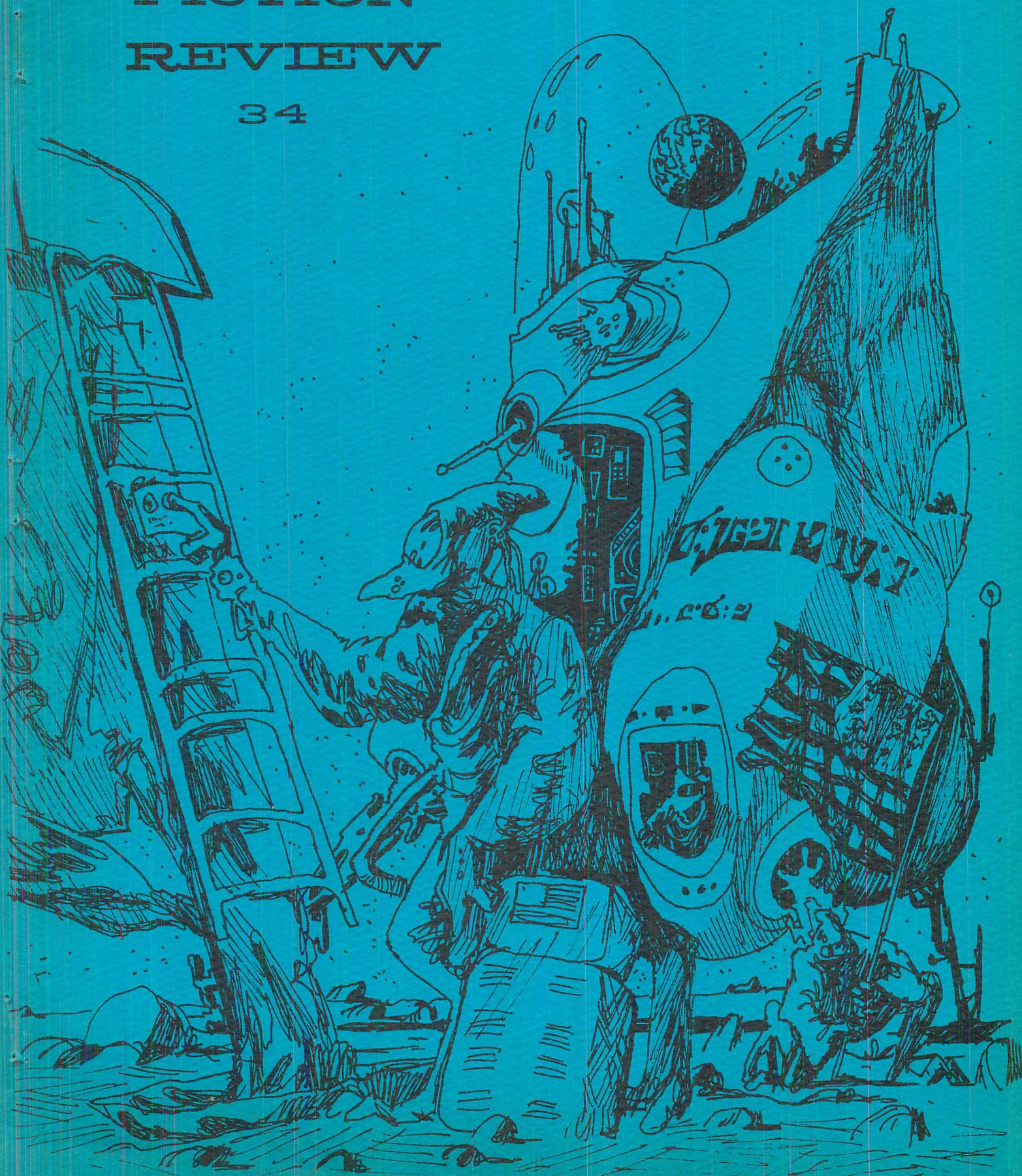


SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW

34



SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW

-34-
DECEMBER 1969

COVER BY MIKE GILBERT
"The Scavengers"

BACK COVER BY DOUG LOVENSTEIN

DIALOG by the editor who has a little list...or three.....4

TIM KIRK'S PAGE...ah, the multi-leveled symbolism of it all.....6

MICHAEL MOORCOCK---an Interview by Robert E Toomey, Jr... 7

NOISE LEVEL---a column by John Brunner in which he takes on James Blish, reviewer.16

THE DEVIL'S BRIDE---a movie review by Dick Glass in which he saves us the bother of seeing the film.....19

MCNOLOG---by the editor: bits and pieces of news and comment.21

THE THIRD VERGIL---by John Boardman. The things you can learn in a review!22

BOOK REVIEWS/DELUSIONS.....25

- by Richard Delap
Hank Davis
John Foyster
Creath Thorne
Earl Evers
Ted Pauls
Ed Cox
Richard E. Geis
Bill Glass

LITTLE NOTED AND/NOR LONG REMEMBERED---by the editor.....36

BOX 3116---where it all hangs out.....38

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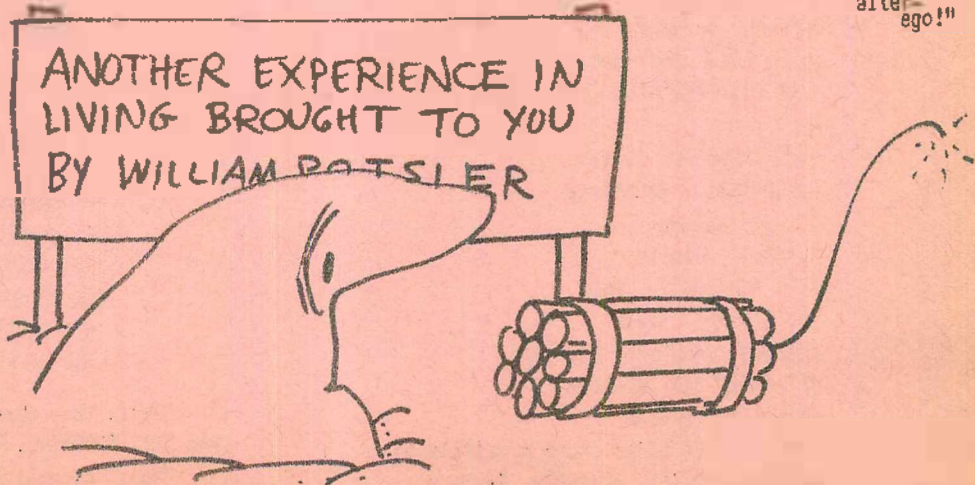
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"Geis, why are you sitting there with your head in your hands like that?"
"I just signed a contract to write another book."
"So? Isn't that the idea? Gotta keep the larder full of wheat germ, nuts, apples, vitamins, bananas, Pepsi, homemade TV dinners, to say nothing of this thatched roof over our heads. You get paid for writing books!"
"Got to get this one done by December 15th. Then I promised I'd spend Christmas with Mom in Portland..."
"You mean...you're trying to say...?"
"Yes! SFR #35 will be several weeks late."
"O the shame! Make the publisher wait! Tell Mom to---"
"Hold it, alter ego! Some things are more important than SFR!"
"Only temporarily, Geis. You know that. And the day is coming.. "
"I won't give up watching Diana Lund on 'Stump The Stars'!"
"Yes, one day even that luxury will be taken from you!"
"But...WHY?"
"Because, Geis, because---"
"Yes, yes?"
"We just ran out of space. Next issue maybe I'll Reveal All."

"Curse you, alter ego!"



● DIALOG GOTVID ●

"What do we talk about this issue, Geis? Some incredibly important event like Apollo 12?...the expanding circulation of SFR...what you had for breakfast...?"

"Nope. We clear out some lists that have been moldering in the review file."

"Aww, Geis— Hey, what're you skipping a space-and-a-half for between our speeches?"

"Oh, sorry. Habit with non-Dialog material. This better?"

"Um. More comfy. I feel less isolated this way."

"Okay. Now these three lists—"

"Geis, do you have to?"

"YES! Now shut up and listen! Months and months ago I asked Ed Cox, Banks Mebane and Richard Delap to each make up a list of the best thirty sf novels of the past ten years. I—"

"Why?"

"I had been GAFIA and—"

"Gafia? What in the name of—"

"Short for Getting-Away-From-It-All. Now, as you know I was out of science fiction fandom and not reading sf for about ten-eleven years, so I wanted a list of what I had missed...the best of what I had missed."

"So Cox and Mebane and Delap obliged you and sent their lists. And you now want to inflict them upon everyone else."

"I consider this a service, a boon—"

"Get on with it!"

"Now, Ed Cox's list is as follows:

DUNE Herbert
 THE SQUARES OF THE CITY Brunner
 THE HIGH CRUSADE Anderson
 DORSAI! Dickson
 DEATHWORLD Harrison
 TIME MACHINED SAGE (or TECHNICOLOR TIME MACHINE)
 Harrison
 THIS IMMORTAL Zelazny
 DRAGONRIDER McCaffrey
 CHTHON Anthony
 STARSHIP Aldiss
 TIME AND AGAIN Simak
 WAY STATION Simak
 STARSHIP TROOPERS Heinlein
 THE ALIEN WAY Dickson
 GREYBEARD Aldiss
 THE REEFS OF SPACE Pohl & Williamson
 THE MAN WHO FELL TO EARTH Tevis
 THE DRAGON MASTERS Vance

THE GIRL, THE GOLD WATCH AND EVERYTHING MacDonald
 JOYLEG Moore & Davidson
 DARE Farmer
 THE BUTTERFLY KID C. Anderson
 EYES OF THE OVERWORLD Vance
 MOON OF THREE RINGS Norton
 THE LAST STARSHIP FROM EARTH Boyd
 THE CLONE Wilhelm & Thomas
 UP THE LINE Silverberg
 WHEN THEY WAKE Laumer

"Geis...that's only twenty-eight books."

"Maybe that was all Ed considered worth listing."

"Umph. What is Banks Mebane's list like?"

"He prefaces his list by stating, 'I didn't get up to 30 as you requested, only 25 (really 24, since two of Cordwainer Smith's books make up one novel). It wasn't that I thought these were the only good ones, but every time I tried to add a 26th, I could think of at least 25 more that ranked about equally; so this 25 stands, in my mind, in the first rank. My starting date cut off Leiber's THE BIG TIME and Blish's A CASE OF CONSCIENCE, so if you're allowing '58 books, add them to my list.'...The titles I picked come heavily from the latter half of the decade. I don't think this is just newer stories being fresher in my memory. There was a sf slump, both in quality and quantity, in the late fifties and early sixties. I like fantasy, but there's no out-and-out fantasy on my list; wish they'd write some.'"

GREYBEARD Aldiss
 CHTHON Anthony
 THE CRYSTAL WORLD Ballard
 STAND ON ZANZIBAR Brunner
 THE EINSTEIN INTERSECTION Delany
 NOVA Delany
 THE MAN IN THE HIGH CASTLE Dick
 MARTIAN TIME-SLIP Dick
 DORSAI! Dickson
 SOLDIER, ASK NOT Dickson
 CAMP CONCENTRATION Disch
 THE MOON IS A HARSH MISTRESS Heinlein
 STRANGER IN A STRANGE LAND Heinlein
 DUNE Herbert
 FLOWERS FOR ALGERNON Keyes
 A CANTICLE FOR LIEBOWITZ Miller, Jr.
 DAVY Pangborn
 THORNS Silverberg
 THE PLANET BUYER Smith
 QUEST OF THE THREE WORLDS Smith
 THE UNDERPEOPLE Smith
 CAT'S CRADLE Vonnegut, Jr.
 THE SIRENS OF TITAN Vonnegut, Jr.
 THE DREAM MASTER Zelazny
 THIS IMMORTAL Zelazny
 LORD OF LIGHT Zelazny

"Well, they agreed on GREYBEARD, CHTHON, DORSAI!, DUNE, and THIS IMMORTAL. Go on to Delap's list, Geis."

"Yes. Richard Delap had this to say first: 'I hope it's understood that this list is not in any way what I consider

(nor should anyone else) a definitive list of the best sf and fantasy of the last ten (approximate) years. There are many, many books which I have never read — this then, such as it is, is merely a choice of my favorites among those I have read, listed alphabetically and not by preference."

A CANTICLE FOR LEIBOWITZ Miller, Jr
A CASE OF CONSCIENCE Blish
CAT'S CRADLE Vonnegut, Jr.
THE CHILD BUYER Hersey
DOCTORS WEAR SCARLET Raven
THE DOLL MAKER Sarban
THE DREAMERS Manvell
THE DREAMING JEWELS Sturgeon
DUNE Herbert
THE EINSTEIN INTERSECTION Delany
A FALL OF MOONDUST Clarke
THE FINAL PROGRAMME Moorcock
FLOWERS FOR ALGERNON Keyes
THE HAUNTING OF HILL HOUSE Jackson
THE DREAM MASTER Zelazny
LEVEL 7 Roshwald
THE MAN IN THE HIGH CASTLE Dick
MILATA Asturias
OSSIAN'S RIDE Hoyle
PAST MASTER Lafferty
THE REVOLVING BOY Friedberg
ROGUE MOON Budrys
ROSEMARY'S BABY Levin
SEASON OF THE WITCH Stine
THE SIRENS OF TITAN Vonnegut, Jr.
THE SOUND OF HIS HORN Sarban
SYLVA Vercors
THE TENANT Topor
THORNS Silverberg
THE TIN DRUM Grass
VENUS PLUS X Sturgeon

"I note, Geis, that Delap reads a lot of "mainstream".
"The only book all three had in common was DUNE."
"Okay, can we go on to something else?"



As of 4:30 PM, Nov. 14th, 1969.

"Geis, why the glum look?"

"I just received a glum phone call from Brian Kirby, editor of Essex House."

"He had glum tidings?"

"He had BAD NEWS for a lot of people. Essex House has been killed by the powers-that-be over there."

"How do you mean, 'killed'?"

"No more books from Essex House! Brian will no longer be buying books. The disposition of mss in hand is up in the air."

"Er..Geis, didn't you just complete a book for Essex House?"

"Yes. I know not now what will happen to it."

"Well...do you know WHY Essex was killed?"

"Low sales is the reason given."

"Huh? I thought sex was enough to sell anything, anywhere and under any circumstances."

"You are deluded. As I see it, Brian's problem was distribution; the distributor didn't reach the outlets he needed and the potential readership he wanted."

"So what happens next?"

"We wait and see. I'll report further developments in the next issue of SFR."

"What happens to Brian?"

"He will be retained in some editorial capacity in the parent organization."

"Well, there goes another noble experiment."



"What's that in your hand, Geis, a fanzine?"

"It is a book. James Blish's Dr. Mirabilis."

"Aha. You're putting me on. It's mimeographed! It's stapled. Blish?"

"He had to self-publish the book in this country in order to protect the copyright. A technicality. It was published in England and sold well there. But he has been unable to find a publisher in this country."

(Whisper) "Bad, huh? A bomb?"

"On the contrary! It's a marvelous book. Beautifully written. It's probably the best book I've read this year."

"Then how come it can't find a publisher?"

"I honestly don't know. It is clearly a superior historical novel."

"Not science fiction?"

"No. It is about Roger Bacon, whom some consider the true father of science. What makes the novel so fine is the realness of the medieval world in which he lived and worked as a deeply religious man. The details, the language, the action...is all so immediate and three dimensional—so alive as you read and absorb the culture, the social structure, the economy... It is like an alien world. You really know what it was like to live in the Middle Ages as you read this book. It should be required reading in colleges and universities."

"Well...hey, where can I get a copy?"

"Send \$5 to James Blish

2; Fisherman's Retreat
St. Peter St.
Marlow, Bucks.
ENGLAND."



"You've got that telltale smirk on your face again, Geis. That means next issue is—"

"Loaded with goodies! The lead article is "Chewing Gum for the Vulgar", by Franz Rottensteiner, a discussion of Alexie Panshin's Heinlein in Dimension, but mostly an analysis of Heinlein. Not a complimentary one. Immediately following it will be a Comment by Alexei. Then "The Square Needle", a column by Dean A. Grennell. Then Piers Anthony's "Off The Deep End". Also: Banks Mebane, Geis, reviews, letters, a lovely Steve Fabian cover, Rdsler, Kirk..."

