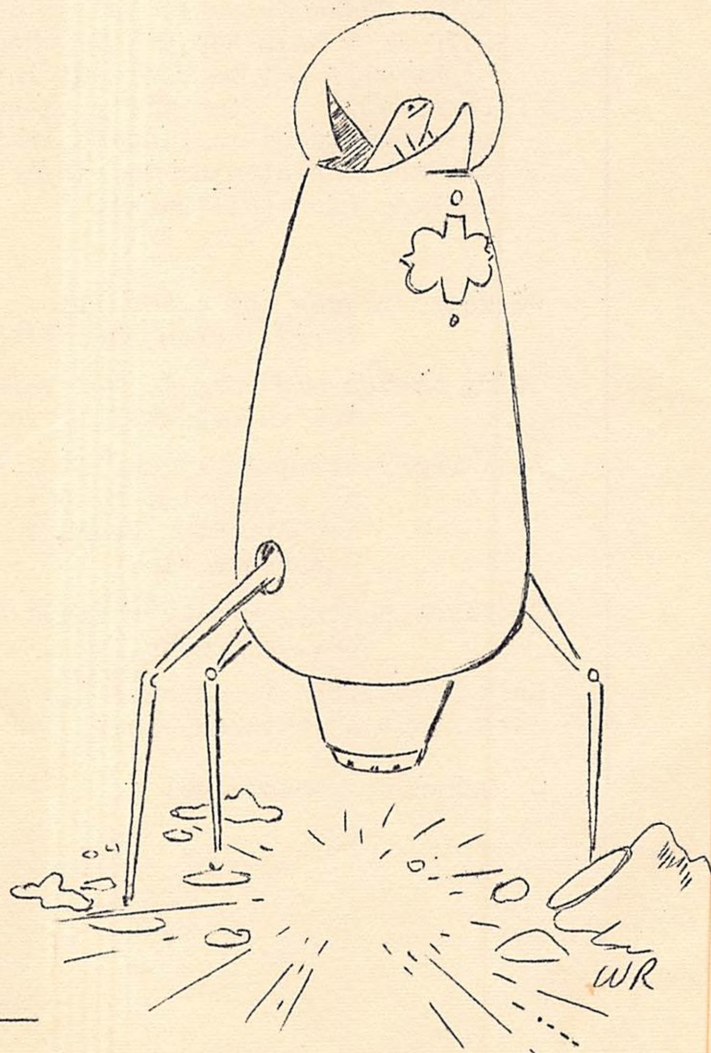


w
a
l
d
o

no. 3



WALDO THREE is yet another FAFIA HOUSE PUBLICATION

from:- Eric Bentcliffe
47, Alldis St,
Great Moor,
Stockport,
Ches.

in the habit of that other hardy perennial publication BASTION - which, in case it still hasn't arrived when you get this, is delayed (according to Norman Shorrocks) due to The Current Situation in Swaziland and Bechuanaland. No other fanzine can make this excuse!

WALDO THREE is published to celebrate the 29TH OMPA MAILING, and to ensure that this wight will not be cast out into the Outer Darkness. Some fifty extra copies are being produced to placate irate fan-editors who are threatening to strike me off their Mailing List (Hi! Buck).

Wm Rotsler drew the cover illo
Terry Jeeves stencilled it.

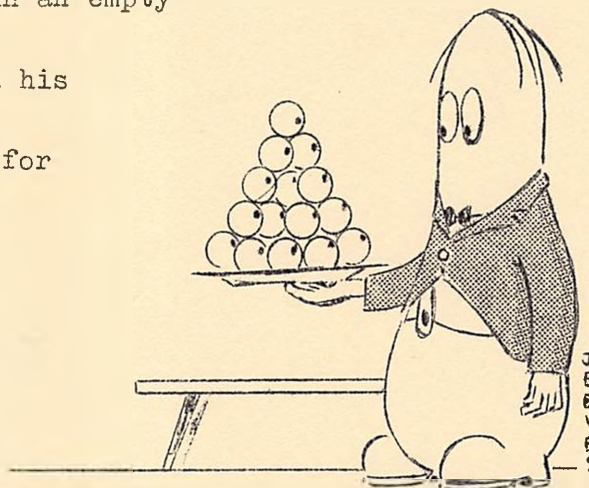
Terry Jeeves also duplicated this magazine
and is responsible for the Soggy's.

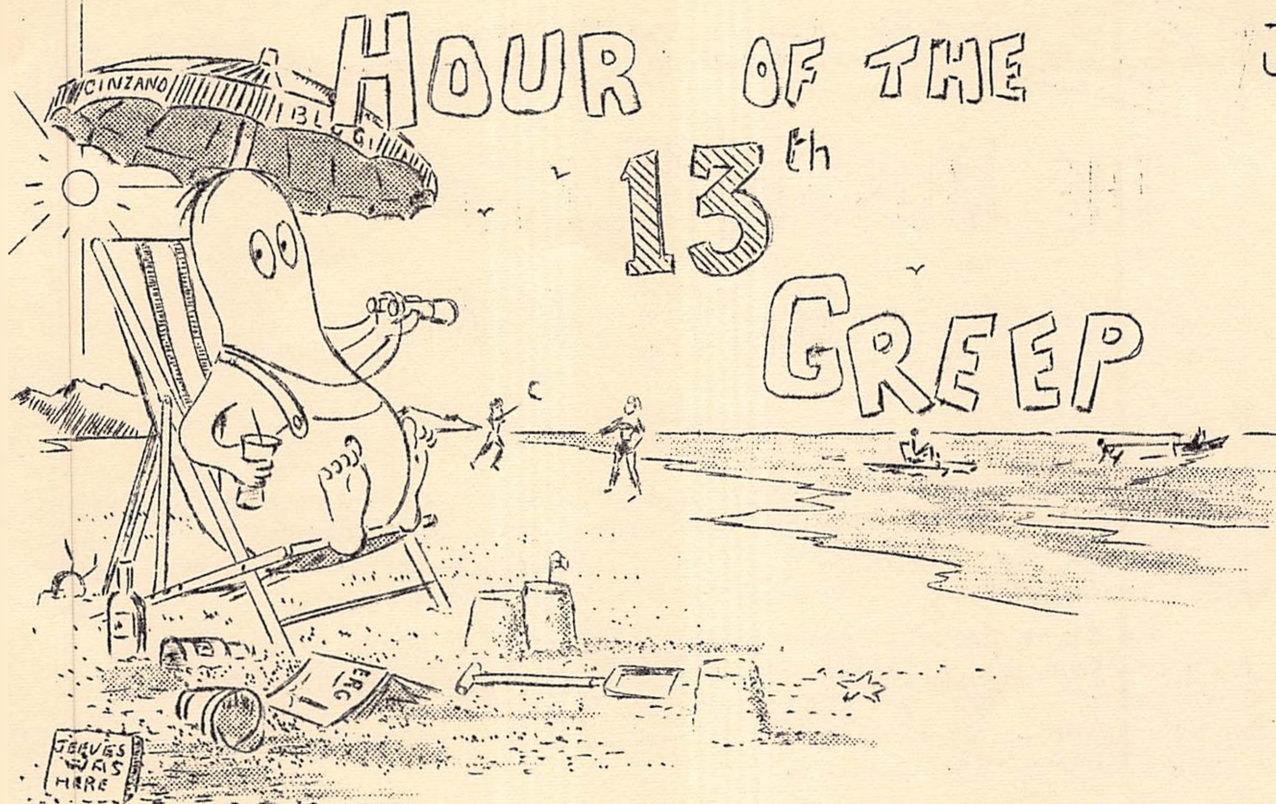
Bill Harry unwittingly supplied the illo on
page page 15. Stencil washed up on
New Brighton beach in an empty
espresso tin.