END OF DIALOG



MICHAEL MOORHEN ASCENDS GOLGOTHA

(BASED ON AN IDEA BY DICK GREIS)

TIM KIRK

★ ★ ★ ★ MICHAEL MOORCOCK ★ ★ ★ ★

AS OF MARCH 23, 1969

GIVEN—

behind every movement there lies somebody's personal vision, whether of heaven or of hell. At age twenty-nine, Michael Moorcock (huge - almost Haystack Calhoun-huge, bearlike-huge, shoulder-length hair, beard, strange eyes) occupies an unusual literary position...on the brink of—

A professional writer for nearly half his life, Moorcock has done everything from comic strips to ghost writing to sword and sorcery to mysteries to science fiction to - well, modern fiction. Modern Fiction! That's what NEW WORLDS is: Modern Fiction! Few copies of NEW WORLDS have found their way across the Atlantic; at present it's a beautifully set up magazine a little larger in size than standard American quarto typing paper. The graphics are superb. The stories - the stories! fiction written by a deranged computer. Really. Inner space Acid-head war stories. Isolation. Insurrection and...Ballard, Aldiss, Disch, Delany, Zelazny, even Ellison, Thomas Pynchon, author of V., Michael Moorcock...Jerry Cornelius (hero or something of The Final Programme) stories by half a dozen writers..."My goal is to fill the magazine with nothing but Jerry Cornelius stories." Is he joking? Who knows?

NEW WORLDS! England swings sf! Experimentation.

the...new wave

Bug Jack Barron serial denounced - would you believe it! - denounced in Parliament; problems with distribution, with the printers, with the publishers, and - £4,000 out of Moorcock's pocket to keep the thing going. £4,000! That's about \$9,600. £4,000 out of his own pocket for a magazine devoted to...Jerry Cornelius?

A save NEW WORLDS campaign conducted in IT, London's largest underground newspaper...60,000 copies sold at newsstands and in tube stations and airports and on street corners by freaky-looking characters in colorful comic-operetta uniforms (one of whom was busted for selling IT; an edition with the front page showing a naked white girl being kissed by a naked black man - her nipples showed - busted for obscenity)...60,000 copies sold every week or ten days (whatever the schedule is)...60,000 copies of IT: about ten times the circulation figure of NEW WORLDS...trying to save NEW WORLDS...trying—

The dust jacket of the U.K. edition of Behold the Man (Allison and Busby, 21s net) shows an incredibly evil face split down the center by a line of darkness. Darkness to

the left, dimness to the right and...evil. Michael Moorcock's face. £4,000 out of his own pocket! A man who is generally considered to be one of the kindest, most generous, decent human beings alive...a man who helps perfect strangers, really helps them...who is known for encouraging new writers... who—

Michael Moorcock and the wave of the future; the difference between knowing where it's at and being where it's at with Elric, the albino warrior; Dorian Hawkmoon, Jerr—

THE INTERVIEW was conducted over a period of about six hours. Problems with the tape recorder; with the telephone ringing; with the traffic outside that the mike kept picking up, drowning out conversation; with people coming in and going out with material for NEW WORLDS, artwork and stories and ..."I've been working harder on the magazine since I quit it than when I—"

And I sat in this (was it Naughahyde?) comfortable swivel chair in the Moorcock study in front of the electric fire and pondered a statistic: that in England, with less than one-quarter the population of the United States (and so much less land mass that the whole island will fit without discomfort in Texas), that in England more books are sold every year than in the U.S.A., and I said...

(Q.) Now that you have...abdicated from the editorship of NEW WORLDS, what degree of involvement with the magazine do you plan on maintaining?

(A.) Well...a lessening degree of involvement. I hope to phase out by 1970.

(Q.) When you first took over NEW WORLDS what were your plans? Do you think they have reached fruition?

(A.) I think I've worked pretty steadily towards them...an ideal. When I first took over NEW WORLDS, when I was asked if I wanted to be the editor of NEW WORLDS, I went to the publisher with a mock-up of the NEW WORLDS that I wanted to see; which was a cruder version, possibly, of the NEW WORLDS that now exists. And I said, "This is the magazine that I want to put out." The publisher put a paperback on the desk and said, "This is the magazine we're going to put out."

And as far as format was concerned, what I thought important was that something like NEW WORLDS needed a lot of visual impact. So for three years I was stuck with the paperback format. I did my best with it, but there wasn't much that could be done with it. But in that time it turned out, in fact, to be an advantage, because the kind of stories I



an interview

by Robert E. Toomey, Jr.

wanted to see were only being written by a handful of people, and the whole thing became instead a sensible slow development. If I had gone straight into the thing it would probably have been a disaster. Like everything else, it was better for having been come to by degrees, by evolution. And gradually it - shifted.

The first thing to do was to revitalize the British field in particular, and the next thing to do was to revitalize the whole field of science fiction, which was then chiefly done in a negative way to begin with, by making outrageous attacks on what we believed to be sacred cows of science fiction and various well-respected authors. Which got a lot of feedback. Which is the reason why it was done. It got people defending as well as attacking. This produced a much livelier climate than had existed.

The reason why I wanted to do NEW WORLDS in the first place was - well, I didn't want to do NEW WORLDS in the first place, that was the straight thing. Because I'd got so fed up with the restrictions of the science fiction field in general that I'd really begun to feel that there wasn't much that could be done in science fiction; that it was a completely moribund form and was dying. But then I was offered the job and I began to think of my...ideals. So I decided to take the job and do my best to see if it (science fiction) could be revitalized.

A lot of it was to do with my frustrations as a writer which, in fact, has tended to influence my policy in that we...tend to work more closely with writers than most magazines do; and to respect the writer more, certainly, than most American science fiction magazines do. And this has got results because, by not forcing the writer to write in any particular way, whether it was the way we liked or according to the world of conventions; - that by insisting that the writer do his best in whatever he had chosen to do, and by trying to help him to write what he wanted to write within its own terms, not try to distort it into something else.

This policy still exists very strongly, although the kind of fiction we're publishing now has changed quite a bit since the early days.

(Q.) NEW WORLDS has been called everything from a bastion of filth to the most important fiction magazine being published in the English language today. What would you say is the basic reason for such a wide disparity of opinion?

(A.) Well, I think...

(Q.) Let me phrase that differently. It was a kind of poorly phrased question: What's causing all the controversy?

(A.) Well...it's just its newness and the fact that it hasn't established itself as an idiom. You know, as a generally accepted idea. But as people get used to it they start to judge the individual stories individually. We're still establishing new conventions, which was the subject, in fact, of my first editorial when I took over. That new conventions had to be established, and we're still in the process of establishing them.

My feeling is that a great deal of the subject matter of science fiction is interesting, but that the conventions that bind it serve to destroy it - to destroy the impact and also to destroy the potential of what the author can do with it.

(Q.) I know what you mean. But it seems to me that every movement away from an established set of rules to recreate, or to attempt to revitalize, or to go into a new establishment, eventually finds itself moribund within its own conventions, within its own set of rules.

(A.) This is perfectly true. But it takes a long time before



it does become moribund. It took science fiction - American magazine science fiction as a thing in itself - something between twenty and forty years to become moribund. The form of the novel was established in Victorian times and still isn't technically moribund, although it appears to be getting that way. It's a question of whether it works for the writer and for the reader. If the form is moribund, then it tends to bore the writer. If it bores the writer then it tends to bore the reader as well. You can't say that something's dead until nobody's reading it anymore and enjoying it. Therefore, you can't say that old guard science fiction is dead because it isn't dead. It's probably more alive now than it ever was in terms of the readership it's got - which is greater today than it has ever been. But it is dead for certain kinds of writer and for certain kinds of reader. So, in a limited sense, it might be called moribund and lifeless. But, in the general sense, this obviously isn't true.

(There followed a long and fairly irrelevant discussion of

science fiction as a category, and the stigmata - both real and imagined - attached to it, culminating with—)

(A.) One of the reasons I don't like my books to be issued as science fiction - although I believe them to be written directly in the tradition of science fiction and to have the background of science fiction and to be derived from science fiction (the British edition of Behold the Man was issued as general fiction by Allison and Busby) - is largely because I don't want my books to be reviewed in the —

(Q.) Ghetto?

(A.) In the small section most newspapers devote to eighteen science fiction books every month, and by reviewers who are usually very stupid. One of the things that has happened in this country is that when perfectly good science fiction novels have been published that are, in fact, better than most of the mainstream fiction that's published in the same period; instead of being reviewed in a decent amount of space by a reasonable reviewer, they're reviewed by the people who always have a little niche in the bottom right-hand corner of the books page once every six weeks, who are used to taking a slightly patronizing line towards science fiction. These reviewers tend to like science fiction because they feel themselves to be better than it. This means that anything that shakes their faith is regarded as being pretentious and useless. This is also true of several of the publishers who publish science fiction. They rather like to see themselves as the guardians, the rich uncles to ...spastic children. And it's very nice to bring the child along every so often and do it a good turn. But when the child is cured and finding its feet and becomes articulate, they don't much like that.

(Q.) They'd just as soon it went back to the orphanage.

(A.) Yes. If people buy pets they should know how to treat them.

(Q.) Right. There seems to be an apparent contradiction here. You say that science fiction here in England is generally not ghettoized as much as it is in the States, (during the long and fairly irrelevant portion of the tape) yet, on the other hand, you say it is segregated here to some extent.

(A.) It's not ghettoized in quite the same way, and it's easier for a writer to get out of the ghetto; to be, as it were, reviewed - for what reviews are worth - outside of the ghetto. It happens once the writer gets out of the ghetto - like Vonnegut, say; and Ballard and Aldiss are not reviewed, generally speaking, in the small columns, and most particularly Aldiss' recent work isn't - then the writer is safe. He just takes his chances with the other guys in - in the large ghetto.

(Q.) The Great Escape! Motorcycles over the walls - getting out of the ghetto...

(A.) Yes. The point is that, although it's ghettoized, it's respected more. It's rather like the difference between the prewar attitude to the Jews in England and the prewar atti-

tude to the Jews in Germany. The same way the English have all fairly traditionally admired the Jews, whilst seeing them as something slightly different and, occasionally, not that nice - and have tended to romanticize the Jews as well; whereas the Germans used to traditionally see them as villains. This is quite similar to science fiction. The English are quicker to assimilate anything - in a slightly bland way - often to their own destruction.

(Q.) Speaking of dirty words like science fiction, there's one that's been cropping up, probably with the help of the new filmmakers who are growing up - like in France with the Nouvelle Vogue and so forth - we have what is called the new wave in science fiction and everybody's running around screaming at the top of their lungs, but nobody seems to know exactly what it is. I remember Lester del Rey getting up and giving a very serious speech one time, in which he said absolutely nothing except that Roger Zelazny had disowned the new wave, whatever that meant. But what is the new wave?

(A.) Well, first of all, the new wave is...I suspect that the whole discussion of the new wave is a completely surrogate one, and is not at all dealing with the essentials of what's going on. Which is what usually happens. People start to argue over words and terms rather than the thing itself. Which is still going on at apparently full strength.

I don't know what the new wave is because the new wave is something different to everybody. I think it was in Harlan Ellison's introduction to Dangerous Visions, if that's the place where I saw it, he said, "What is the new wave? My new wave isn't Judy Merrill's new wave and it isn't Michael Moorcock's new wave..." It's Harlan Ellison's new wave. And I think that's what it really boils down to. If you believe, or if you're prepared to believe, that newness is a good thing, and that there's such a thing as progress rather than development in literature, then anything you like you're going to call "new" because you like it. And therefore "new" is the word that gives your seal of approval to it. Anything you dislike is going to be called old, and however new it may look to somebody else, you will find perfectly good reasons as to why it is so old. You will say - "Well, that's what Gaston Dupres was doing in 1906 in Marseilles."

I think there's a renaissance in people's engagement with science fiction; and that renaissance has very little to do with the age of the authors or the kind of thing that they're writing. All that's happened is that science fiction writers who had got bored with science fiction found ways of reviving their own interest and the reader's interest. These ways vary considerably. Some of them are completely traditional, but none the less vital; and some of them are untraditional - and none the less vital. The argument seems to me to be ridiculous. The term (new wave) is worthless except in that it gets people arguing; and it's the argument which produces the work, the climate, in fact, in which people are interested in what they're doing.

I think it's safe to say that in 1963 when I was looking at the American science fiction magazines, there seemed to be very few people who were interested in what they were doing...

(Q.) The idea of a mechanical prose style producing mechanical

stories that have no guts, only gears.

(A.) Yes, And I've found that, for me, the American science fiction magazines haven't changed at all since, with the possible exception of FANTASY & SCIENCE FICTION - but I'm told they have.

(Q.) There seems to be some indication that the American audiences aren't really looking for change, that they're not really digging this change. Look at IF Magazine getting voted the Hugo three years in a row. I mean, what kind of a tragic farce is that, anyhow? How could a magazine completely traditional, completely hidebound, and catering to the lowest intellectual common denominator among science fiction readers possibly win the award?

(A.) That's why it wins the award; because the award is voted democratically. IF - without wishing to knock IF - gets the award the same way George Wallace is made governor, and the same way Ronald Reagan was made governor and so on. If you want to have a mass vote it's obviously the man with the common appeal who's going to win it.

It's the fanatical science fiction reader that goes to conventions and who constitute the voters who vote for the books; and, while it's a partial gauge of what's going to be popular, it's by no means a complete one. A book that a science fiction convention likes well enough to give an award to is not necessarily one that will sell many copies.

(Q.) Would you say the award has any value then? I'm speaking of the Hugo.

(A.) I don't see a great deal of difference between the Hugo and the Nebula, for one thing, largely because the rank and file of SFWA (the Science Fiction Writers of America) is made up of fans; by people who've had one or two stories in print; and therefore you get a very similar voting pattern.

(The awards) have value in their own terms. They mean that a group of peers virtually - which is either fans or writer/fans - get together to honor one of their numbers. But beyond that (the awards) have no significance.

(Q.) It's generally said that the Nebula - well, perhaps not generally, but at least by the people who promote the award - is a truer indication of achievement - or merit or value or quality or some other abstract term - in the work itself because it's being voted on by professionals, and you say that that's not true.

(A.) I don't think it is true because it largely isn't voted on by professionals. It's voted on by members of the SFWA who are not, in my terms, professional writers. They're people who have sold a couple of stories - which is not the same as being a professional writer. And writers' awards to other writers are no particular indication of the overall

merit of a book because these awards can be made as much on personality as on anything else; as can Hugo awards be made because the person is a regular attendee of science fiction conventions and people like him and -

(Q.) He writes for the fanzines.

(A.) -writes for the fanzines and so forth, and people like him - then they will read his stuff. They'll be interested in reading what this nice guy writes. So it's fair to say that, to a degree anyway, that a writer liked by the fans or liked by the other writers - as a personality - has got an edge and is likely to be read a bit more, simply because people like him. And it's just a built-in thing. You're bound to get it in any awards system. Awards are worthless unless they get the author a considerable amount of money.

(Q.) You won a Nebula with "Behold the Man." Last year, wasn't it?

(A.) Yes. It also won the British Fantasy Award.

(Q.) Very good. I didn't know that.

(A.) It's a fan award.

(Q.) Oh. It's worthless, then, unless it got you a considerable amount of money.

(A.) Well, no. To be fair, I was very flattered that I won these awards. I was talking about the thing objectively.

(Q.) What was your reaction to the winning?

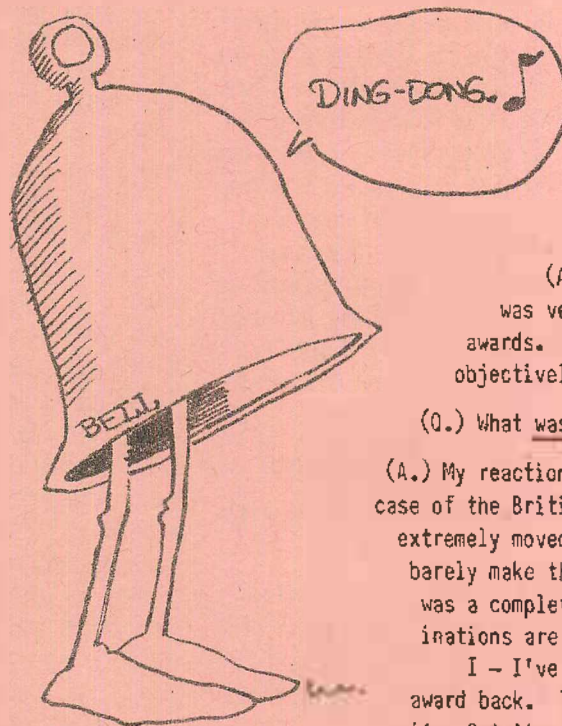
(A.) My reaction was, first of all, in the case of the British Fantasy Award, was to be extremely moved. So much so that I could barely make the speech receiving it. It was a complete surprise because the nominations are secret.

I - I've never actually received the award back. They took it away to engrave it. But it was nice while I held it.

My reaction to getting the Nebula was very similar, though a trifle more mixed because the British Fantasy Award was an award pretty much to me by a lot of people who knew me; you know, it was something more or less of a surprise birthday party...and the Nebula was obviously a different matter. The people who gave me the British Fantasy Award probably hated my stuff but liked me, and the Nebula award was - I don't know. I have very mixed feelings about it, partly because there were better stories in the group that were nominated.

END OF TAPE ONE

(A.) It's partly the way you phrased the question that made me appear to knock the Nebula system and the Hugo system. I don't knock it. It can be useful to writers in that it tends to pull your name out and publishers are presented with it; so it does,



in fact, have value. There's no doubt about that in financial terms. And it's also very nice to receive.

My mixed feelings about it, about receiving it, had to do with whether I deserved it or not. I feel slightly cynical about all awards, including the Nobel Prize; so that I'm not merely attacking the science fiction awards as not being good gauges of merit. I'm just attacking the whole idea of awards. I don't feel strongly about them one way or the other; but I certainly don't feel proud and kinda humble about getting awards. I'm sure I'd feel similarly if I were offered the Nobel Prize. I feel it's very nice and it's very kind of people to like something (of mine) but I don't think it has a lot to do with lasting merit.

(Q.) Well. Let's try to pin the new wave down if we can. My personal belief is that the new wave is a term used by people who have to use terms...

(A.) Yes. I agree. If you want it...I think that the new wave has to do with science fiction and that NEW WORLDS has not to do with science fiction. New wave science fiction is science fiction. That is, it's traditional science fiction that is perhaps written with more gusto, perhaps it's better written, perhaps it's more colorful, perhaps it's more sophisticated in some of its characterization - but it is still essentially science fiction. That is, it's still as much the conventional stuff as it ever was.

Whereas, what NEW WORLDS is trying to do is to...utilize... some of the conventions of science fiction and a lot of the subject matter of science fiction, and the...attitude...which science fiction writers bring to their subject matter. But to write something that is essentially -- Modern Fiction is the only phrase I've been able to come up with. Fiction about the present day in an imaginative rather than a journalistic treatment.

When we got the Arts Council grant (which is given by the British Government to subsidize and assist various worthy projects having to do with the arts) for NEW WORLDS and we went into the large size, I said to the editorial staff: "Staff - we're now in the real world - and we've got to win in the real world." It's very easy to win a spot in any - ghetto; it's very easy to gain the respect of one's friends in the "little" magazine world, in the poetry scene, anywhere; but what I wanted to do was to present a magazine which any uncommitted modern reader would be able to pick up and read and feel its relevance to his own life. The NEW WORLDS development is an attempt to bring a relatively sophisticated kind of fiction into the popular arena. We've no pretensions or ambitions to become a "little" magazine.

(Q.) What is your ambition?

(A.) To produce a healthy-selling popular fiction (magazine) that makes few concessions to what is traditionally accepted

as being popular taste. And which is, in fact, largely popular taste.

There's very little difference between the person who reads Harold Robbins and the person who reads whatshisname - Robert Heinlein. The ideas are as simplified in Heinlein as they are in Robbins. The world is as simplified in Heinlein as it is in Robbins. The readership responds to that simplification, either consciously or unconsciously, so that people can like Harold Robbins whilst knowing it is crap, and people can like Heinlein whilst knowing it's crap. It's purely escapist, simplified stuff. The fools are the ones who claim that it's more than it is.

If science fiction is to live up to the claims made for it by Hugo Gernsback, by John W. Campbell and by Fred Pohl and Anthony Boucher and H.L. Gold, and the claims that were made for it in the early days of NEW WORLDS - that it is a sophisticated and imaginative and a highly intelligent form of fiction, then it certainly has got to develop in this way. I feel that all a new approach to fiction is doing is developing the range of fiction. It isn't superceding a previous kind of fiction and it's nonsense to debate it in these terms - which

are the terms it's usually debated in. There's one group in science fiction...well, one group claiming that the old stuff is the best stuff; and another group claiming that the new stuff is the best stuff and will supercede the old. This is nonsense...because no art is ever superceded while it still has exponents and an audience. But, if you want to extend the range and if you have a particular ambition to deal with, possibly, to some extent the science and the society about you, then you need different techniques. That's essentially what we're doing.

We're using quite similar subject matter to that used in science fiction, but it's not treated in the

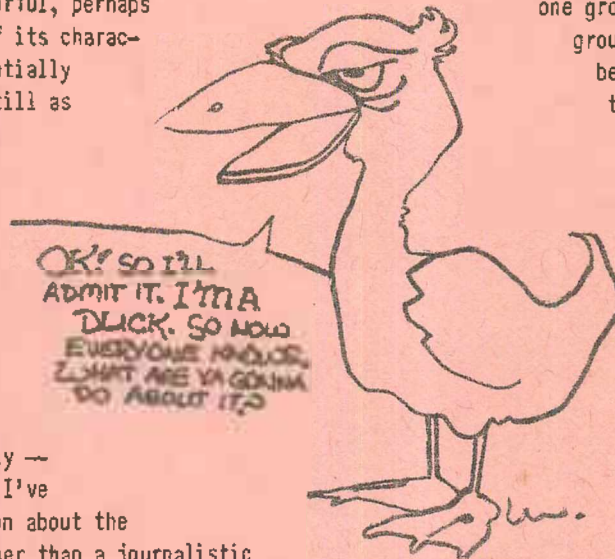
traditional way.

(Q.) So... Wait a moment. Let me sort that out.

Science fiction had its birth in the pulps where everything was action, where everything was movement, where everything was put the hook in the reader and drag him along. Like the mystery story.

(A.) Yes.

(Q.) Then it moved into writers who were actually capable of putting words together and thinking about them. Hammett and Chandler (in the mystery story) moved in. In science fiction it happened in approximately the same way. It started off with A.E. Van Vogt changing the plot pattern every 800 words, or writing in 800-word segments, and Robert Heinlein writing fast-moving, fairly thoughtful action stories. Then came writers like Theodore Sturgeon and Ray Bradbury who got into introspection. I'm trying to work out the pattern. Then there was



Alfred Bester, who took all of these techniques and put them together in different ways.

(A.) Yes.

(Q.) Now it's moving into another thing where, instead of taking the old methods that were used in science fiction - the science fiction that developed in the pulps - and just trying to move the pieces around a little, taking literature as a whole and examining that in terms of what's happening now. It would seem to me that it's easier to do this in England where the pulp tradition isn't as strong as it is in the States.

(A.) There's as strong a pulp tradition, but it hasn't existed in science fiction.

I feel that Hammett and Chandler have never been beaten at doing their own thing. And Bester has never been beaten at doing his own thing. But, on the other hand, you get a lot of reasonable offshoots of this that retain their interest for some time; just as most of the best of American science fiction these days appears to have the quality of The Stars My Destination without having, perhaps, the coherence. So you get Ross MacDonald writing reasonable semi-pastiches of Chandler and Hammett; what a very superior genre writer does is keep that genre alive a few more years, simply by influencing it to that extent where people will continue to be impressed by that writer.

This isn't to say that the virtues of Chandler and Hammett and Bester are entirely to do with the way they manage the conventions or synthesize the conventions. But if that's the terms of the argument then that's really what they did.

It's hard to say. I know that my own work is, in fact, influenced strongly by Chandler and Hammett and, as for Bester - Bester chiefly for subject matter and attitude. Chandler and Hammett in terms of style.

But I think that science fiction as such - and I choose to see it as a category as firmly entrenched in its traditions as the western, the mystery and the romance - will remain perfectly viable, commercially viable, for a good many years to come. But what has come out of science fiction, what was inspired by science fiction is another thing altogether.

The thing is that most good, viable modern fiction has a science fiction influence. Most of the best young experimental writers, so-called experimental writers, of the present day have read a great deal of science fiction and have been influenced by it. William Burroughs is a perfectly good example. Thomas Pynchon is another...they go on and on. The thing is that science fiction in the fifties - which were the formative years for most of these writers - was the most interesting and stimulating kind of fiction

available in large doses.

(Q.) Mass distribution.

(A.) Yes. And about this time the novel had become extremely mediocre. And still is. What you get now is with writers like John Barth - and to a degree Susan Sontag - writers of this kind, is an attempt to infuse some of the imagery of science fiction into their work to give it life. And it gives it a kind of artificial life for a short while. They're trying to retain the traditional way of writing novels by a degree of infusion of the subject matter of science fiction.

It is dull because - it's dull in exactly the same way that conventional science fiction is dull. It hasn't been worked. They're still excited about the imagery itself. They're not using the imagery sufficiently well. They're not making any artistic use of the stuff.

And this is what a few NEW WORLDS writers are doing...making a conscious artistic use of the material. They're taking the material and putting it to their own purposes. This happens to be very closely linked with science fiction. Most of them came out of the science fiction field. Their background is science fiction. Their reading matter is largely science fiction - that is, their general escapist reading matter. It's just a question, to a degree, of moral resolution.

If you feel strongly, you must come to terms with the real world, however obliquely, rather than masturbate...

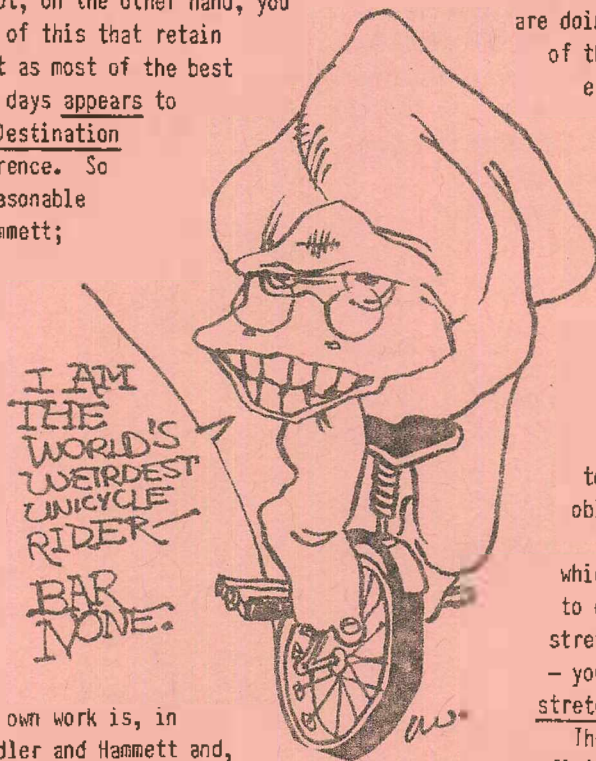
...if you want to stretch your mind, which is what science fiction is supposed to do - and doesn't. It pretends to stretch the mind and doesn't do that at all - you have a sort of...a sort of - false stretch...

There's a point actually at which science fiction got sidetracked into the conventions of the mass market, of popular conventional fiction, so that the basic plotting required by most science fiction editors is the same basic plotting required by most Hollywood adventure-film producers. Just as the Hollywood producer spends seven hours describing his art and making great play with what they're going to do with this film - the fact is, what they want is a very circumscribed kind of film, and it's exactly the same with the editors. All their claims have very little results in actuality because it comforts them to think they're doing something better than they're doing. It brings us around again to Chandler and Hollywood scriptwriters - they're better known than the stuff they write.

(Q.) Yes.

(A.) And that's what I tend to feel about most science fiction editors and writers. They're extremely good company...

(Q.) About your own work and your own goals. I'm sure that



there's a strong division of readership among the people who read your stuff; the various types of books that you've produced. For example, I'm certain that anybody who sat down and read Stormbringer and Stealer of Souls must have been sort of shocked when they read The Final Programme - not knowing exactly where you're at as a writer because most writers tend to stay in one category and not to spread themselves out. Also, I know that NEW WORLDS isn't distributed in the States and they get echoes of it coming across the Atlantic and they say "What?" -you know- "He's producing this magazine which is causing all this controversy and all these movements and everything, and he's producing books that don't seem to be quite like that, and where is he exactly at?"

(A.) Well, I believe in entertaining the public. I believe it's the first job of a writer to give the public a good read. My whole policy with NEW WORLDS has been along those lines. If a dichotomy exists, it is that a monthly magazine has to develop particular kinds of writing. Therefore, not everything that that magazine prints will necessarily be either immediately acceptable by the general public or particularly good - because you're developing writers as well as, in a sense, trying to develop a public; to get that public used to a particular kind of thing.

This is what's happened here. It hasn't happened in the States, obviously, because it hasn't been going on in the States. For all the talk of newness in the States...there's been nothing that I've seen appearing in any of the anthologies and so on that've been put out—

(Q.) Dangerous Visions?

(A.) Yes, including Dangerous Visions - that has, in my terms, been in any way fresh. It's been a slight development of the established forms as such. Therefore, you quite often find that people are not discussing the same thing. You'll find this in the American fanzines all the time - that one person is discussing NEW WORLDS and they're discussing Dangerous Visions, and they assume that they're the same. Which, of course, when you see them, they're not. Partly...we've been happily dealing with sex—

(Q.) Let's hope so!

(A.) —for a number of years without being particularly worried about it either way...because our judgement had not to do with the conventions. We were simply judging stories on merit. We didn't have taboos because we hadn't considered taboos. And we didn't break down taboos because we didn't know there were any taboos to break down...you often

find that the people who speak most about breaking down taboos - and this is not a personal attack on Harlan Ellison - are usually the people who are most aware of them; and therefore the people who are most affected by them, however unconsciously this is.

(Q.) That's it?

(A.) Yes.

(Q.) Let's get back you your writing.

(A.) Yes.

(Q.) You've more or less given your editorial viewpoint—

(A.) Yes. I'm sorry. What you said was...

(Q.) People have met a lot of different Mike Moorcocks and they're not exactly sure which one you are.

(A.) Well, I see them as the same Mike Moorcock, of course.

(Q.) Yes.

(A.) Most of my books are not science fiction, they're pure adventure-fantasy. Which I find, from my point of view, is a slightly less restricting form in that it depends most strongly on imagery. The reader who wants that kind of book wants a great deal of imagery. Therefore you're free - you're fairly free - to invent or to use your own personal imagery without it having to be particularly rationalized...because you've got magic instead of science fiction.

But I have written some science fiction. One of my early books, The Sundered Worlds, was science fiction; The Wrecks of Time was science fiction; The Fireclown was science fiction; and, while Terry Carr doesn't agree, I felt that The Ice Schooner was science fiction;

so was The Twilight Man—

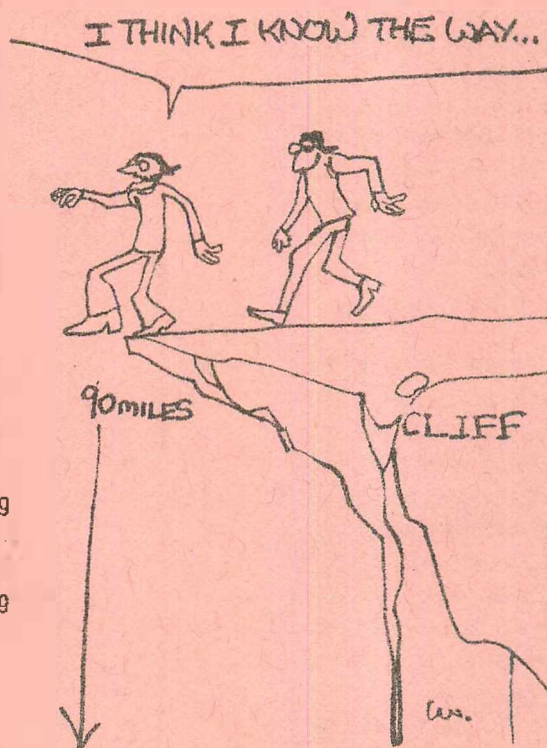
...I appear to have written quite a lot of science fiction.