Geoffrey Doherty kindly revised his
Lxicon Speech.

Eric Bentcliffe is responsible for
just about everything else.

- Copyrite August 1961 -





This isn't really the 'HOUR OF THE 13th GREEP', but it would be a great pity not to use this most suitable heading illo which Terry has stencilled for me. Before I went to Sane Remo I mentioned to Jeeves that I'd probably write something about the trip in the next BASTION so he, kind man that he is, drew the heading and sent it along. However, I now find that my two-week vacation has inspired me to write a much longer piece than I expected - rather than the paragraph or two I thought it would take in my editorial-type column, it seems to have grown into almost a full scale travelogue.

So.....I thought I'd save my OMPA Membership with it.

HOUR OF THE 13TH GREEP PRODUCTIONS

PRESENTS

ONCE MORE UNTO
THE BEACH



(Taking into account the virulence
of a certain local life-form....)

THE MUSQUITE KID BITES AGAIN

IN ACTUAL FACT I hadn't been expecting to take a vacation abroad in '61, but a change of firm coupled with a raise in pay made things suddenly look more promising - I hooked my perambulating oscillator, and found I could just about afford to gaffiate for two weeks.

My first thoughts were to spend my holiday savings on building a raft to cross the Atlantic, so I could revisit the many pleasant places and pleasant people I met last year. Reluctantly, however, I cast this idea on oneside...my wild desire to get back to the States being, dare we say, Timbered with caution!

Discussion by letter with Fomme friend Pip (who lives in London, has been to one convention, but could not be termed a fan), resulted in a First Choice for both of us of Venice Lido - the peninsula of land which protects the city of Venice from the tides of the Adriatic. Unfortunately, however, a succession of travel-agents gave the same reply to my quest - all flights to Venice were booked up; they could fix us up if we were willing to travel by train, but we weren't. With the second-choice of San Romo, on the Italian Riviera I had better luck and managed to get suitable bookings for us both.

The Day Of Departure, Friday June 9th, came along all too slowly, but did eventually arrive and I reported in at Manchester airport in the early evening for my seven o'clock flight to Nice. And round about here the Bentcliffe Bugger Factor (remarked upon in EPITAFF), eg, 'If Anything Is Going To Go Wrong It Is More Likely To Do So If Bentcliffe Is About' began to exert its influence. My first intimation of this was an announcement over the airport public-address system that my flight was unfortunately delayed.

Apparently something unmentionable had gone wrong with the plane and we had to wait until they nailed the wings back on again. It was a charter-flight so there wasn't another aircraft on stand-by to replace it. I sat in the departure lounge and drank several beers, an equal number of coffee's and attempted to interest myself in a semi-s-f novel titled "The Cure For Death"; it certainly wasn't the cure for boredom.

Some two hours after the scheduled flight time we were called to board the plane. Several of the passengers did so with seeming trepidation, and possibly my remark to a prospective blonde seat-mate (Pip was to join me a couple of days later) that "The only trouble with these old Argonauts is that the props have a left-hand thread and are liable to fall off," had borne fruit.

5

It was an uneventful flight though, slow but pleasant, taking slightly over three hours to reach Nice. Highspot of the flight was when we passed over Paris. It was an exceptionally clear night, we were flying at only 8,000 feet and one could clearly discern the floodlighting around the principal buildings of the city. A magic splendour of colour both beautiful and impressive.

We touched down at Nice at a few minutes before 12.30, that city also providing an exceptionally pleasing appearance by night. The airport is on a promontory out into the Mediterranean, and one sweeps wide out over the sea and then (seemingly) skims the wave-tops when coming in to land. I noted that it hadn't been necessary to shoo the seagulls off the runway before we landed, which is always a sign that the weather is good! Coaches for the various riviera resorts were waiting outside the airport buildings, and having quickly passed through customs and immigration I boarded the one for San Remo.

The Bay of Nice was pleasantly illuminated and as we sped through the city along the Promenade Des Anglais it was nice to leer at the pretty girls thronging the pavements, or sitting over an after-dinner aperitif... We passed the famed Negresco, many other opulent hotels and then out onto the lower Corniche, towards the Italian border. The coach ride was quite stimulating, for the driver with typical Italian abandon drove in and out of the rock-face with seeming disregard, blaring his horn to clear the way and addressing volubly any drivers who did not feel like allowing him right of way. The fact that night had truly fallen though, prevented us from getting more than a glimpse of the spectacular scenery this coastline, the Cote D'Azur, can offer.

Monaco, Monte Carlo, Mentone; came and went and we reached the French/Italian border where we were inspected in turn by the respective border guards and customs. The French of the Surete in smartly pressed khaki, the Italians in resplendent white.

We hadn't covered many miles beyond the frontier when the Bentley Bugger Factor once more took a hand. We had just passed through the centre of Ventimiglia, the first Italian town of any size, when I was awakened from a pleasant doze by the bleating of a horn behind us. Coming up along side our coach was an impudent little Fiat, its driver gesticulating out of the window, our coach driver took this to be a challenge and immediately put on speed. However, this was not what our rival wanted, by dint of pressing his accelerator right to the ground and several times taking his life in his hands he finally managed to pass us, waving for our driver to stop. It seemed someone had decided to call a bus strike!

You've seen these comedy films where a small car will pull up and an endless succession of people get out.... This was a baby Fiat, and I'm sure there were at least ten angry strikers in it. The party surrounded our driver and proceeded to inform him that he couldn't go any further because other strikers were waiting farther along the road to stone any coaches which tried to go through. This, of course, I gathered from an interpreter aboard somewhat later... my Italian is adequate for ordering a beer, but for all I could get from the rapid interchange they could have been discussing the Italian Soccer Season. And judging by the time they took to make a decision they probably did cover this as well...

6
If it hadn't been for the fact that I was rather tired I'd have really enjoyed the altercation, but as I was anxious to get to my hotel and get some sleep I joyfully joined in the chorus or two of 'Why Are We Waiting' with the rest of the Inglesi Touristi aboard. This did in some way help to force our driver into making a decision, but the quality of our singing obviously hadn't been of a high enough quality... he drove us back into Ventimiglia, to the railway station! Then he went gleefully off with the other strikers hoping, I imagine, that another misbegotten driver would come along with a coach-load of people.

I eventually arrived at my hotel in San Remo at about 5a.m., and I hope the taxi-drivers English wasn't good enough to allow him to understand the unkind things I was muttering sotto voce about Italian bus drivers.....

ooooooo

ooooooooo

I'm not going to cover the ensuing two weeks in any sort of detail because I don't want to bore anyone with repetition of phrases such as 'once more I staggered out of bed too late for breakfast, and only managed an hour on the beach before lunch'. My conception of an ideal holiday is to spend the greater part of my daytime hours lazing in a deck chair on the beach, vacating my seat only to cool off in the water, or to buy another gelati (ice-cream). This way I conserve my energies for the evenings...and like I always say, there's nothing like lying all day on the beach for giving you a good appetite!

My hotel proved to be an excellent choice, it had been advertised as a 'Superior second-grade' and, for once, the description was understated. The food was excellent and varied - a typical menu would start with a choice of a couple of soups or a pasta, a main dish of veal, steak, chicken, or trout would then be offered followed by a sweet, plus cheese and fruit. My single-room turned out to be a suite of sorts with a separate bathroom, shower, etc....the bedroom itself being large enough to hold a British Convention in. It was managed most efficiently by an Italian, Senor Enrico, who had travelled widely abroad (he'd even been to Pittsburgh) and who I got to know quite well during my stay. If anyone wishes to visit San Remo in the near future, I can definitely advise a stay at the Des Etranger.

Since Pip wasn't to arrive until the Tuesday I spent the first few days of my stay in exploring San Remo, and generally doing nothing in a most enjoyable way. The weather was wonderful....it had been a relatively mild winter in Britain, but it was far from warm when I left, and the transition to this literally sun-drenched coast was exceedingly pleasant. In fact, these first few days I found the heat rather enervating and retired fairly early, spending the evenings at one or another sidewalk cafe drinking excellent German beer and just watching all the girls go by.

I was tempted slightly out of my lethargy the third evening there though, when I went to see a Japanese science-fiction film. A Japanese s-f film with Italian dialogue, I might add. I can't fully recall the title of this film, but it was something like 'Del Inferno La Stratosphoria', in Italian.

It was fun. I went in when the film had already started and due to the singular hardness of Italian cinema-seats I didn't bother to stay to see the beginning come round again, but it was fun, and I don't think I would have enjoyed it half as much if the dialogue had been in English. Seeing the United Nations in session, all with inscrutable oriental faces, and all speaking volubly in Italian appealed to me warped sense of humour. And there were some quite good effects in the film too. One of the best Smithean space-battles I've yet seen screened....but if you see it, see it with Italian dialogue, huh!

San Remo itself, proved to be quite an interesting place. The more modern portion of the city was pure riviera resort and followed the coastline in a ribbon development; it boasted some very fine hotels, ristorante, and a large Casino - and there's also a quite formidable appearing Russian Church, which presumably dates from when the Riviera was the playground for the old White Russian aristocracy. The old town, La Citta Vecchia, however, was much more interesting. This conglomeration (and that is an apt word in this instance) of building covered a considerable hilltop slightly inland and adjoining the resort. One could turn off the Via Roma, the principal shopping street, with it's fairly modern buildings and, within seconds, be almost completely lost in what appeared to be ancient Italy.

When I say that the old town covered the hilltop, that's just what I mean. The houses were were all joined together, if not leaning against each other they were joined by archways, and one could walk seemingly for miles through narrow 'tunnels' between the houses. Fascinating. And on the rare occasion one came to a narrow street which was actually open to the sky, the impression of a medieval town was intensified. To further add to this impression, down the centre of the streets ran a gutter, and one could well imagine the days debris being tipped out of the high windows; I must admit to an occasional glance upwards just-in-case.

On the Tuesday afternoon Pip arrived. She'd flown from London in an Air France 'Caravelle' and her ears were still popping from the flight when she arrived in San Remo. To digress for a moment. I met Pip (surname Phillips, hence the diminutive) a couple of years ago in Italy, and we've renewed the acquaintance several times since. She isn't a fan but she reads s-f occasionally and has a fine quiet sense of humour. One of the few females I've known with whom I can really relax with. She shares my like of doing as little as possible when on vacation, and we spent a most pleasant holiday together.

The day after she arrived, we decided it was time we investigated the surrounding countryside a little more, er...as leisurly as possible and definitely not on any organised tourist jaunt. I imagine resorts the world over are pretty much the same in one respect; if you are weak willed you find yourself being shepherded interminably about the countryside with no time to stop and observe anything properly. I like seeing far away places with strange sounding names, but I like to do it at my own pace and unencumbered by a guide. The wednesday morning we spent on the beach, during the afternoon we ascended Mt. Bignone.....

We ascended Mt. Bignone by cable-car.....I trust that nowone, before they turned the page, actually thought we climbed the 13,000feet lump on foot! The ride up was interesting, but the mountain, alas, was in a somewhat misty state. 'On a clear day,' they'd told us, 'you can see France and Switzerland'. Hell, we couldn't even see San Remo! Our few hours of mountaineering though, were enlivened by a pair of most friendly dogs. I'm a sucker for most canines, and almost as we stepped out of the cable-car, I spotted a white terrier-like mongrel playing with a young Alsatian. I whistled, they came running, I was hooked. I spent the greater time on top of that mountain throwing sticks for the two dogs...and occasionally having to retrieve them myself when the dogs couldn't be bothered. I tell you folks, I had a ball!

The afternoon was also made pleasant by the discovery of some jazz to my taste. A cafe of sorts had been built up against the cable-car landing, and once when the dogs romped off into the far distance we decided it was time for a capuchino. The place had the almost inevitable juke box, but wonder of wonders, several of the records were Benny Goodman trio's and quartet's. That was one of the most pleasant coffee's I drank in Italy...and a very pleasant musical change from the thumping rock 'n roll and Elvis singing 'Surrender', which see to have (momentarily, I hope) captured the Italian imagination.

The mist had cleared a little by the time we'd exhausted the Goodman discs, but we still couldn't see France or Switzerland. However, it had been pleasant to breathe in the clear mountain air after the heat of the beach. And as we entered the cable-car to return to San Remo, a most disconsolate looking alsatian watched us with his head cocked pleadingly on one side. Several times while on the beach in the ensuing days I'd look at the distant peak of Mt. Bignone, and a mental image of a dog howling mournfully would come to mind.

o o o o o o

o o o o o o

On the Friday of the first week we decided to spend a day in Nice. Boarding a coach at 10a.m. we arrived in Nice shortly after noon. The journey had provided some quite breathtaking views, and in particular we made note to visit Monte Carlo and Monaco another day. Nice is spectacular, but not a place I'd care to spend a vacation at. The Bay of Nice has a foreshore of gleaming hotels and palatial residences, the beach is almost non-existent and what there is of it is principally pebbles. The narrow inland sweep of the city is slick, smart and soulless - it gives the impression of a machine geared to part the visitor from his money as quickly as possible, and not necessarily painlessly.