(Q.) Yes, you do. For somebody who doesn't write the stuff.

(A.) But I see almost all of it as part of my general work. It was only in science fiction that I found severe restrictions because science fiction does actually touch on real problems, real ideas, real factors. This is where I felt particularly frustrated. Not in the fantasy because, although I tried to deal with certain things in it, in the Elric books - and failed from my own point of view...

(Q.) The Faust theme?

(A.) Not simply Faust. It was a general moral argument which, in fact, runs through virtually everything I write, a very simple moral argument—



(Q.) Law and Chaos?

(A.) Law and Chaos; yes. Whether it is better to—

(Q.) —have lawed and lost than never to have lawed at all.

(A.) It's actually the problem of the writer. It's the implicit problem of any artist. The artist generally requires a certain amount of disorder in order to work; but requires a certain amount of order in order to make something of that work. Therefore the books are all, to a certain extent, the reflection of my own gradual maturing as a writer.

(Q.) It seems to me though, strangely — or perhaps not so strangely — that the book that has the best chance of breaking you out of the science fiction ghetto, at least in the popular mind in the States, Behold the Man, couldn't possibly be more restricted or more structured than it is.

(A.) Yes; it's a very circumscribed structure. This is deliberate. Part of it is — what's happened in the States — is that quite a lot of my early books have come out at about the same time...so that this whole lot of stuff appears, to the reader, to have been done at pretty much the same time. whereas I have been writing steadily for my living for... nearly fifteen years, and my development has been a fairly moderate one; and, although I'm still relatively young, I've done a lot of work in that time by...by...

(Q.) By doing a lot of work.

(A.) By doing a lot of work. I tend to identify with the Beatles here in that they're essentially primitive and I think of myself as a primitive. I began as being pretty illiterate and just writing what I like to read; and gradually, by doing the work, I discovered the possibilities and the restrictions and so forth — and gradually I expanded. But I didn't expand all at once, largely because, unlike the Beatles, I wasn't a great popular success. Also, unlike the Beatles, I didn't have a lot of money and was able to continue my development. Certainly, like the Beatles, the current two volume of them that they've just produced, is in many ways a going back to earlier forms...when I wrote Behold the Man, it was a deliberate — and also The Ice Schooner, which was written in the same period, and also The Twilight Man — it was an attempt to reassess my own position and to reestablish my own authority in my own eyes...because I'd written The Final Programme in 1965 or '4, sometime around there. I believed it was up to me personally to...experiment, if you like. But I was also — being a writer who likes to work for an audience...and wouldn't want to write otherwise — I also felt I had to make sure that what I wanted to do couldn't be done — by me — in a traditional way.

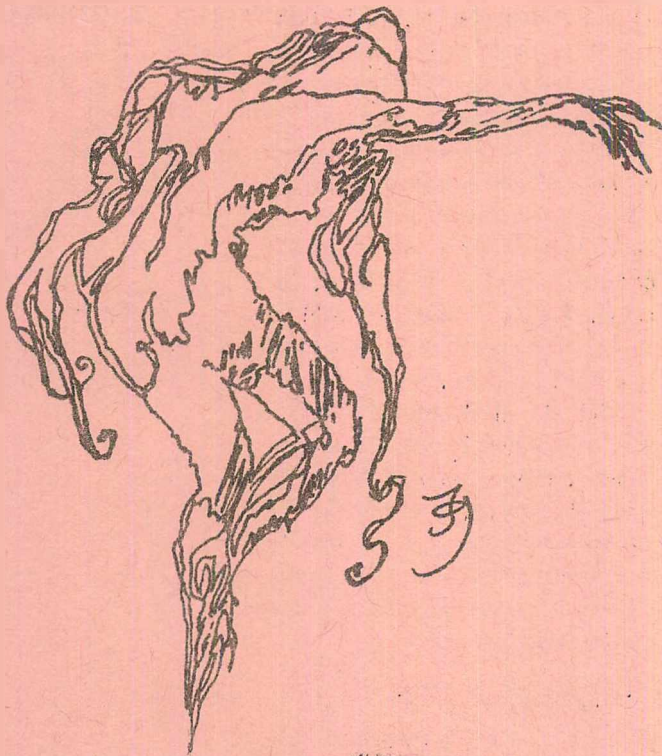
Therefore, I wrote three traditional books — or two traditional novels at the time and one traditional novella — in order to test myself. And having written these — and I feel, relatively adequately — was then convinced that this was not my natural...the form that I could do the most with. And since then I've been writing much less conventional stories. Again, they haven't appeared in the States and probably won't for some time.

(Q.) "A Cure for Cancer", for example.

(A.) Well, "A Cure for Cancer." The short stories. And all these infinitely more complex — and more mature and more everything than anything I've written before. But they still retain, I hope, the spirit of what's in Stormbringer: (a) a sense of audience and a wish to please that audience...(b) a strong use of imagery and action to put across what I'm trying to say. What I'm trying to say now is far more complicated now and, of course, requires a more complicated structure.

And that's all there is to it.

The other thing is I don't make a great deal of money writing what might be called experimental fiction — what I like to call simple straightforward Modern Fiction. But, as a professional writer supporting at times a very expensive magazine, and having relatively expensive tastes, I've had to continue writing traditionally; which doesn't do me any harm .. the market.. they still like it. I'm quite happy to



work this way. I'm writing less and less that way because the audience for my more serious fiction is growing.

Secondly, I've brought a lot of readers over from my sword and sorcery to my Final Programme stuff.

(Q.) Yes. You get a carry-over effect, especially when they are being published at approximately the same time.

(A.) Yes.

(Q.) But I wonder how many readers you're bringing over from your Final Programme sort of books to your sword and sorcery?

(A.) Well, supposedly quite a lot. They regard them (the books) in different ways, obviously. The Final Programme will be regarded in a more serious way and will be regarded as a better book by the people. But people still tell me they read my sword and sorcery because they want to kill a couple

of hours. They'll reread The Final Programme perhaps several times. It will have a permanency, whereas the sword and sorcery will be something to relax them and send them to sleep...which is a perfectly valid function. And which is why I'm not attacking traditional science fiction.

(Q.) I'd like to speak about Behold The Man since I've just finished reading it and it impressed me tremendously, although my feelings about it are mixed. I wonder why you chose the Christ theme. A lot of other writers seem to be fascinated with the theme as well.

(A.) The reason I took the subject was - and the reason I think writers do take the subject - has nothing much to do with Christianity, but with what is a part of the popular imagination. And Jesus is still alive as far as people are concerned...a lot of people believe Jesus is still alive.

The idea was conceived one Easter—

(Q.) What an odd day for it!

(A.) —in a conversation between Hilary, my wife, and I. And it occurred to me that this was a possible reasonable explanation. Not the time machine...but to link it up with contemporary man I chose to use the device of a man going back in time to discover Christ...and to have Christ affirmed for him - the physical and spiritual existence of Christ affirmed. But, in fact, it wasn't an interest in Christ that led me to the subject, but an interest in certain kinds of impulse in the human psyche.

(Q.) It seems - if I remember the Gospels that refer to Christ - that He was a man - if He was a man - with no sense of humor whatsoever...and the picture in your book is unrelievedly grim...

(A.) Well, I'm dealing with a psychotic, and most psychotics are notoriously lacking in humor. Adolph Hitler - I could have chosen somebody like Adolph Hitler, possibly, but he's too close...and I thought if I was going to describe a man with a Messiah complex I might as well invoke the Messiah.

(Q.) Do you fear the reaction people are going to have? If Christ is still very much alive - excuse me, if Jesus is still very much alive...

(A.) No; I don't. Because people that are Christians will dismiss it. Sophisticated Christians will assimilate it - and the people who aren't Christians won't care anyway.

(Q.) Well, it seems you've eliminated your audience.

(A.) I don't think so. The most sensational aspects have to do with the depiction of Christ. The story itself has to do with the lot of modern man; of, certainly, many modern man...and I think that's where it has its chief relevance. And the identification is, in fact, with Glogauer slowly turning into Christ, not with Christ Himself. And since most of us have mild Messiah complexes of one sort or another, that's where the identification lies.

I haven't read the book recently.

(Q.) I guess that's as good a place to end the interview as any.

(A.) Yes.

The role of (A.) was played by Michael Moorcock; the role of (Q.) by Robert E. Toomey, Jr.



NOISE LEVEL continued from page 18

patient inquirer. (It might possibly be by William Gaddis, come to think of it.)

Jim, how can I make you see that assertions of this kind are indefensible? They're what I call "cookeries", after what G.W.M. Reynolds told a correspondent in his Miscellany in 1848: "The greatest living poetess is Mrs. Eliza Cook."

Ah. Maybe I can employ a close analogy. You're a tremendous admirer of Richard Strauss. I have nothing whatever by Strauss in my record collection; I've never heard anything of his that I wanted to form part of my personal world. I'd rather include Bartok, Messiaen and Schuller at one end, Mozart, Beethoven and Bach at the other. But I know that Mr. Blish, whose judgement I respect in sundry other fields, is well capable of forming articulate opinions on subjects where I share a reaction with him; I would not therefore dismiss his critical abilities out of hand purely because of this - to me - inexplicable worship of a composer whose work leaves me cold.

If it is true that five writers, duly named, have indeed all decided that the "conventional" narrative approach to the novel no longer offers them the scope they require to discuss themes they regard as supremely important, and if (as in the case of Stand On Zanzibar) they thereupon gain access to an audience to whom the banalities of routine SF are of no interest, is it not at least conceivable that their decision was motivated by something other than a "childish striving for impressiveness of manner"?

Mine was. I tell you straight.



I ALSO GOT LETTERS FROM... (continued from page 52)

JAY KAY KLEIN, MATT HICKMAN, MITCHELL J. SWADO, JR., JOHN J. PIERCE, NEAL GOLDFARB, DANNY JENNINGS, PHILIP M. COHEN, JEFFREY D. SMITH, ROY TACKET (Damn, no room!), JUSTIN ST. JOHN, VALDIS AUGSTKALNS, RONALD J. ANDRUKITIS, MIKE KLAUS, BILL WEST, DAVE BURTON, DAINIS BISENIEKS, MARK BARCLAY, GREGG CALKINS (Sob!), JEFFREY MAY, W.E. CAGLE...and anyone I missed... thanks, and keep writing. Your comments go to those concerned in the Egoboo Bonus when I cut up the letters and paste the parts on sheets of paper and mail them out....

—REG

NOISE LEVEL · john brunner

a column

The title of this column memorialises (to use a word we here in the Old Country regard as a Horrible Americanism) a short-lived OMPazine I used to publish back in the 1950's. I've often toyed with the idea of reviving it for those occasions when I have something I particularly want to say through other than commercial channels, but I've never managed to summon the effort necessary to arrange for things like duplication, collation and circulation. So it might as well become a column. This is known as a labour-saving device.

Emphasis on the vice: laziness.

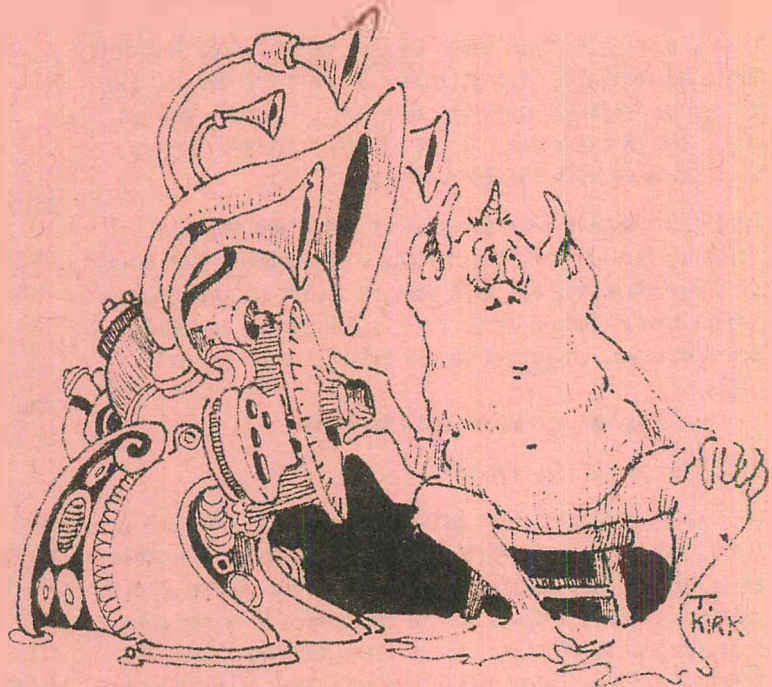
This first manifestation of the reincarnated NOISE LEVEL is sparked off by the purchase, a few days ago, of AMAZING for September 1969, in the review column of which my good friend and respected colleague James Blish – for once wearing his own hat instead of that of his notorious alter ego, Wm. Atheling, Jr. – astonished me by opening his mouth and putting his foot in it shoe and all. To wit, in the course of a review (of sorts) of The Jagged Orbit during which he also delivered a glancing blow at Stand On Zanzibar, he has taken a stand concerning current trends in the science fiction novel which I believe to be wholly unjustified, and which in my own case I know to be.

I've already communicated the essence of the following remarks to Jim in a letter (and hope by the time this sees print I shall have discussed the matter personally, too), but I feel the questions he has raised are serious enough to warrant a wider airing than in private correspondence.

Here I am not concerned with the "rightness" or "wrongness" of an individual's critical attitude towards a particular work. Jim apparently disliked SOZ intensely, and TJO nearly as much. That is his privilege. Hugos and whatever do not invalidate personal assessments – for instance, I didn't and still don't like Lord of Light half as much as most of Roger Zelazny's work, even though that was voted the Hugo.

No, I'm concerned with something different, and considerably more important. I'm concerned with an attempt to elevate a personal prejudice into a canon of critical judgement: an attempt which to my mind is wrong per se.

Summarising brutally for the sake of people who may have missed, or who do not recall, Jim's review, I'll say that he refers to the careers of five writers (Delany, Farmer, Herbert, Zelazny and myself), whom he singles out



as having started with "somewhat idiosyncratic styles but with work that could otherwise be described as conventional, though highly skilful." These five, having "exhausted... the resources of the conventional with a single climactic conventional work" (in my own case, the short story "The Totally Rich"), went on to write a very long story, or a novel, more resembling a mainstream than a traditional sf story inasmuch as it paid far more attention to character (for me he cites Telepathist/The Whole Man and The Productions of Time).

Up to this point, fair enough. (Or, to quote Jim directly: "So far so good.") It is from the next paragraph on that I start to disagree very strongly indeed, and moreover to question the evidence for the assertions Jim now makes. I shall have to quote rather extensively, I'm afraid, to explain why.

Says Blish: "...other people, too, have followed much this same path, but stopped. The five I have named did not stop. Instead, they all took the same, far from inevitable, next step. They went on to the Novel of Apparatus."

First objection to the argument: would it have been better had these five stopped? How better? What can be good about a writer who, having – in Blish's own words – "exhausted the resources of the conventional", quits? Or who (assuming the word "stopped" does not mean "gave up writing" but "proceeded no further") declines for the rest of his working career to tackle forms and styles he has previously neglected? Perhaps this is only careless phrasing. But it's at least careless!

Continuing: "The temptation to say 'they all fell into the

same trap' must be tempered by the fact that all have won their chiefest recognition from the Novel of Apparatus..."

Second objection, phonetically: wha-a-a-at? Take Chip Delany. He has done one novel which I believe would fit this term "novel of apparatus" (new to me, incidentally, but I think valuable and apt). That's The Einstein Inter-section. How, though, can that be said to have won him his "chiefest recognition"? Surely Babel-17 was the book which established him as a field-leader, and that's relatively conventional. Likewise it was The Lovers that secured Phil Farmer his loudest acclaim, not "Riders of the Purple Wage," which a great many people dismissed as turgid and tricky (though I personally loved it and roared with laughter). Herbert's Dune is enormous, but conventional enough in its presentation despite the complexity of its argument; none of his more recent work has excited similar reactions. Submitted: this assertion is groundless.