We had intended to stay in Nice until early evening before catching a coach which would get us back to our hotel for dinner, however, after only two or three hours we were in mutual agreement that we'd seen as much as we wanted to of the place. The heat was probably a contributing factor, it had been hot in San Remo but there, there was the pleasant shade of palm trees and a slight breeze which made walking quite bearable, when we did any. In Nice there was no breeze, and the sun bore down mercilessly, being reflected from every angle. I could well understand -

pto

now the Promenade Des Anglais came to be so named - only a Mad Dog of an Englishman would go out on it in the noonday Sun! After some searching we did find one park (close to the principal Casino) and gladly sought its shade.

Nice is definitely a place to visit, briefly, but not, I think, one to stay in - unless you have a yacht moored in the harbour and can afford to cruise out into the Med whenever the heat becomes unbearable.

o o o o o o

o o o o o o

The last time I visited Italy, every bar was full of gaiety and life from the early evening until the late morning, however, I'm sad to report that the One-eyed Monster appears to have almost conquered Italy. Whereas before people would foregather in the bars to make their own entertainment, be it song or story, now nine out of ten bars you pass has a tv-set and the customers sit goggle-eyed staring at the goggle-box. A pox on progress....

I think it was the evening after our trip to Nice, though, that we did find one hostelry unaffected by the paralytic effect of television. This was the Hostario Pigna D'Oro (The Golden Pine) in the old city of San Remo. To reach it one delved into mysterious passageways, passed through evil looking archways and, all the way, you climbed - it seemed somewhat ironic after all that climbing that the place should be located in a cellar!

The Pigna D'Oro would be a beatnik hang-out in almost any other country but here in San Remo it is a place where the local guitar players, singers and artists of one kind or another gather. As I mentioned, it's in a cellar, the tables are long and solid and the lighting is by candles stuck in empty wine-bottles...it sounds typical, but isn't. It is frequented mainly by the local inhabitants but a few tourists, those who manage to escape their guides, get there also. We arrived there before the place got crowded and introduced ourselves to 'mine host' Bruno, who advised us on the cheapest-best wine he could offer to please our palate. We settled for Albana, a wine of the region 'en carafe' - that is draught wine from a cask rather than bottled. It was cheap, pleasant and potent.

Since he didn't expect the hostario to get busy for a half hour or so, Bruno offered to show us round a nearby studio shared by two young artists of his acquaintance - he did a little sculpting himself - an offer which we accepted. The studio turned out to be another nearby cellar (I think there must be a strong underground movement in Italy!) in which several of the local artists had work on show. This was mainly of an impressionistic nature, and I'm no judge of this or any other type of art...much of it looked to me like exaggerated Rotsler cartoons. It provided an amusing half hour though, while Bruno tried to explain what some of the art meant. It also made us thirsty...

Back at the Pigna D'Oro a couple of guitar players had arrived, and the hostario gradually began to fill up. There were several rooms, knocked-together, and by an hour after our arrival the place was really brimming at the edges.

The guitar players were good, the happy wine-drinking audience had some good voices amongst them and a very pleasant atmosphere was created. Most of the songs were lilting Italian melodies very pleasant to the ear, but an occasional concession to the tourists was made, and I never expected to hear 'Lili Marlene' (several German tourists had also found the place) or 'It's a Long Way To Tipperary' in a setting such as this.

We'd been quaffing the Albana quite copiously during the evening, and by the time we left the Pigna D'Oro we were quite high. It says much for that kind providence which seems to watch over the slightly drunk that we took a wrong turning immediately outside the hostelry, got completely lost, and found ourselves back at the hotel in roughly half the time it had taken to get there!

© © © © © ©

© © © © © ©

Early in the second week we visited Monte Carlo and Monaco. This was a much more enjoyable excursion than the one to Nice, and whereas I wouldn't care to spend much time in the latter resort I would like to return to Monte one day for a more protracted stay.

Once more we caught a coach along the coast road, there were other routes but this was far and away the most fascinating, through Bordighera, Ventimiglia, Mentone, Villefranche, and Beaulieu; pleasant seeming places of which we only got brief glimpses. We could have visited them all, of course, but if we had we wouldn't have been able to spend so much time lying in the sun doing nothing. We arrived in Monte Carlo in the early afternoon, having had lunch before we left, here again the sun was very hot but there was a certain amount of shade. The coach had deposited us close to the famous Casino, but resisting the possibility of becoming the Fan Who Broke The Bank at Monte Carlo our stay there was only brief - there wasn't a Brag game going, anyway! A most imposing interior and exterior, but a little rich for my blood. Somewhat marble-tomb like, but imposing.

I took a couple of shots of the fine gardens in front of the Casino, with the Alpes Maritime rising in the near distance they made an excellent subject. Then we strolled on down the hill towards the harbour. It was at this point that I saw 'My' boat, and my day was made....

A couple of mornings prior to our trip to Monte I'd been suddenly enthused out of my lethargy, and deckchair, by the sight of a most fascinating craft speeding out to sea from the harbour of San Remo. I don't really go along with the maxim that 'There's nothing so worth doing as messing about in boats', but this was one boat I'd like to 'mess' about in. I'm completely ignorant of the finer points of describing a water-bound craft so I hope nowone will jump on me too heavily if my description does beggar description...she was about forty-feet long, blue and white, and had to me the appearance of a boat of the future. In fact, the craft brought to mind a Finlay illustration (which I can't date) of a skeeter-boat on Venus. From the bridge to the prow was a twin-fairing which gave the boat more the appearance of a sub than a motor-yacht. She was a fabulous looking craft, and I felt rather proud that she was flying the RN Ensign.

I'd had only a brief glimpse of her at San Remo, as she sped out to sea, but here she was again moored in Monte Carlo harbour. I couldn't resist going over to her mooring to get a better look. She was called the 'Sheherazade', and, most accomodatingly, the owner decided to change moorings as we sauntered along the quay-side. I took a couple of shots of her, and By Ghu if I ever get rich, I'm going to have one built just like her.

There were many other fine looking craft in this Millionaires Playground, but none could match the style of the 'Sheherazade' as far as I was concerned. As she sailed out into the bay to seek her fresh mooring, Pip took me by the hand and led me gently away before I could dive in after her...!

From the harbour we climbed up onto the promontory on which the Royal Palace of Monaco (and probably the Postage Stamp Factory as well) stands. I'd never realised before just how small Monaco is, but a most pleasant little kingdom at that. We strolled it's narrow streets for awhile, and then sat at a sidewalk cafe facing the Palace to refresh ourselves. I discovered that the place provided excellent beer in huge Litre glasses, and proceeded to quaff one down quickly....thirsty work this exploring. Pip wrote a postcard home, and I sent one to Boyd Raeburn - earlier in the year he'd sent me one from Montego Bay, Jamaica, intimating that Luxurious Living and Fanac didn't mix, I thought this would be a suitable place to reply from, in agreement.

Monaco is a fascinating little place, orange-coloured walls and narrow streets, fantastic sheer cliffs down to the blue, blue Mediterranean. We got so interested that we missed our coach back to San Remo. There was another one due in an hours time, but we decid d to be adventurous and travel back by train instead. It took us almost half an hour to find the station and there wasn't a train bound for San Remo until after the next bus, but this gave us a further opportunity to see more of Monte, and I'm rather pleased we did miss that bus.

We got onto the station some 15minutes before our train was due and this too was propitious for no sooner had we reached the platform when one of the famed Trans-Europ Expresses thundered in. Personally, I much prefer to travel by air than train, but I must admit that the railway has for me a certain fascination (romance) which the newer mode of travel hasn't. It gave me a slight feeling of disapointment that the Trans-Europ Express was now a streamlined monster rather than the 'Rattling Giant which thunders across a continent' that so many fiction writers have made famous. However, no sooner had this pulled out of the station when, on the other track, appeared one of the 'Trains Bleu' - wagon-lit sleepers pulled by a huge steam-engine of quite romantic appearance. This train one could well picture travelling across Europe from end to end, a spy in every-other carriage.

I think one of the most fascinating things about travel is to suddenly espy some placename or thing, which has previously had a romantic connection in your mind. With me this sort of happenstance causes the pleasant spine-shiver of my sense of wonder awakening. I suppose I'm not quite as blase as I sometimes think I am....

The train ride back to San Remo was quite pleasant, we didn't get seats until after we had crossed over into Italy but it was fine to lean out of the corridor windows and view the spectacular scenery around us - much of which we wouldn't have seen if we hadn't missed the 'bus. And we made it back to the Des Etranger just in time for a late dinner.

0000000

0000000

Like most vacations this one came to an end all too soon, I've touched only on the portions of the holiday which seem to want writing about, but of course I enjoyed the unreported episodes as well - a typical day would find Pip on the beach shortly after nine in the morning, and myself anything from half an hour to two hours later; just after noon I'd have a beer and Pip would have a coke, then lunch. Back to the beach again around 2.30, lying in the sun and wallowing in the water until the sun began to diminish around 5ish. Dinner around 8 o'clock, then a stroll down to the harbour (or up into the old town) with a drink at any spot that took our fancy. Gafia Uber Alles....occasionally, anyway!

I've not mentioned the boat-cruise by night we took, during which the pianist aboard allowed me to take over on piano for him....and ~~being bitten on the foot by a shark~~ stubbing my toe on a rock while ~~swimming~~ doing my undistinguished dog paddle...and then there was the NICE NIGHT WALKING EPISODE, which I think I'll give a paragraph to.

On the return journey, we arrived in Nice rather earlier than we needed to, and having rid ourselves of bags and checked in were left to while away a couple of hours before our respective planes were likely to be on the tarmac. I suggested a stroll. We sauntered out of the airport building, turned left along the quiet, dark road and proceeded to walk unconcernedly along....not for long tho'! I suppose we'd only walked something like an eighth of a mile from the airport when four youths passed us on somewhat ramshackle motor-cycles. We were talking, and took little note of them...not even when they pulled up a little ahead of us and one started to fiddle with his carburettor, or something. As we came abreast of them, two of them barred our path and proceeded to hold out their hands and demand money. Since I could understand little of what they were saying anyway, I played dumb (a part I find quite easy!). Since it was obvious they couldn't speak English I told Pip to be ready to run for it when I gave the signal, meanwhile facing front and 'talking' to the apparent leader of the gang. When outnumbered I believe in the old maxim that discretion is the better part of valour! Fortunately, before the youths could get really into their villany a car came sweeping out of the airport-entrance, and approached us with headlights glaring - I gave the bod nearest to me a good push in the chest, grabbed Pip's hand and ran like hell.... We heard motor-cycles receding into the distance as we once more entered the airport building.

Deciding that the natives were hostile, we spent the rest of the time until take-off drinking coffee in the departure lounge. We could, and should, I suppose have reported the incident to the police, and if we had been arriving rather than departing at the time we would have done. As it was, two o'clock in the morning was no time to get involved with the local gendarme's. Next time I go night-walking in Nice though, I think I'll invite Bill Donaho along....

13
At the time this wasn't a particularly pleasant incident, but in retrospect it seems to tie the vacation up nicely...and it's quite possibly a timely warning to me for I'm given to wandering, alone in strange cities. I've done it in Antwerp, and Geneva, and Terry Jeeves and I indulged it in Brussels and Amsterdam...and I frequently do it at home. It used to be that only the apparently wealthy were unwise to wander dark streets at night, but now the underworld is likely to pick on anyone....mebbe I'll stick a little more to the brightly lit streets in future.

My flight home was again delayed, and Pip who should have flown out after me, got away first. I sat out on the terrace fronting the departure lounge and watched the dawn break over the Mediterranean.... and feeling most reluctant to board my plane when it did arrive.

..... FINITO

+++++

YOU GOTTA EX-ERCISE YOUR YEA OR NEGATIVE
AND LATCH ON TO YOUR PEROGATIVE.....

...in other words

VOTE
HELP
SUPPORT
PLUG

TAFF!

As reported in SKYRACK, Don and I are now declaring open-season on a TAFF DELEGATE from the United Kingdom to visit the U.S.A., and attend the SCIENCE FICTION WORLD CONVENTION in 1962. Next year, no less.

Nominations may be sent to either of us (and a duplicate letter to the other TAFF administrator would be greatly appreciated). Nominations will be accepted up to OCTOBER 31st, 1961. Voting will commence as soon after this date as we can get ballots out.

Each prospective TAFF Candidate should:- a) Be nominated by three known fans from the home country, plus two from the host country. b) Post a 35/- (Five Dollar) registration fee with the TAFF Administrators. And, c) Present a signed statement of willingness and intention to make the trip if elected.

Don and I hope to have two fans crossing the Atlantic in 1962, we're already pretty sure that one will make it, Eney or Ellick, from the States to hear...if we get the sort of support TAFF has had over the past few years it should be a twosome. It's up to you.

.....cb.