"... which means that other writers, and fans, don't regard it as a trap at all. They like it. Four of the five have taken trophies for their essays in this form."

Hmmm! Either the category "novel of apparatus" is conveniently elastic, or else the definition implied by its use in Jim's review is imprecise. (It was written before Stand On Zanzibar received the Hugo.) How, four? Herbert has not to my knowledge received a trophy for anything which fits this definition. And no mention is made, even in passing, of the writer who more or less single-handedly grafted the novel of apparatus on to the science fiction stock: Alfred Bester. (He was however perhaps only the most self-conscious of the authors who were exploring this approach to sf as long ago as the fifties, borrowing - with due acknowledgement - from Wylie and ultimately from Sterne. Bernard Wolfe was another, Vonnegut yet another, for me the most successful.)

I'll skip Jim's dismissal of The Jagged Orbit as "an immense snow job" - it's not a particularly good book, alas, for various reasons. What I want to get at is this section, immediately thereafter:

"Why are recent science fiction writers doing this kind of thing, and why do articulate readers abase themselves before it? I can only offer some guesses, but they are not all mine. The first, in fact, is Kingsley Amis's, who suggests that SF writers of a certain stripe get a special satisfaction out of making such constructs - 'adult, or nearly adult, versions of that interest that induces children to draw elaborate maps of imaginary islands' (New Maps of Hell)."

If it were not for the... Damn it, I have to use the term! If it were not for the sneer implicit in the word "abase", I'd be content to accept that, seldom though it is that I can find anything in Amis's views to agree with. This mode of expressing the idea, though, makes my hackles rise. Is it "abatement" to admire the creation of Yoknapatawpha County, or Robinson Crusoe's island (not less imaginary for being based on Alexander Selkirk's), or Barsetshire, or Poictesme? Is Jim Blish "abasing" himself before

the inventor of the imaginary medieval country which he so lovingly analyses in KALKI?

"No doubt this is a good enough partial explanation" (extremely partial in my opinion - JKHB) "but Amis's adducing as an example the appendix to A Case of Conscience (1958) leads me both to examine my own motives, and to reason out (if I can) the reason why the readers like it. It is, I think, something much more childish - a striving for impressiveness of manner, in terms which the lay reader can accept. We seem all to yearn, in our various ways, to be respectable, to be told that we are as good as the mainstream, that we are inheritors of Kafka or Daniel Defoe or James Joyce or John dos Passos or (even) J.R.R. Tolkien, or anybody else from whom we can borrow glory by an imitation of his manner... I suggest that this is the worst kind of dead end. We would get farther, and maintain our self-respect (the only kind of respect that counts) a lot better by following our medium to its own conclusions and leaving the past where it lies."

Having already been told that in Jim's estimation I have exhausted the conventional approach, as being one of the five writers cited at the beginning of his review, I now find myself adjured to follow my medium to its own conclusion.

But, damn it, that's what he said I'd done already!

Parenthesis: there can be few varieties of fiction which are more hidebound in their slavish adherence to conventionality than sf. True confessions, Gothics, and doctor-nurse romances have the edge, but even Westerns aren't markedly worse. Follow the medium to its conclusion - what else can you do but jump off the end? Or turn back!

Supplementary parenthesis: on reflection I find it absurd to say that I, or anyone else, have "exhausted the conventional". The "conventional" form of the novel is almost literally inexhaustible; it has served writers whose shoe-strings I am not worthy to unlatch, and vain as I notoriously am I would never claim to have reached the limits of a field where giants have walked.

Now instead of theorising let's deal in facts for a bit. Fact: for about two years I wrestled unsuccessfully with the idea of a novel which would reflect the foreseeable psychological strains due to extreme overpopulation. Fact: I couldn't sit straight down and tackle it because, as grew clearer and clearer, my problem wasn't to set a story in the future but to create a future for my story to happen in. (This is why, at the end of SOZ, I called it a "non-novel"; traditionally, novels are dominated by their characters, whereas I wanted to write a book dominated by an as-yet nonexistent world. Lovecraft: "The true hero of a 'marvel tale' is never a person but always an event.") Fact: I was getting thoroughly bloody frustrated because although I could sense the impact of innumerable forces shaping that future like a gang of crazy explosive-forming presses - Black Power and LSD, rock music and Vietnam, Marcuse and READER'S DIGEST - I couldn't integrate what I was feeling into a communicable form.

Fact: all of a sudden I realized that the necessary form did exist. So I used it, and apparently what I wanted to say

got across to the audience. At any rate, most of them...

And now I think we come to the central hangup of this review. To illustrate what I mean, I'm going to jump to the final paragraph: after quoting Tom Disch's eulogy of Jagged Orbit (in which he said "The styling is Now!"), Jim continues, "The only thing we know about Now is that one second later it is Yesterday; and in both of these recent Brunner Novels of Apparatus (SOZ and IJO), it is the Yesterday of the 1920's."

But it isn't my yesterday. I think Jim is old enough for it to be his, if he will forgive my commenting on the fact. It's my past - which means it is simultaneously my present. My present is uncountable generations deep: I put a stack of records on the player and the first may be Vivaldi and the next Jimi Hendrix. Similarly, my literary "now" embraces not merely the mainstream of the past but also the tributaries. (Were I to have taken, for some other novel, a more "conventional" writer than dos Passos as a model - say Aldous Huxley - I think few people would have noticed and nobody, not even Jim, would have objected. After all, the stylistic influence of Wells is so deeply ingrained into modern SF that no one thinks of it as derivative any longer.)

I suspect that Jim has tumbled into a semantic pitfall. I suspect he is implicitly opposing "conventional" to "original", and complaining because he finds nothing here that isn't derivable from a specific predecessor. The right term, of course, is "unconventional", which means no more and no less than it says. It doesn't above all, imply any claim to novelty; one might attempt a pastiche in the manner of Sterne, and that would be unconventional, but novel it definitely would not be! Not after more than two centuries!

In the conception of SOZ, unconventionality was forced on me by the nature of the material I was determined to investigate. How else, pray, could one convey to the reader within any compass less than that of an encyclopedia a range of information concerning several scores of named characters which covered everything from their political situation to their sexual attitudes?

IJO, by contrast, incorporates some genuinely experimental techniques - taking a clipping from a daily paper, for instance, copying it straight into the text at the point I happened to have reached, and letting its content determine the next stage in the development of the plot. Possibly because there are such experimental elements in the book, it's notably less successful than SOZ.

In dismissing IJO to the Yesterday of the twenties, I don't think Jim goes far enough. Schuy Miller came closer in ANALOG by calling it a "Victorian" novel because of its numerous characters and frequent shifts of viewpoint as well as because of the expository sequences attributed to Xavier Conroy. I feel absolutely no sense of inconsistency in employing a "Victorian" approach for an SF novel, any more than I feel it inappropriate to employ a technique developed in the twenties. I know (don't you?) people whose temperaments and attitudes are Victorian - the SF audience is

lousy with them; I know others whose personalities might fit the Jazz Age, others still who think they are ahead of their time but in fact merely combine elements from disparate cultures - as it might be, Bushman with modern urban.

Parenthesis, relevant upon reflection: I was in the audience for the Galaxy Fashion Show at the Mycon. If I recall aright, Tom Disch was sitting just in front of me. When the show was over, he turned around and said he hadn't seen anything which couldn't have been worn to a London party. Quite true. (He omitted to add that at a London party you'd probably have seen several things even further out - Victorian nightgowns, men in caftans, dhotis and saris and what-have-you.) None of the girls was topless; none displayed dyed and curled pubic hair - and the ladies of the court at Versailles not only used to curl and dye it but went so far as to ornament it with silk ribbons.

Back to Jim: "Brunner has been praised in some quarters for having had the insight to see that the technique of dos Passos's USA was peculiarly adaptable to science fiction; but the preliminary question should have been, not, Should I adopt someone else's manner for my own purposes, but, Was USA itself worth writing in the first place? A man of Brunner's gift should have seen ab initio that USA was a still-birth even in its originator's hands..."

Now, finally, I can substantiate what I said at the beginning of this column: that Jim is attempting to elevate a personal prejudice into a canon of critical judgement. Possibly because the period of USA is part of Jim's "yesterday", it obviously works no better for him than Midcentury works for me, and he dismisses it as a "stillbirth". For me, though, it's nothing of the kind; it makes a period which I'm too young to have experienced (and hence belongs not to my yesterday but to my past) come alive, showing what it felt like to be caught up in the confused aftermath of World War I. There's no question of my "abasing" myself before dos Passos. It's a matter of record that a hell of a lot of people appreciate (in the formal sense) this trilogy: set a value on it which marks it out from what they would discard as ephemera. I happen to be among them.

Stillbirth? Why? Because it didn't eventuate that every major novelist adopted dos Passos' mode of presentation and narrative structure?

In other words, what Jim is saying here is that "if Brunner doesn't share my revulsion at USA he's incapable of forming a proper judgement."

With respect: horseshit.

"...just as Farmer should have seen that Joyce, while permanently alive himself, worked his technique to its ultimate dead end and cannot be imitated by anybody in any genre."

Christ, he's at it again. How can one be so arrogant as to define the "ultimate dead end" of a vein of literary ore as rich as that which Joyce discovered? I fully expect to see before I die a book whose complexity makes Finnegans Wake look like a kindergarten reader and is no less rewarding to the

The Devil's Bride

A movie called THE DEVIL'S BRIDE with Christopher Lee could go either way as far as quality is concerned.

The screenplay is by Hugo winner (THE INCREDIBLE SHRINKING MAN) Richard Matheson, so that balances the pejorative connotations of a book by Dennis Wheatley (who's last sojourn into cinema was a grade D bomb THE LOST CONTINENT).

BRIDE is done by the winning combination of Hammer Films, Ltd. and Christopher Lee; both responsible for a high quality renaissance of the 1930's horror classics.

The Story— Christopher Lee, looking somewhat Sardonian, but as a descendant of the good Cardinal Richelieu battles a coven and the entire forces of Darkness for his very soul and the souls of his friends. The time is 1928. The period mood is perfect. If you saw this movie on the late show in black and white with less than perfect reception, you'd be hard put to date this later than '35. Lee, as the duke, is the protector figure knowledgeable of the Dark Arts. Niki Arrighi is the frail, small-chested, bee-stung lipped, curly-haired heroine—brunette for she is a lady of mystery, too. There is a British Jack Armstrong hero, a kindly-looking Adept, a sorceress who looks like a cross-eyed buzzard, de Richelieu's niece, her skeptical husband, their innocent blonde daughter, and Richelieu's young playboy friend who's about to lose his soul.

The movie plays like a 1929 novel so that you can tell where the chapters end. Sense of Wonder all over the place. It all fits into an integrated whole: the Pola Negri heroine, the early modern architecture, the hok-yok giant tarantula, pure

motives, purer good/evil struggle, the simplified dialogue, the instant love, the "scientific" detailing of ritual, and the triumph of a mother's love... Enjoy, enjoy.

Nickolas de Richelieu meets Rex van Rijn at a private aerodrome. It is the yearly reunion of three members of the Lafayette Escadrille who have remained good friends through the last ten years. Simon, the third member of the group, is missing; he has been behaving oddly for several months. Nickolas and Rex go to his home.

Here they note that Simon has added an observatory to the house. Inside they come upon a closed gathering and a rather nervous Simon. Simon is obviously under the influence of the sinister, kindly-looking Makata. Rex meets an old acquaintance in Tanya (the lady of mystery) who is the travelling companion of the buzzard sorceress. When it becomes clear that Rex and Nickolas are not part of the coven, they are asked to leave. Nickolas asks to see the new observatory.

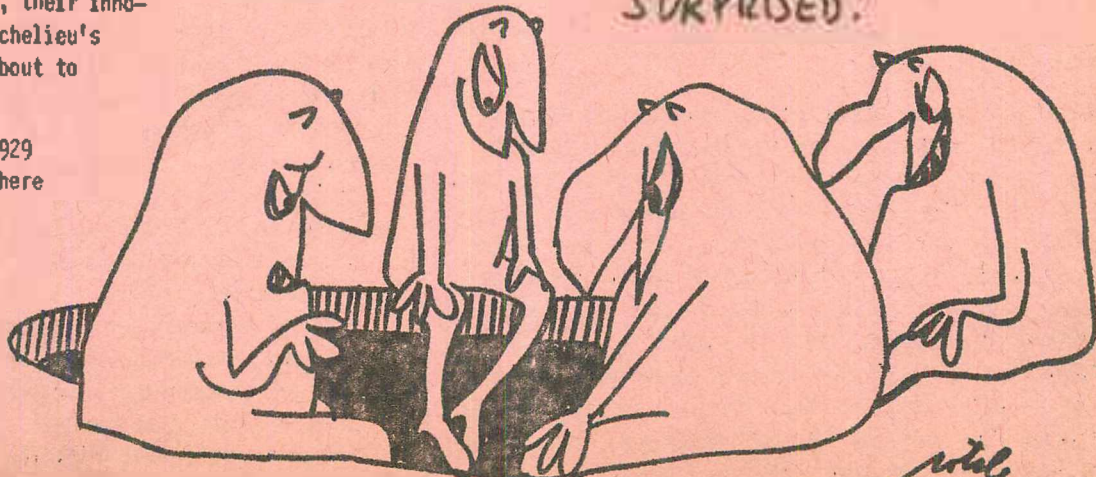
It is filled with cabalistic charts and figures. He finds two chickens to be killed in the imminent ceremony and begs Simon to give it up. He knocks Simon out and abducts him with Rex's aid from the house of evil. Makata is not pleased.

Rex, dumb collegiate that he is, doesn't know what's coming off and doesn't believe it when he is told. Simon is sent upstairs to rest with a crucifix about his neck. Makata forces himself to choke himself with it so that a servant removes it. Simon is in evil's power once more. He leaves.

Nickolas and Rex go back to his house in hopes of finding him. They go up to the observatory...lights dim and smoke rises from the nostrils of the ram within the pentagram on the floor and a demon appears. Nickolas averts his own eyes and implores Rex to do the same, but Rex is in the demon's grip. Nickolas rips the crucifix from his own neck and throws it at the spawn of Hell. The demon disappears leaving a smoldering glob in the pentagram. "RUN!" Nickolas urges, and they do.

Rex is finally convinced that the coven is evil and that they have 24 hours in which to save Simon's soul, for the following night is the High Sabbat when their friend will be unholy baptised. Their one clue is the girl. Nickolas goes off to London to research dark tomes (Luckily, the curator is an old friend.) while Rex takes Tanya to the country place of Nickolas' niece and her husband, Peter. As Rex vaults out of the car to greet the couple's daughter, Tanya (following Makata's instructions from the rear-view mirror) puts the machine in gear and races off. Rex hops into Peter's red roadster and roars after her. ("They didn't stay long," says Peggy.) In the ensuing race we see that those old cars can really move when they want to. Makata frosts Rex's windscreen so he can't see. Rex pushes his fist through it for visibility. Then Makata surrounds him in fog. Rex smashes into a

AND WERE THEY
SURPRISED!



By dick glass

tree and Tanya escapes.

When Rex comes to and tries to flag down a car on the road, he is almost run down by a black sedan (driven by the cross-eyed buzzard). He chases it, showing that those old collegiate heroes can move when they want to. The car turns into an estate. The gate is guarded by figures of winged serpents. Rex goes in and sees the coven coming out. Makata and the rest are taking Simon and Tanya for their unholy baptism. Rex hides in someone's boot to follow Satan's followers.

When they reach their destination, the group gets robbed up and joins a good number of other Satanists to celebrate the High Sabbat. While they're drinking, dancing, fucking and otherwise carrying on, Rex goes to a beautiful AAA phone booth and rings up Nickolas who has returned from London.

Nickolas picks up Rex and hands him two phials ("Salt and mercury. I have other protections.") as they speed to the unholy spot. They watch from the shadows as Tanya and Simon are brought forth. A goat is sacrificed and everyone drinks blood. Blood is spilt over Tanya. The Devil appears on the stone altar in Pan form and a ram's head. Simon is brought to his master.

Nickolas hops into an open blue convertible. Rex jumps onto the running board. Nickolas switches on the headlamps and guns the engine. They barrel through the coven, pull Tanya and Simon into the car. Rex banishes Satan with another crucifix and they fight their way out of the mob.