Those of you who have read EPITAFF will probably recall that last September in Minneapolis I visited a joint called the Key Club in the company of Dale R. Smith and Gordon Dickson. Dale has recently sent me a newspaper clipping which I found rather amusing, and which I'm going to reprint here. Quote. " CITY MAY CLOSE KEY CLUB Shooting of 2 Brings Request to End Licenses. The city council will be asked Tuesday to revoke the licenses of the Key Club, and the South of the Border Bar, Police Chief Kenneth Moore said Saturday. Moore's announcement followed a meeting with the mayor over the shooting of two customers Friday in the Key Club by the owner of the places, Henry Sabes. THE CHIEF also noted that in 1957 Sabes shot and killed a man in his South of the Border Bar. A grand jury considered the case and brought no indictment. 'There have been other disturbances of a serious nature in the past,' Moore said. He did not elaborate. Police have said the club is a hang-out for prostitutes and narcotics peddlers. 'Minneapolis is too good a city for a condition like this to exist,' Moore said, 'We have major-league ball coming to town. What if he (Sabes) had shot someone from out of town who came to see a ball game?' "

It's this last statement by the Chief which amuses me most....no mention of protection for Visiting Firemen from Podunk, or even visiting TAFF Candidates! I'm afraid that I'll have to give future TAFF delegates advice to stay away from the Key Club..... Apparently the good influence of a couple of visiting Knights of St. Pantony had a beneficial effect on Sabes the night we went tho', he didn't shoot anyone that evening!

This here Twenty-Ninth OMPA Mailing is, I think, one of the finest mailings our illustrious opa has ever accumulated. The quality is high, and the size - thanks to Donaho, Hickman, Eney, Lindsay, and Buckmaster - is quite impressive. Having been just about OMPA's most inactive President ever during the past year, I feel that I can look back on my year of office with a real feeling of pride. Rarely has an OMPA Officer done so little and achieved so much!! " Yes," I will say to some far off future fan gathering, " I was president of Ompa when that fabulous twenty-ninth mailing appeared, and they did it all over my dead-body!" Thanks for putting up with me anyway, it's been a double-honour being Ompa Prexy as well as a TAFF Candidate in one year. But, I wouldn't suggest the honour be conferred too frequently on ompa members who are declared TAFF winners - I've felt guilty about just not being able to contribute my bit to ompa, and I imagine any future TAFF Delegate would be in pretty much the same predicament.

Without doubt the most interesting thought-provoking, and mind-boggling publication in the whole mailing is Earl and Nancy Kemp's WHY IS A FAN, thanks Lynn for making it available through Ompa - I only wish this had been done with WHO KILLED SCIENCE FICTION a publication I'd very much like to have in my files, I read snatches of Larry Shaw's copy en route to Pittsburgh but, naturally, didn't study it in the way it demanded study.

OMPATHY MISCELLANY



" Allright, Courtney, so you made sure I'll miss the Ompa deadline, but I'll get you for it...."

WHY IS A FAN, as Earl says, does not succeed entirely in its aim of discovering just WHY is a Fan, but it goes farther along this path than any other fan article or publication has done before, and in a framework where individualists abound, it is unlikely that anyone other than a trained psychologist could take it further...and, personally, I'm not sure that I'd want to see that happen anyway.

It's a pity that more British fans couldn't have been included as recipients of the questionnaire on which WHY IS A FAN is based, but I doubt that the replies would have been very much different in context from those that were received. Certainly, I think, Jim O'Meara's theory that fans are predominantly either firstborn or only-children, holds for British Fandom as much as for American. Offhand I can think of more British fans who fall into one of these categories than who don't...and I'm one of them.

I'm an only-child, and looking back in the light of WHY IS A FAN I can see valid reasons why I became a fan. Back in my childhood I found the company of adults more to my liking than that of other children, who rarely shared my interests or attitudes. -

I had childhood friends of course, and many of them are still friends, but in the main I found that I preferred my own company or that of some adult to the kids of my own age. I had more toys than just about any other child around here, and I delighted in inventing elaborate games to play with them; games for one, rather than for two or more. I'd make up in my mind whole new worlds which my toy-soldiers etcetra would inhabit - I can vaguely recall back when I was about six or seven having a large play-table in my bedroom come den; this had on it an arrangement of stones and artificial-grass representing land, canoes made from meccano and creatures of various types (intelligent and otherwise) made from plasticine inhabited it. When the weather was inclement, which was fairly frequently, I'd retire to play with it by myself....whereas of course, the children who weren't only children would go indoors to play with brother and sister.

Reading, also, was much more a feature of my childhood than most of the other kids around here. I was never particularly brilliant at school but I usually managed to top the class when it came to reading or spelling (on the latter I seem to have regressed!). With this sort of a childhood I suppose it was inevitable that I discover and become fond of science-fiction and fantasy....and I imagine that this is paralleled by a majority of other British Fans. Yes ???

It's really no longer a constant source of wonder that so many fans share the same points of view and general attitudes when you realize that they are also, mainly, only-children or firstborn. Certainly, fans don't share the same opinions, they're diverse in size, form, and nature, but basically they share a great deal. And WHY IS A FAN, if it hasn't boiled down the basic essence of fan, has gone a long way to proving why this is so in consolidating Jim's theory.

And who's going to be the first to found an s-f club called the 'Firstborn' !?!

I hope Earl will keep on with these Sa Fari Annuals, I can think of many topics on which such a treatment would be valuable, both fannish and otherwise. Whither fandom? Is a topic on which quite a lot of words have been written over the past years, strikes me that a Sa Fari Annual could sort of tie the loose end up. Oh, I can think of a multitude of things this sort of treatment could be given to, I'm great at finding work for other people! Thanks Earl, Nancy, Lynn, for going to so much trouble on this most interesting publication.

My next favourite piece in this Ompa Mailing is Alva Rogers fine part-two of the Golden Age of ASTOUNDING, in Bill Donaho's VIPER. Very pleasant nostalgia, bringing back some very pleasant memories of stories which have always been favourites of mine, too. In fact, the article got me delving back into my back file and re-reading many of the stories mentioned. The re-reading firmed up my opinion that the Best vVogt was not the long novels, but the novelettes. Sure, I enjoyed SLAN and it's still one of my favourite s-f novels, but I maintain that the best vV was THE BLACK DESTROYER, DISCORD IN SCARLET and the Rull Stories. And they stand up far better on re-reading than do any other of vVogt's stories....which is the Ten O'Clock Test as far as I am concerned. I agree with you, Alva, on that July '39 issue being the harbinger of the Golden Age.

One thing I don't agree with Alva on though, is her rating of the Sturgeon "ETHER BREATHER" as "one of the funniest s-f stories ever written". It may be that my sense of humour isn't that of Alva's, in fact this is probably the case - but I didn't find the story particularly good at all. For my money, about the only author who has been able to successfully inject humour into his science-fiction writings is Eric Frand Russell. I'm thinking particularly of "THE UNDECIDED" a short story in ASF around the mid-fifties, and a short novel which appeared in PLANET shortly afterwards. EFR's handling of the slaphappy moronic aliens in both these stories was of the highest order as far as my sense of humour is concerned. He's done it in other stories too. The de Camp 'Johnny Black' stories were amusing, and so were quite a number of other stories I can think of (sometimes not intentionally!), but EFR is about the only s-f author who has ever provoked a real belly-laught from me, intentionally.

The rest of VIPER is pretty interesting too, Bill, you Publishing Giant you...in fact I find the mag more to my taste than HABAKKUK, the main reason being I think that I'm heartily sick of reading about Beatniks. This unwashed, unpleasant minority fails to amuse me in the least...I fail to see why it is necessary to wander around looking like something from the filthiest slum to gain experience of life. Our 'civilisation' isn't a particularly wonderful one but we all have to accept its code, mores, and morals to a certain extent if we are going to live in it. We all rebel at times against certain facets of it, the more energetic try to give an example of how they think life should be lived - if this is what beatniks are trying to do they're welcome to their concept of civilisation. But I wonder what they'd do if everyone did adapt their mores, who would they have left to scrounge from!

They do gain some experience of life, I suppose, but by their mode of dress and perpetual penury they can only gain experience of one strata of civilisation....life isn't just that lived by the bums of our world, and you can't have a balanced view of civilisation or its people if you approach it only at the level of the lowest common denominator. So there!

SCOTTISHE was fine, Ethel, a nicely rounded issue in which Walt just about takes top honours. I wish though, that he'd visit us all occasionally then he'd be able to write about British Fandom today instead of only about things that used to be. Ditto for John Berry. Joe Patrizio turned in quite a good report on the LXICON, and this made entertaining reading. Incidentally, Volunteer To Be Sold For TAFF Kingsley Amis, seems to have rather gone back on things...I haven't been able to get any reply from him and seemingly neither have the group who bought him. Mebbe he's not in favour of the Common Market or something.

LYNN HICKMAN MAGAZINES are as impeccable as usual, and the very high quality of the art and reproduction get them stuck right into the Permanent File. The cover on CONVERSATION No.12 is a most unrotslar like Rotsler, and very effective - the BARR on BULLFROG BUGLE 9, is a joy to behold. Incidentally, Lynn, why Bullfrog Bugle? A title like this sounds as though there should be a story behind it. That Motor World letter was, as Boyd Raeburn would say, a real gas, maan. Note that we are in agreement on Beatniks, suggest we have a Ban The Beatnik March, only problem would be stopping the beatniks joining us....!

I was going to cut the Mailing Comments short at the bottom of the last page, but I realised I hadn't mentioned THE RUNNING JUMPING AND STANDING STILL MAGAZINE, and I don't want Sheila to put a hex on me! I liked your piece about Witch's Sheila, this is Off Trail material, and it was nicely done too - says he grimly hanging onto hair, nails, and other possible witchly conjuration material. But, Sheila, what did you do to Mal, there's so little of him in this issue....please bring him back! Double, double, toil and Trouble, let's have Ashworth at the double. Sad that this will be one of the last of Doc' Weir's articles to see publication.

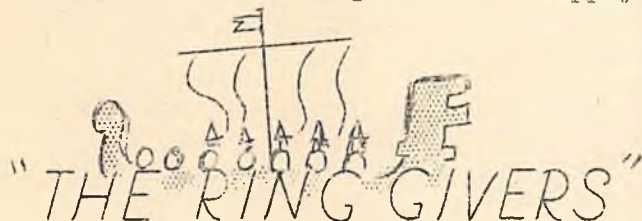
I was particularly pleased to have PHENOTYPE because of the PITTCON coverage...as might be expected, I'm collecting accounts of the Pittsburgh Convention. Eventually they'll all be bound together into one big souvenir package. Thanks, Dick.

And here endeth the Comments which this mailing has inspired. I enjoyed all the other zines to a greater or lesser degree, but they don't move me to comment...which is probably my fault....or that of lethargy.



Dobson Books Ltd, have been kind enough to send me along this latest title of Eric Frank Russell's for Review. And it's a book I'm pleased to have, I'd read all the stories in it, but it was no hardship to re-read them. Here then are six EFR short-stories and novelettes - THE WAITABITS *

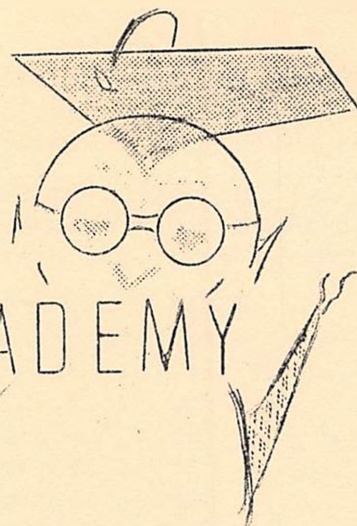
P.S. - ALLAMACOOSA - LEGWORK - DIABOLOGIC - THE TIMELESS ONES, all good, all entertaining, all amusing. My favourite is DIABOLOGIC which is one of the best of EFR's mickey-taking stories - almost all the stories in the book are to the Russell Formulae, ie, Mankind Make Aliens Look Silly, but they're very entertaining nonetheless. Better enjoyed when interspersed with other stories than in a block. Price is 13/6, and no doubt Ken Slater will be pleased to supply copies.



This is a Penguin pb published at 3/6. The author is W.H. Canaway, and this will appeal to most fantasy lovers.

It is, basically, a fictionalized account of the life of Beowulf. Written in what I can best describe as the 'Unknown' style it's well worth the price. It falls down for me in trying to cover too long a period of time and killing off its characters just when they are getting interesting, but ...that's history! Quite good.

Author Geoff is editor of "ASPECTS of S-F", an English Master at a school quite close to hear, and a contributor to the 'GUARDIAN'. This is a condensation of the address he gave at the LIXICON.



ALIEN IN THE ACADEMY

By

Geoffrey D. Doherty

As a schoolmaster, a teacher of English to be precise, who happens to have a taste for s-f, I have certain difficulties to contend with that would never occur to the average addict - whoever that may be. For instance, as a guardian of the moral virtue of the young and a custodian of the ancient monuments of Eng. Lit. I have certain responsibilities to the Establishment which make me very sensitive to some of the more obvious weaknesses of s-f.

It is easy enough for the addict who is only concerned with his own amusement etc. to brush off or turn a deaf ear to those attacks on s-f which deride and criticise such elements as : (I) obscene sexual elements (II) sensational overwriting (III) mere escapism (IV) interstellar cowboys and indians (V) lurid presentation (VI) general puerility (VII) vampire horrors and so on. The list could be extended ad nauseam. Of course, we all know such ideas are based, for the most part, on ignorance. What I have to contend with in school, however, is the evil image of s-f which exists in the academic mind. Evil image, note, not bad name. There are considerable advantages financial and social, in having a 'bad' name like Brendan Behan, for instance, or the 'Angry Young Men'. It's a good thing to know (sort of) about avant garde stuff. S-F, unfortunately, is neither that nor on the O.K. list of Eng. Lit. This is probably because it has never shaken off its associations with pulp magazines and those deliciously provoking, technicolour pictures of monsters, hirsute, tentacled, bug-eyed, dragging off some naked pneumatic wench to a fate obviously far worse than death in a polyhedral space-ship poised for blast-off on some unlikely lunar crag. It is bad lifemanship to be caught scanning such confiscated titbits by the Senior Mistress.