The rescued and the rescuers go to Peter's house as morning dawns. The battle has just begun with Peter and Nickolas' niece as fresh troops. Tanya is guarded by Rex, Simon by Peter, and Nickolas goes back to his own pad to get weapons against the coming night when the full fury of Hell will be unleashed upon them.

Makata comes to return Nickolas's car and to tell Peter to give up Simon and Tanya. He hypnotizes Nickolas's niece and then takes control of Tanya who is his medium. Tanya almost knifes Rex and Simon almost strangles Peter when Peggy, Peter's little daughter, comes into the room to break the spell. The woman throws Makata out, but as he leaves, he promises, "Something will be back tonight." with ominous overtones. Tanya runs away. Rex runs after her. She wants to get away from the house so she won't be able to harm her new friends. Rex agrees.

Nickolas returns. He is worried, but he lets Rex and Tanya leave his protection. He has the servant stay with Peggy as he goes to the parlor which is cleared of furniture. He draws a protective, inscribed circle with a candle at each of the four points of the compass. Within the circle are himself, his niece, her husband, and Simon. There are pillows and the four lie down to form a cross with their feet towards the candles. There is a pitcher of holy water to drink. Rex and Tanya are in a barn somewhere. She is tied and gagged. Makata has been attacking her all through the day, but the light has held back his power. Tanya writhes and screams into the gag. Darkness falls...

All Hell breaks loose.

They are tempted to break the circle, Tanya escapes her bonds, the Angel of Death is called twice, a dead spirit is called up, the dead person is resurrected, there is a possession, the Wrath of God descends, and time is reversed. "It is all over." "Thank God." "Yes, He is the One we must thank." Fade Out.

But it's all there, clear quill sense of wonder like the olden ones. It's an A treatment of a B subject which elevates the latter to a B+ cinematic experience. The photography is good as is the direction, although matte work is none too cool and the characters are decidedly two-dimensional (but with class). If you dig good period piece "modern" witchcraft films by all means put on your best crucifix and dig up your most paranoid beliefs in Evil and see this one.



MONOLOG CONTINUED FROM PAGE 21

+ Ralph Ashbrook sent along a Warner Bros.-7 Arts production schedule from a trade magazine. Current is THE VALLEY OF GWANGI with James Franciscus, Gila Golan and Richard Carlson. Sci-fi western (G).

Coming are: FOOTPRINTS ON THE MOON. Apollo 11 documentary narrated by Werber Von Braun.

FRANKENSTEIN MUST BE DESTROYED. Peter Cushing, Veronica Carlson. Baron Frankenstein makes unethical brain transplants, but as always in the cause of science. (M)

MOON ZERO TWO. James Olson, Catherine Von Schell. Science fiction.

THE PICASSO SUMMER. Albert Finney, Yvette Mimieux, Yul Brynner. Ray Bradbury drama.

TROG. Joan Crawford, Michael Gough. Science fiction thriller.

WHEN DINOSAURS RULED THE EARTH. Victoria Vetri. Pre-historic adventure.

JE T'AIME, JE T'AIME. Claude Rich, Olga-Georges Picot. Sci-fi romance; man wanders through time.

Ralph wonders if there is another sf-fantasy cycle of movies building up.

+ Leland Sapiro wrote: "Regret using SFR space for trivial matter like this, but Alicia Austin saw none of the "letters" she complains about, which generally were one line notes and (unlike Miss Austin's) of a non-malicious character.

"She's also wrong in saying I'm an American. I already explained in Pete Gill's mag (which Miss Austin certainly reads) why I applied for Canadian citizenship, so won't repeat that here.

"It's not necessary for you to explain that Delany's article requires mental effort from its readers—but wish you had printed address of mag (EXTRAPOLATION) in which article originally appeared."

That address: EXTRAPOLATION, Thomas D. Claerson, Editor, The College of Wooster, Wooster, Ohio 44691.

MONOLOG

by the editor

+ There is an unverified report that Mai Zettering may make a movie of Mike Moorcock's Behold The Man. If it comes about that would really cause a storm in this country when released.

+ Norman Spinrad has a collection of short stories coming out soon from Avon.

+ Changes of address: Richard Delap to 1014 S. Broadway, Wichita, Kans. 67211.

Larry and Noreen Shaw have moved again. To: 12823 Burbank Blvd, #6, North Hollywood, Calif. 91607.

Alicia Austin is now at: #203 - 12 Corkstown Road, Ottawa 14, Ontario, Canada.

George Senda's new address: c/o Mr. Halstead, 3401 East Bonanza Rd., Las Vegas, Nevada 89109.

+ BACK ISSUES OF SFR AVAILABLE: #28, 29, 30, 31, 33. 31-33 are getting low. #32 is sold out.

Print run for #34 is 800.

+ Numerous sf pros are now writing sf-sex novels for Essex House, including one very well known pro who will publish under a pseudo. I have sworn never to reveal... However, when it is published you can all have fun guessing.

+ Piers Anthony sent a card: "I'd appreciate a note in next SFR: I have an offer for Hasan from Benson of Berkley that I have accepted, so must terminate my open offer to editors re marketing of that novel. It may still be open for hardcover republication, should anyone be interested; depends on contract terms.

"I have received several comments on the Hasan column; correspondents seemed to be intrigued by my self-promotion.

"Essex airmailed me five novels that I read with interest, and I am now almost 10,000 words into one of my own. I expect to do a column for you on those 5, jointly, ((is that a pun?)) as they are all SF/fantasy."

+ John Boardman writes: "My father just sent me a clipping from the San Jose Mercury (23 Sept. 1969) which is an interview with Thomas Scortia. In the interview, Scortia blasts the "New Wave" as "a very strong new anti-technological movement...concerned largely with human values and sociological values in a technological society". Later on, the article (written by Leland Joachim of the paper's staff) includes among Scortia's output a book "containing three short sci-

ence fiction novels and called Get Out of My Sky."

"All very well - except that Get Out of My Sky was actually written by New Waver James Blish!"

James Blish is of the New Wave!? Does he know that?

+ John Brunner writes a correction: "The Whole Man was not a joining of three novelettes. There were two ("City of the Tiger," which survives as about 4000 words of the final novel instead of 20,000 originally, and "The Whole Man," retitled for US publication "Curative Telepath," some 17,000 words of which survived into the book largely intact, out of an original 25,000). The rest, about 45,000 words, was either radically re-cast or wholly original for the novel, mainly the latter."

+ And Terry Carr memos: "Wish I'd written that article on the Specials just a little later. I've got two books in a row coming out in January and February that I think are beauties and I'd've liked to say so: The Steel Crocodile by D.G. Compton and And Chaos Died by Joanna Russ. The latter, in particular, is a mind-blower."

+ I asked Bob Silverberg for permission to print his Helicon Guest of Honor speech and he replied: It..."will be called SF IN AN AGE OF REVOLUTION. But you'll have to make your own arrangements to get a transcript; as usual, I'll be speaking from rough notes, not a full text."

CAN ANYONE OUT THERE HELP ME???

+ George W. Price of ADVENT: PUBLISHERS writes that the paperback edition of Alexei Panshin's Heinlein in Dimension is now out and it and the second cloth edition has an index.

Cloth: \$6.00; Paper: \$2.45. Address: P.O. Box 9228, Chicago, Ill. 60690.

+ Lawrence P. Ashmead, editor of Doubleday, SF writes that Marc Haefele is no longer working with science fiction but will remain an associate editor at Doubleday. Judith M. Glushanok is joining the department in November. Diane Cleaver will be in charge of the overall operation of the science fiction list, as well as handling trade titles...

+ Ethel Lindsay reports "Bram Stokes has just opened a book store in London devoted solely to SF and fantasy. He has called the shop DARK THEY ARE AND GOLDEN-EYED. With a name like that he deserves to succeed!"

+ Anne McCaffrey is trying to locate a Mr. Jim Landau. Her address is 369 Carpenter Av., Sea Cliff, N.Y. 11579.

+ Mrs. Florence Jenkins reports that she has received all the books previously ordered from Ace, has ordered seven more; now she wants me to use my influence to speed her seven book Ballantine order of Aug. 5. Heh. Consider it done, Florence.

+ Elaine Landis reports SF Book Club selections for April '70 will be Nova 1, edited by Harry Harrison (15 short stories written especially for this volume) and Galactic Pot-Healer a novel by Philip K. Dick. Both at \$1.49.

+ Darrell Schweitzer (113 Deepdale Rd., Strafford, Pa. 19087) will pay one dollar for NEW WORLDS #176, and 75¢ each for #165, 166, 169, 171.

MONOLOG CONTINUED ON PAGE 20

John Boardman

The Third Vergil

A review of Avram Davidson's The Phoenix and the Mirror, Doubleday, \$4.95

Each era of history makes its own legends about the preceding eras, as Murray Kempton pointed out in Part of Our Line, a comparison of the real 1930's with the myths which had been built about that decade in the 1950's. So that any history or legend is a tale of two times, the author's as well as its subjects'.

The Middle Ages had their own myths about classical antiquity, myths constructed out of a belief that history, like science, was chiefly useful as a set of instructions on moral living. In search of these morals, the facts were twisted out of all recognition. The Gesta Romanorum, purportedly an account of events which had taken place in the days of the Roman Empire, spoke of such personages as "the Emperor Pliny", "a certain king named Asmodeus", and "Conan, king of the Hungarians".

The Roman Empire seemed to dominate the consciousness of medieval intellectuals. As a single political unit controlling virtually all Christendom, it became a golden age when Christians lived in brotherly amity, undivided by religious schism or political nationalism. Greek, German, or Russian rulers would take the title of "Emperor" and pretend to continue the traditions of the Caesars, so much so that until 1947, when the King of Great Britain abandoned the title of "Kaiser-i-Hind", there was always somewhere in the world at least one monarch with a title etymologically derived from "Caesar". At the very bottom of his Hell, Dante showed the Devil himself torturing the three greatest sinners of history - Judas, who betrayed the founder of the Church, and Brutus and Cassius, who betrayed the founder of the Empire.

Needless to say, our own times have compounded this process of historical refraction by constructing yet another view of both classical antiquity and the Middle Ages. Many historians yet endorse the views of their medieval colleagues by regarding the Middle Ages as some kind of retrogression from a better age; Gibson's famous comparison of the Middle Ages as a gulf between two peaks, the Roman and the British Empires, is perhaps the best-known of these metaphors. But only in a political sense were the Middle Ages a retrogression. A single large political unit based on chattel slavery was replaced by a crazy-quilt of feudal states. This meant that large-scale engineering works were no longer maintained, let alone continued. But the techniques and the artisans still existed. A large body of technology existed, which could be employed by any ruler sufficiently wealthy and powerful to rival the ancients in public works. In fact, when such rulers arose in the 15th century Italian city-states, they had no difficulty finding

men to put their building plans into execution.

Technologically, mankind continued all during the Middle Ages to advance. That period saw the invention or introduction into Europe of the still, strong acids, the pendulum clock (invented in the 10th century by Pope Sylvester II), several advances in mining and well-digging machinery, the compass, gunpowder, and even the humble horsecollar, which employed far more efficiently the strength of the strongest available animal. Philosophical Nominalism and the views of Duns Scotus represented a substantial advance on the warmed-over Platonism of late classical philosophy, and political theories brought in by the Germanic barbarians made the individual something more than the instrumentum vocale of a classical tyrant.

These considerations should be taken into account by the many science fiction authors who choose to write about Our Barbaric Descendants. Working from Gibbon's "two-peaks-and-a-valley" view of history, they believe that if the large political units of our time were shattered by a nuclear war or a pandemic, we would regress into a Gibbonian concept of the Middle Ages. It is assumed that with the collapse of large political units would come a collapse of technology, that every side-street printing shop or basement lathe would vanish, together with the know-how of their operators.

Modern science fiction has a sense of wonder about the future, knowing as we do that science can transform our conditions of life even more profoundly in the coming centuries than it has in the past. But the medieval fabulists applied their sense of wonder to the past, believing that it contained many marvels lost to their own times. The tales of these marvels and their makers did not shrink in the telling.

One cycle of such tales accumulated itself about a most unlikely figure, the Augustan Age Latin poet Publius Vergilius Maro (70-19 BCE). (The spelling "Virgilius", whence "Virgil", is now rejected by most Latinists.) The Vergil of antiquity was a pedantic poet, whose Aeneid is rather too consciously an attempt to construct a Latin rival to Homer's epics. He was born in Mantua and educated at various Italian cities including Naples, where he learned Greek. Naples remained his favorite residence, and he was eventually buried near there. ("He was an amiable, good-tempered man, free from envy; and in all but health he was prosperous." - Smaller Classical Dictionary)

It is still not quite clear how the gentle poet of Mantua became converted into the powerful Vergil Magus, the great nigromancer of medieval myth. It has been speculated that his mother's family name Maius was transformed into "Magus" by a careless scribe, and that subsequently a number of magical constructions were fathered upon him. For the Vergil Magus legend, unlike the tales of Merlin or Faustus, is the property of the intelligentsia alone. It did not arise out of a folk-tradition, and does not survive in it today.

Another possible explanation for the transformation of Publius Vergilius Maro into Vergil Magus may lie in the wars between the city of Naples and King Roger II, of the Norman dynasty then ruling Sicily and southern Italy. According to a Sicilian tradition the remains of Aristotle lie in a church in Palermo, the city where King Roger was crowned. These bones

could be appealed to in time of need, so that Aristotle came into general repute as a great magician and tutelary guardian of Sicily. During the decade 1130-1140 - just before the appearance of the first Vergil Magus story - Naples successfully resisted several assaults by King Roger, in a manner that must have appeared miraculous to the inhabitants. As a rival to Palermo's Aristotle some Neapolitan may have elevated the most famous scholar of his city's history into an even more powerful mage. Many of the Vergil Magus stories deal with his protection of Naples against human and supernatural foes.

(The Magi were originally a Persian tribe which provided the priestly class for their people, as the Levites did for the Jews. They had different customs from the other tribes; for one thing, mother-son incest was permitted among them, and the best Magi were supposed to be the offspring of such unions. As priests of the cult of Mithra they were believed by the worshippers of other gods to be evil wizards. The "three wise men" of Christian myth were Magi, and in Spanish are still called "los Reyes Magos". From "Magus" comes out modern word "magician".)

The Vergil Magus stories started appearing sometime in the 12th century. Their hero is intended for the same person as the poet whose works were well-liked in the literary Europe of the time, though anachronism abound. One writer puts Vergil in the reign of Augustus, while another locates him a century later in the reign of Titus. A third makes him a subject of Nero, whom he tells that his palace will endure until a virgin bears a child. Nero, naturally, imagines that the palace will last forever, but it collapses when Christ is born. (Of course Jesus was born some 40 or 45 years before Nero.)

The tales fall into the following general categories:

1. A beautiful woman makes a fool out of Vergil. (In some versions of these tales he takes a revenge upon her.)
2. Vergil constructs a talisman by his arts, which protects the Roman Empire, or Naples, from some danger.
3. Vergil builds a castle (or sometimes, the whole city of Naples) on a foundation of eggs. Sometimes other magical constructions are also attributed to him, such as a bridge made of congealed air, or a road from Rome to Naples built by devils at his command.

As Lin Carter explains in his discussion of medieval romances in Tolkien: A Look Behind the Lord of the Rings, each fabulist had to outdo his predecessors in inventing marvels about Vergil Magus. The earliest extant Vergil Magus story, in the Polycraticus of John of Salisbury (c. 1159) merely tells of a bronze fly which Vergil built for Augustus' nephew Marcellus to keep living flies out of Naples. From there imagination took off, until by 1400 Jean d'Outremerse (an alleged author of the John Mandeville yarn) made Vergil prophesy the birth of Christ, enchant a temple's women confess their misdeeds aloud, convert senators to Christianity, conjure up armies, and build an aqueduct t

carry oil and wine from Naples to Rome.

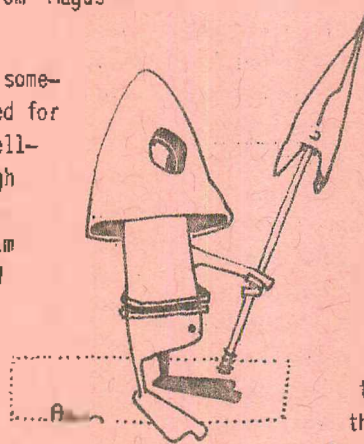
One popular theme in medieval writing - probably a borrowing from the Middle East - was the duplicity of women. The best-known Vergil Magus story is of this sort. Vergil makes an assignation with a woman kept in an inaccessible tower by a jealous father or husband. She agrees to pull him up in a basket. However, she leaves him suspended half-way up, to be a general object of ridicule for the townspeople. This story as John W. Spargo shows in his study Virgil the Necromancer is a compound of the basket by which many Arabic heroes ascended into a guarded harem, and the "punishment-basket" used to expose minor malefactors in medieval German cities. Some versions of the story show Vergil taking a revenge. By his "art" he makes all the fires in the city go out, and then announces that they can be rekindled only if the cruel lady stands naked in the market-place while all the townspeople relight torches from her body. Here we see a pun on "light" women, and perhaps also the frequent reference to venereal disease as a contagious "burning". (Opera fans may recognize here the plot of Richard Strauss' Feuersnot.)

The Vergil Magus theme faded with the later Renaissance, as scholars delighting in classical learning disentangled Vergil-poet from Vergil-Magus. Since then the Vergil-tales have lapsed, or have been attached to other men famous as magicians, such as Sylvester II (from whom some of them were borrowed in the first place) or Faustus.

Now that diligent scholar and champion of things medieval, Avram Davidson, has brought the Vergil Magus tales out of obscurity, and for at least five years has been working on a modern treatment. The Phoenix and the Mirror is the first of several books in a series; the entire corpus is to be called Vergil Magus. A major opus is clearly intended.

The Phoenix and the Mirror does not slavishly follow the original Vergil Magus tales. No phoenix seems to appear in those tales, and the magic mirror story does not have the importance of the Vergil-in-the-Basket or Magic Egg themes. But Davidson's Vergil Magus is also betrayed by a woman - not by such an obvious a trick as the basket, but by the stealing of his soul, or one of his souls. Having this soul in her possession, she condemns him to physical and psychic impotence until he makes for her a major speculum of virgin bronze in which to search for her missing daughter.

The magic speculum - or mirror, to translate from the Latin - is a device which appears in many magician stories; see for example Richard Greene's play Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay. With it the magician is supposedly able to see things happening at a great distance. This tradition seems to have originated in the great Alexandrian lighthouse, which did possess a mirror and which threw its beams a great distance. By oral transmission over a millenium of ignorance it became a magic mirror for throwing sight a great distance, and the requirements for its construction became caught up in the very



exacting magical demands of absolute ritual purity.

The brazen head which guards Vergil's laboratory - taken like the speculum from the original Vergil Magus tales - is also a venerable part of legends about mages. It seems to have originated from the ingenious pneumatic and hydraulic devices designed by Heron, or Hiero, of Alexandria. Medieval artificers knew of Heron's gadgets but kept the techniques of their construction secret, preferring to baffle their patrons and the multitudes with them. The 9th century historian-emperor Constantine Silverspoon (for this reviewer prefers to translate the meaning of "Konstantinos Porphyrogenitus") reports an imperial Roman throne of his own time, tricked out with lions that roared and birds that sang when an ambassador approached. By such devices a brazen head could easily be made to shout, hiss, or make sounds which the credulity of the ignorant might transform into words. Oral tradition did the rest.

Other elements have entered into this latest of Vergil Magus tales. In the first chapter the mage is menaced by mantichores in a subterranean network of caverns. Neither the mantichores nor a human allegedly reared by them appear again, so presumably they are plants for a future novel in this series. A citadel of exiled "Tartismen" is in Naples; Davidson apparently follows de Camp and Ley (Lands Beyond) in identifying several features of Tartessos with Plato's Atlantis. There are the fearsome "Sea-Huns", although the Huns of actual history committed their depredations everywhere except upon the seas. The woman who steals Vergil's soul is a Roman subject who is Queen Mother of Carsus, a realm not otherwise known to this reviewer. And, when Vergil's search for absolutely pure copper carries him through the Sea-Hun blockade to Cyprus, he finds there an underground religious cult which worships "our Lord and Savior Daniel Christ (who) gave His flesh to be torn by the lions in order that we might be saved". The cult's leader holds his position because he was "seized by the spirit as I neared Allepo".

The Vergil legends do not usually mention the mage of Naples as an alchemist, locating his skills instead in magical spells and automata. So Vergil is given a side-kick, an alchemist named Clemens, who is a good foil for the rather romantic mage. Clemens is a solid, rational, rather cynical man who enjoys the good life, including "the fifth essence of wine" - that's brandy, as far as us moderns are concerned. Vergil's magical laboratory, staffed by a number of competent craftsmen, resembles in many respects, including the teamwork of the men, a modern research lab. But the research is out of any number of old grimoires and alchemical handbooks, including the shadowy figure of "Mary the Egyptian", a woman of the Jewish colony in Egypt who, in actual history, seems to have been the inventor of the still sometime in the last century BCE. There is in Vergil's lab a rascally lad named Morlinus - taken from the Merlin of the Arthur legends, and apparently intended to glorify Vergil by claiming that the greatest magician of the Britons would be but an apprentice compared with him.

The Vergil Magus of the medieval fabulists was, despite his purported dates, a medieval rather than a classical man.

As if to carry on the tradition, Davidson's Vergil is a distinctly modern man despite the twice-removed trappings of Roman antiquity. He has the introspective, self-analyzing, modern way of thought. Clemens is also a modern man, intellectually active and physically lazy, and much more of a cynic than any medieval who knew just where he stood between Heaven and Hell.

As if these legends weren't enough, Davidson works into the Vergil myth the myth of the Phoenix. This is also an ancient tale, which combines the purple heron with a solar myth to produce a symbol of immortality. Davidson comes up with a rather surprising interpretation of this myth, as The Phoenix and the Mirror comes to a climax in the Libyan desert.

The Red Man who appears now and again in the story, apparently to help Vergil in his quest for the materials for the speculum, is no mere deus ex machina like Mike Moorcock's "Warrior in Jet and Gold". His motives, it appears, are not simply altruistic. And he enters the story from a myth even older than the Aeneid, a theme which Davidson has apparently borrowed from Robert Graves. Yet there are depths to the Red Man's myth not plumbed in this book, and possibly reserved for future tales in the author's Vergil Magus series. After all, "Adam" simply means "Red Man", and this opens up the whole kabbalistic myth of "Adam Kadmon".

As in much sword-and-sorcery fantasy, the minor characters are often delineated more clearly and memorably than the major ones. The mischievous Morlinus, apparently destined for a fate like that of the famous Sorcerer's Apprentice, and the rough, good-natured workman Iohan are more realistically drawn individuals than Vergil or the Red Man. This reviewer thinks that the character of Clemens comes across well, but probably because he is also a physical scientist in a world too much tainted with mysticism. Among the subplots is the strange tale of how Bayla, King of the Sea-Huns, comes into his heritage, much to Vergil's advantage. Bayla, the king-slob of a race of slobs, yet comes over as a character in whom the reader can take an interest.

And so does Vergil, if you take him on his own terms. His modernity, after all, comes out of the need to present him to a modern audience. His tale can illustrate the same basic ideas as the medieval tale, and yet differ from it widely in detail. But this idea, of retelling a traditional tale in another time so as to convey the same impact, is wasted on Vergil Magus. Don Juan, or Faustus, or even Jack the Ripper, lies closer to the common wellsprings of human thought and deed than does Vergil.

The author's use of language amply demonstrates his well-known liking for the antique and archaic: "speculum" instead of "mirror", "horloge" instead of "clock", "Oeconomium" (misprint for "Oecomenicum"?) for the "known world". So do all the alchemical and astrological trappings of Vergil's and Clemens' work, things which appear in the old books in far more colorful trappings than the mundane and mathematical science of our own day. Bits of more are scattered through The Phoenix and the Mirror, which may be lost on many readers not so acclimatized to the Middle Ages. The analogy between chemical reaction and marriage ("the Fair White Matron... and the Ruddy Man") is one not popular with scientists of today. And neither is the incessant astrology.



Book Reviews DELUSIONS

BY: RICHARD DELAP
HANK DAVIS
JOHN FOYSTER
CREATH THORNE
EARL EVERS
TED PAULS
ED COX
RICHARD E. GEIS
BILL GLASS

LOVELY by David Meltzer—Essex House 0117, \$1.95

Book One of a projected tetralogy entitled "BrainPlant," Lovely is going to frustrate porno-lovers who will surely dislike the 'lack' of constant sex and will be too impatient to unravel the rest. Refreshingly, Meltzer doesn't even pretend to offer excuses for the book's immorality, but lays his goods out (albeit, in some disarray) and says with a giggle, Hey, look at this!

It's a difficult book to assess in terms of importance and/or relevance in the sf field; but, damn!, it is funny, and surprisingly entertaining considering that the erotic content isn't in the least stimulating. Like Farmer's "Riders of the Purple Wage" it will probably be often lumped in with the indecipherable contributions to the so-called new wave, and though it doesn't really measure up to the craftsmanship of the Farmer story, it shouldn't be casually connected with the many half-wits working desperately to hurry in the McLuhan photo-media era by flooding the market with unreadable prose.

Meltzer has taken a careful look at the world today and has satirically projected present trends into an intelligently unlikely (or is it?) direction. What he has done in 150 pages is far more intricate and detailed and believable than Brunner could manage in the massive but shallow Stand on Zanzibar. Plot? There isn't much of one, really, and perhaps this is what makes the book sometimes work. The author has not tried to diligently find excuses to cram his spanning views into a logical progression, but has tossed

them around with the casualness of a May Day dancer sprinkling petals. This frivolity does not always work, but it works better for Meltzer than for most writers who use this method.

Generally, the events center around the effects of the "Military Industry" and the horribly splendid methods by which it runs the America under its control. Non-profit parks, museums, libraries and the like have been displaced by the suburban fun zones which keep the populace under strict control by catering to any fleshly desire that can be probed for in (and paid for by) the public, baa-baa sheep never recognizing the danger involved in their mindless hedonism. There are still the dissenters, the radicals who have a thousand reasons to uphold their planned revolution but can't seem to pin down a single one of them.

Meltzer's story zips over and around almost any and every subject that touches a sore spot in contemporary standards: auto- and mechano-eroticism, the War (25 years going in this instance), pollution and sanitation, sex surveys (Masters and Chambers should definitely read this!), violence, racial tensions and/or apathies, simulated concern (personal and national), nymphets and incest (one of the funniest scenes in recent memory, reducing "Lolita" to primary level), the Buddhist influence ..and that's only the beginning. The final, succinct message is so pessimistically apt that it makes Sturgeon's Law look like a gross overestimate.

Good as the book often is, it does suffer a bit from the very looseness of its construction. It's too easy to put down when a page isn't quite as funny as the last one, and the reader knows he will not have to worry about losing his train of thought because the "plot" is created in scenes rather than a smoothly running storyline.

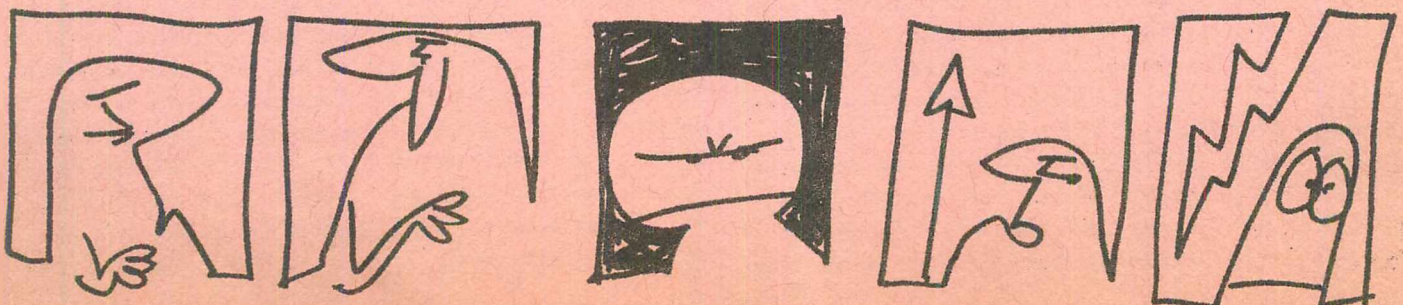
Frank M. Robinson has summed up in his readable Postscript the attitudes Meltzer rips apart in "a world that has strangled romance but still insists we dance with the corpse." It isn't Ginger Rogers and Fred Astaire...but I think Meltzer could find something funny about them too.

—Richard Delap



A PIECE OF MARTIN CANN by Lawrence M. Janifer—Belmont 850-811 50¢.

My previous experience with Mr. Janifer's sf has consisted mainly of a few very funny, very good novels he has written by himself (The Wonder War, Pyramid), and with Randall Garrett (the Kenneth J. Malone series, Pyramid), and a more recent,



less successful series of humorous sf novels written for Ace in collaboration with S.I. Treibach. (The Ace novels start off very well, and then, alas, fall apart halfway through.) Aside from a few short stories, my acquaintance with the serious Janifer was limited to a clumsy and boring novel, *Slave Planet (Pyramid)*, until I read this book. And this book has definitely put it on my mind.

It is short but not quickly read, written with densely packed but subtle prose which requires close attention. I didn't find the going easy, but was glad that I was going.

The possibility of treating mental illness by entering the minds of the ill has given rise to many stories. Most are dreary rewrites of Peter Phillips' classic novelet, "Dreams are Sacred." Not this one. Partly because of the scope of the patient's delusion and partly because the novel follows no easy paths, this story stands on its own. And the central problem is a lovely one: how do you convince God that the universe should not be created? Characters are solid and convincing, and are sketched with economy.

That the novel is not one of the outstanding sf novels of 1968 (and 1968 was a year that had good ones coming in droves) is a consequence of two faults.

First, there is too much going on offstage to suit me. This may be an overly personal objection, for the events are indicated indirectly, but there is never any doubt concerning what has happened. Nonetheless, I didn't see it happen and an unhappy having to hear about the moves second hand. Second, there is much discussion of matters ethical. Sympathetic though I am toward some of the conclusions, I feel the intervening reasoning has not been tough enough and that some expansion is in order.

Though not fully successful, the novel is more enjoyable — and more demanding — than many I have read lately; and it is impressive.

—Hank Davis



THE BEST SF STORIES FROM NEW WORLDS #2, Edited by Michael Moorcock—Berkley X1676, 60¢

The most obvious feature of the stories in this collection is their gutlessness. Almost without exception they are Hollywood fronts disguising shoddy or non-existent ideas. The possible exception is Roger Zelazny's "For a Breath I Tarry" in which the author seems to manage to overcome his unfamiliarity with the English language long enough to produce a worthwhile investigation of the Turing machine as a self-conscious being. A minor quibble concerning this story is the repetitious use of "predicted" where "predicated" is clearly required. This appears also

in the magazine version (though, if the story had a U.S. magazine publication, and I suspect it did, that may not have been the case there), so it may be the eager-eyed NW proofreader. But it might just be Zelazny getting it wrong again.

The other stories aren't worth a cracker: Aldiss's story doesn't have much to do with his own introduction to it, and manages to be mighty trivial in its own right. Sladek's "The Poets of Milgrove, Iowa" is pointless, and neither Moorcock nor Sladek nor Berkley could bring themselves to print "shit", "fuck" or "cock". This does not seem to me overcuteness upon Sladek's part. And why is it that Americans continually use "cock" instead of "prick"? "Cock" is the word used by little boys, at least in Australia.

David Masson's story ("The Transfinite Choice") collapsed when his hero failed to understand the word(s) "Namplize".

"You: Coma: Marilyn Monroe" is one of Ballard's "white cadillac" series. Though these seemed to me at least moderately impressive at first reading, this one is definitely less so now — a measure of its success.

Charles Platt's story ("The Total Experience Kick") is just incompetent ("able to sight-read Fortran" indeed!), but it does show that 1940s science fiction is just about his speed. Tom Disch's "Three Short Stories" weren't sf.

George Colly'n's story ("The Singular Quest of Martin Borg") old-fashioned as it is, is nonetheless interesting if chasing the variants on a character's name ("Marxitita Marta") appeals to you. P.F. Woods's "The Countenance" is good old 1930s harmless stuff, while the Colvin/Moorcock self-proclaimed 'experiment' (in what way I do not know) simply lacked motivation. Kit Reed's "Sisohphromatem" just lacked.