Carrying out a bit of frank self-analysis, I can well recall the day when I used to smuggle tattered copies of "Amazing Science Fiction" or "Weird Tales" into a secret box under my bed. Except for the pictures they were very disappointing as pornography even in those days. Now ASTOUNDING has been transmogrified into ANALOG, it conceals a decline in s-f standards behind a socially acceptable cover in semi-abstract style. More and more s-f is published in hard-back format and even finds its way onto the shelves of the more progressive public libraries.

Penguin Books have smiled upon John Wyndham and are, it is said, soon to publish a new anthology of s-f stories. Despite these moves towards respectability, however, the image I have referred to still remains.

Regrettably, it must be agreed that there is plenty of cause for these reservations. For instance, what do I do when I find one of my girls reading a passage like this ?

" She rose, and down about her in a cascade fell the squirming scarlet of - of what grew upon her head. it fell in a long alive cloak to her bare feet on the floor, hiding her in a dreadful, wet, writhing life. She put up her hands and like a swimmer she parted the waterfall of it, tossing the masses back over her shoulders to reveal her own brown body, sweetly curved. She smiled exquisitely, and in startling waves back from her forehead and down about her in a hideous background writhed the snaky wetness of her living tresses. And Smith knew that he looked upon Medusa. "

It gets worse, much worse. Is this the sort of stuff to put before a young virgin of sweet sixteen ? Of course, this is taken from a book by a well-known writer of Fantasy not s-f, as any fan would complain when confronted by this criticism. Almost all horror stories provide a happy hunting ground for the Freudian analyst, but this book is described as science-fiction in the blurb. Bad publishing helps to sustain the bad image.

Then there are certain stylistic weaknesses which recur with depressing regularity in s-f stories, both long and short. The most irritating of these is the crushing platitude stated as though it were a philosophical profundity:

" What was the common factor ?

'I could give you many examples -'

'Wait a minute!' Roos halted. ' I can see the common factor! Inferiority Complex! Am I right ?' He turned to face A'Kren, realisation lighting his eyes. He smote his brow with the heel of his hand. 'I'm a fool, we're all fools!'

They began to talk again.

A'Kren told him. ' Inferiority inspires greatness, through deformity, ugliness, failure, lack of stature, a thousand causes."

The effect of this is somewhat akin to the bathos peculiar to s-f, which is produced in those stories where a complex plot leads to a huge climax through which, you think, some new truth will be revealed. No such luck, the story turns out to be a gimmick, and all those interesting questions: who were the aliens ? why did they...? Etcetra, remain forever unanswered. Theodore Sturgeon, well-known in the field and no mean writer, commits this crime in a story called the "GOLDEN HELIX". We meet an interesting group of humans who are just waking up out of cold-storage after a long starhop. -

Eventually they find they are on a new world at a very early stage in its evolution and, horrible realisation, they are hundreds of light-years away from where they ought to be. Well, they were put there by the mysterious intervention of a super-race. How? Why? Any moment we expect a revelation of philosophical truth. It never comes. Of course, at the plot level they have been planted there in order to provide a productive seed in the evolutionary cycle of a new world. The most interesting implications are never resolved - very frustrating, and in retrospect some of the highly-wrought poetic style seems overwriting:

" April said, later, that it was like a cloud....to Tod, the object had no shape. It was a luminous opacity between him and the sky, solid, massive as mountains. There was only one thing they were agreed on, and that was that it was a ship. And out of the ship came the golden ones... "

There are many other weaknesses that could be illustrated, as, for instance, a frequent descent to crudity or sentimentality when dealing with emotions rather than ideas. The supposed lack of interest in characterisation in s-f is notorious. However, one of the most difficult hurdles for the non-addict, is the plethora of bewildering conventions which the fan calmly takes for granted. Concepts such as psionics, hyperspace, stasis, time-warps, are gibberish to the uninitiated, but as common place as radio or TV to the regular reader. It would be quite easy to explain how and why these conventions arose if this were a treatise on the history of s-f. Here, however, it is sufficient to say that too much reliance on this kind of gimmicky approach soon causes mental indigestion in the reader, and it is true to say that there is now plenty of good s-f in which they do not appear at all. At the same time, the general reader will not get very far with s-f without a working knowledge of astronomy and general science - a point in its favour I should have thought.

I have tried to point out some of the particular failings of s-f; it would be easy enough to dwell on general literary weaknesses that apply equally well to any kind of popular writing today. To be constructive is a good deal more difficult. Before we go any further, I think s-f should be distinguished from Fantasy to some extent, and from horror, supernatural, out-of-this-world-by-magic or pseudo science. Generalising wildly, in all true s-f, there is a scientific or technological factor integral to the story and very often the story will have some sociological or philosophical interest as well. For the purpose of this definition, I would accept psychology as one of the sciences. The best s-f today is closely related to Utopian literature and the old philosophical tale. Occasionally s-f and fantasy have so much in common that it is impossible to distinguish them. Indeed, it is a well-established bardic function to convert mankind's inner fears and frustrations to legend and myth. This kind of material is easily debased and in s-f and fantasy, just as in any other kind of contemporary writing, some authors make the worst use of their material for the worst reasons: "Shamblau", " A Voyage to Arcturus", and " The Lord of the Rings", exist in parallel, so to speak.

Having trimmed and carped like this in deference to academic scepticism, we are left with a considerable body of worthwhile reading, of which, I think, Wells and Verne were the true progenitors. -

They were not the product of an age. How does the imaginative man, agnostic but not unaffected by 'Those thoughts that lie to deep for tears', react to an age of scientific materialism? Who will deny the poetic element in, say, "The Time Machine"? This is typical. The future symbol refers back in some way to the present. It would be pleasant to expand upon the poetic symbolism of s-f. We might just say, however, that the imagery of s-f is drawn from a 20th century urban and technological civilisation, and is consequently valid for and available to an ever widening audience.

Perhaps my defense of s-f has now become more clear and my reasons for its inclusion in the Eng. Lit syllabus in school more understandable. Not the least important of the English teacher's many functions is to induce his pupils to consider themselves, their society, its problems moral and philosophical - in other words to become a thinking human being. S-F is frankly popular fiction with a high entertainment appeal, but at the same time it opens more interesting vistas than all but the very best in accepted literature. Many will go on reading s-f: few will even start reading the latter.

Of course, one has to know where to look for good material and what to advise one's pupils to read. Personally, s-f has given rise to some of my most interesting lessons - some excellent classroom dialectic, particularly in the middle school. Impartially, I observe its growing popularity, even amongst the forms I do not teach!

.....Geoffrey D. Doherty