Not a pretty sight, all in all, but most of the authors were in there trying, which used not to be the case, just a short while ago.

—John Foyster



LET THE FIRE FALL by Kate Wilhelm—Doubleday, \$4.95

One would hardly gather from the pretty face featured in the dustcover photo that here is a woman whose wholesome (if lopsided) smile hides venomous fangs, and whose pert, straightforward gaze looks easily beneath the most concealing veneers. Her talented typing fingers are equipped with deadly double-edged razors — slash! slash! and the facades of civilization tumble down, sometimes with a thunderous roar, more often with shuddering sighs as the life's blood of convention leaks slowly away. Miss Wilhelm is a one-woman war against science fiction complacency. Her short stories (including the recent Nebula-winner "The Planners") are mind-taxing blends of fact and fantasy, and this, her newest novel, is not only her best book but one in which she succeeds in climbing the wall that has blocked many other sf writers for years. That wall is Religion, and the author not only climbs it but follows with tearing it down to the ground, stone by stone. The result is dev-

estating.

The starting line is an Ohio cornfield where, in 1972, a manned spaceship (which looks like a "skinny pagoda") lands, triggering the fanatical elements of a world's psyche to the point where human values become distorted almost beyond belief. All but one of the aliens die mysteriously, and the survivor is merely a baby, born at the same time, in the same room, as an illegitimate Earth child. Both are boys, and both are destined to carry heavy odds in the coming race to destruction.

Two men see the ship land: Obie Cox, father of the bastard Earthchild, and Dr. Matt Daniels, who takes the child in, naming him Blake. The alien Star Child is made a ward of the United Nations, and is raised and schooled under the strictest surveillance. One of his teachers is a child psychiatrist, Winifred Harvey, who finds the boy sweet but not too bright. (Winifred is also a friend of Matt and his wife, Lisa, providing one of the tenable links between the boys' destinies.)

All of these characters are juggled expertly in divergent scenes that move smoothly from one to the other, and none of them fall out of place when attention focuses predominantly on Obie Cox as he becomes an evangelist and founds the Voice of God Church. This church, an organization manned largely by human defectives and cripples (both physical and mental) living largely on hope, creates the ultimate example of how to achieve manipulation of the human race — give the people what they want in return for unswerving faith, excuse their vilest sins in exchange for unstinting support for the Church. (And does that strike a familiar chord, even now?) It is not long before the country is swept into a violent civil war between Obie's church and the social Christian churches that oppose him. Tolerance is a sign of weakness garnering suspicion from both sides, and the fence-sitters' position makes them the easiest victims in the mushrooming insanity of fanaticism. No one, no place, no thing is safe as the intensity of the battle reaches riot and mass murder stages.

Interspersed between the chapters are short 'Interludes' — which the author wickedly states can be skipped "if one has a mind to" — each of which polishes up the timely satires of the story. One, especially, comes across with the impact of a bomb: Matt's daughter, Laura, a Voice of God convert, writes a college report which shows how complete permissiveness is as likely to lead to dangerous reactionary thoughtlessness (or gullibility, if you prefer) as will its opposite. Laura's essay is a beautifully controlled work that despite its fervor and attempted rationalism rests on faith. Though partially aware of her church's exploiting elements, she persists in finding excuses for it and becomes a prime example of the aforementioned manipulation. With this and other similar sequences, Wilhelm keeps twisting that garotte tighter and tighter, with a deadly precision that is both appalling and stunning.

As the author strips away the pretensions of middle-class, Bible-belt morality, she never forgets for a moment

that she is also telling a story. When the movement of the religious zealots gains momentum, the economic structure of the economic structure of the country begins to crumble; and by the time 1990 rolls around, Matt and Lisa have been forced to take the "cold sleep" to escape religious persecution, Blake has taken to the road to avoid capture and exploitation by Obie, and the Star Child's heritage begins to come under question. As the world seems headed for a perverted version of a theocracy, all the elements of the story start to mesh, culminating in an explosive, pyrotechnic climax that is open-ended and enigmatic.

A book such as this is bound to stir up some bitter controversy...almost any type of personality you can possibly know (or be) will find something here that constitutes what might be called slander. Granted, there is plenty of maliciousness in the book...but lies? No, I don't think so. To twist an old proverb — truth is scarier than fiction — and there is far more truth than fiction in Let the Fire Fall. If you've got a thin skin, read it anyway. You need to suffer; it's good for your soul.

—Richard Delap



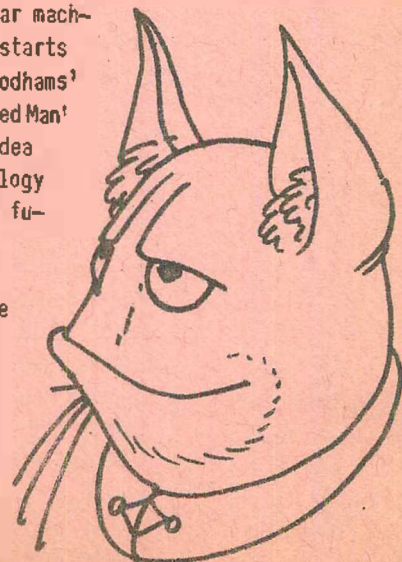
ANALOG 7, Edited by John W. Campbell—Doubleday, \$5.95.

Analog 7 is an attractive book at first sight: it has an interesting cover and it's big (over 350 pages). There's no introduction or other biographical material, so the stories, which are all from ANALOG a couple of years back, have to carry the show by themselves. They don't do a very good job. The main trouble is that out of nine stories all but three show poor style, unoriginality of ideas, or both.

Several of the stories might be classified political science fiction. Of these only Mack Reynolds' "fiesta Brava" is barely competent; the others lose the struggle.

Several can be classified technologically oriented "hard" sf. The main trouble with these is lack of originality of idea, or, in some cases, even no story, once you get past the jargon. Thus, Keith Laumer's "The Lost Command" is about a war machine that is unearched and starts on a rampage, while Jack Wodhams' plotless "There Is a Crooked Man" takes as its premise the idea that crime will use technology to its own purposes in the future.

There are three good stories in the volume. Anne McCaffrey's "Weyr Search" is not exceptionally well-written stylistically, but the extensive background, even though it is incompletely revealed in this story, is engaging enough to make the



story well worth reading. Poul Anderson's "Elementary Mistake" is an example of the way technological sf should be written. It is both scientifically correct and entertaining to read. And Bob Shaw's "Burden of Proof" is a story that combines scientific extrapolation and a study of human emotions to make fine reading.

—Creath Thorne

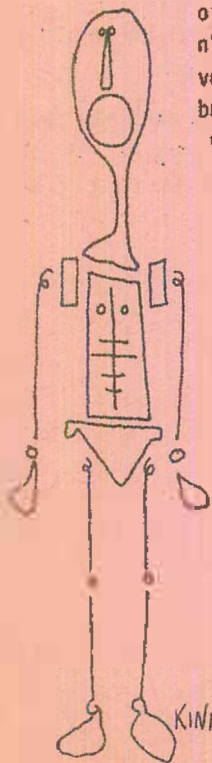


SUBSPACE EXPLORERS by E.E. Smith—Ace H-102, 60¢

This is Doc Smith's last novel, and probably his best by technical standards of judging. It's space opera, of course, with oodles of lovingly described superscience and peopled by characters that are nothing more than flesh-and-blood robots with computer-like minds programmed by the author to create and unravel technical problems just at the proper moment to advance the plot.

Explorers is basically the story of a group of future robber-baron industrialists who, among many other things, discover all phases of psi, invent all sorts of new space-travel gadgetry, unravel one or two of the Basic Secrets of the Universe, and in the process found a sort of Galactic Empire based on "Enlightened Self Interest". If Smith's characters had been human to start with, they'd have been well on their way to becoming Supermen at the end of the book; as things stand, they just evolve from one sort of human machine into another, newer and fancier piece of gadgetry in human form. Smith doesn't even insert any real, fallible, flesh and blood humans to serve as poils for his mechanical supermen.

Surprisingly enough, the total effect of the book is quite powerful — Smith isn't talking about people and the real Universe by any stretch of the imagination, but his unreal characters playing their obviously artificial game of conquer-the-universe are still capable of generating a good deal of suspense, a suspense based entirely on wondering what's going to happen next and how Smith is going to cope with it. There's no sense of character identification at all, but more the excitement you get watching an intricate sport like football or auto racing. As a writer, E.E. Smith was a hell of a good engineer, but really, a good, fast, exciting but mechanical story is superior to a lot of the emotional plotless mishmashes that pass as sf these days. Anyway, this is unabashed space opera, but it's good space opera. If you really like this sort of story approach, then this will be one of the best sf books of the year or decade—for you. If space opera isn't to your taste, at



least it's a first rate example of its type.

—Earl Evers



THE ZERO STONE by Andre Norton—Ace 95960, 60¢

No matter how well acquainted the reader may be with Miss Norton's voluminous output, reading a new Andre Norton novel invariably produces the same reaction: low initial expectation, followed by increasingly pleasant surprise. I have gotten to the point where I begin to seriously wonder whether the author deliberately structures novels to achieve this effect.

The Zero Stone is a classic example. The opening paragraph of the book sets a tone that is appalling: "The dark was so thick in this stinking alley that a man might well put out his hand and catch shadows, pull them here or there, as if they were curtain stuff. Yet I could not quarrel with the fact that this world had no moon and that only its stars spotted the night sky, nor that the men of Koonga City did not set torchlights on any but the main ways of that den of disaster."

As I read this I literally grinned in embarrassment both for myself as reader and for Andre Norton as writer. Oh God, I thought, PLANET STORIES has been revived; so familiar is that kind of opening that I would almost be prepared to swear that I read stories when I was 11 or 12 years old beginning with exactly the same words, save that it was Manga City or Klanga City. To make matters worse, the story is told in the first person by the hero, Murdoc Jern, in a stilted grammar that makes the narrative like a bumpy road (from the first chapter: "A man's life is ever worth, at least to him, more than the fabled Treasure of Jaccard"; "They were not minded to have difficulty thereafter from the Patrol, or from powers beyond their own skies, being shrewd enough to know that a god may be great on his own world, and nothing under the weight of an unbeliever's iron fist, when that fist swung down from the stars"; "And then I was near startled into letting go my grasp"). Additionally, the narrative drags badly in the initial chapters, and takes a vacation altogether in Chapter Two, which is devoted to explaining past events. So it would be fair to say that this book did not impress me at the beginning; indeed, I moved through the first 25 pages prepared to dislike it intensely and savoring the prospect of writing a blistering review.

Then, as is usual with Andre Norton books, came the surprise: viz., that The Zero Stone was not, after all, a bad book; that, indeed, within its limitations it was a very good one. Somewhere around the end of Chapter Two, either the narrative style became smoother or, more likely, I became accustomed to "Jern's" syntax and sufficiently engrossed in the story not to feel the bumps. And I settled back from that point on to enjoy an imaginative, well-done science fiction adventure story.

You will not find here or, for that matter, in any Andre Norton novel that I know of, perceptive commentary on man and his mores or profound insights into social relationships. The

Zero Stone makes no pretense of being anything it is not; it is intended only to be a good, entertaining piece of fiction, and in that it succeeds. (No doubt Lester del Rey and other proponents of Old Wave sf would find the above insufferably condescending; if so, it is unintentionally so.) Nor will you find great writing. Andre Norton is a competent technician, nothing more.

What you will find is an engaging, fast-moving story that avoids nearly all of the deficiencies of its type. In particular, Miss Norton avoids the stereotype characters and situations which are the bane of so many writers in this genre. The hero, Murdoc Jern, is interesting and highly believable as a hero. No superman he: Jern gets battered around, double-crossed and outwitted, and usually has to be bailed out of tight spots by his companion, Eet. The latter is a mutated cat-creature, a telepathic consciousness aeons old who is charmingly droll with a touch of arrogance. None of the other characters really come alive, but at least they are written as individuals, not stereotypes. In addition to the characters of Jern and Eet, what stands out in The Zero Stone is the description of the forest/jungle in which the adventurers are marooned at one point. Norton does a superb job of creating the topography of a lush, alien forest, reminiscent of but, I think, a bit better than, Aldiss' "Hothouse" series.

As noted at the outset of this review, I seriously wonder if Andre Norton deliberately writes poor beginnings in order to establish a psychological state in the reader in which he is even more impressed by the novel once it gets moving. Probably not, but it sometimes seems that way. In any case, The Zero Stone, once you get past the first couple of pages, and into the story, is a most pleasant couple of hours of reading. Its only major fault from Chapter Three onward is that it leaves some loose ends, and that no doubt was done with a sequel in mind. I look forward to it.

—Ted Pauls



THE BELL FROM INFINITY by Robert Moore Williams—Lancer 73-766, 60¢

He wrote two of my favorite sf short stories, "Flight of the Dawn Star" and "Robots Return." And for Ace some ten years ago he wrote The Blue Atom, a good space opera that has stayed in my memory while others have faded. And he has lately been writing repellent novels about a dud named Zanthar, each one more painful to read.

He can do better than this, I keep telling myself. He can do better than this...

The Bell from Infinity is slightly reminiscent of The Blue Atom, since it, too, involves an ancient machine of incredible power. While snooping, for reasons unspecified, in a hollowed-out asteroid which contains a hotel and casino, an agent for a space police force called Group Nine stumbles onto the device and is vibrated out of existence. His dis-

appearance results in the arrival of more agents and things start happening. Unfortunately, they happen rather slowly as Mr. Williams uses the tricks of his trade to stretch the story to novel length. Consequently, the book would have benefitted from a stiff dose of editing.

And a rewrite would not have been out of order, for the novel bristles with lines which are unintentionally humorous: "There were no changes of expression...My Dysto's pointed ears continued to point." "Our job is to stop ultimate weapons before they get started." (Plural ultimate weapons?) "If we are going to have any influence in space, we absolutely have to back up the few men we have. ... Otherwise every bum in space will laugh at us and we will have no influence at all." And that last remark is followed by a misquoting of Theodore Roosevelt. Finally, I think the time for stories about Martians and Venusians who can live unprotected in an Earthlike environment is long past.

On the plus side, inside jokes are sprinkled through the book. One character, for example, is from eastern Kentucky, and he is an asteroid miner. And, if one overlooks the padding and occasional clumsy phrasing, the novel is an enjoyable, if slight space opera. An improvement over the Zanthar tripe it is, but...

He can do better than this, I keep telling myself. He can do better than this...

—Hank Davis



EDGAR RICE BURROUGHS: MASTER OF ADVENTURE by Richard A. Lupoff—Ace N-6, 95¢

This is a 317 page descriptive study of the works of ERB. As a limited circulation Canaveral Press hardcover, I'm sure it was a necessary and valuable book to its intended readership — hardcore ERB and sf fans and collectors. As a mass-circulation Ace paperback, it leaves a whole hell of a lot to be desired. Master is a "specialty" book in the worst sense of the word — it's simply not broad enough in scope to be meaningful or even interesting to the average reader.

What Lupoff sets out to do is describe the plots, characters and backgrounds of ERB's whole literary output: seventy published books over forty years. And he does it quite well, devoting more complete coverage to the more important series stories: Tanzan, and the sf Mars, Venus and Pellucidar books, but still sketching in the minor potboilers and non-series stories and books. His treatment seems completely objective, although that can be called a fault rather than a virtue. He also cites numerous other books which may have influenced ERB's writing, and mentions several of the more important works written under ERB's influence.

—Earl Evers



THREE FOR TOMORROW by Robert Silverberg, Roger Zelazny and James Blish—Meredith, \$5.95

This book is the product of an interesting idea. Arthur C. Clarke was asked to write a brief essay outlining a theme—of his choice—for a science fiction story. The theme he decided upon was "With increasing technology goes increasing vulnerability; the more Man 'conquers' (sic) Nature, the more prone he becomes to artificial catastrophe." Clarke cited such instances as the Great Northeast Power Blackout, the TORREY CANYON, the Santa Barbara oil slick, etc. Copies of the essay were then given to Messrs. Silverberg, Zelazny and Blish, and they were requested to write novellas around it, each without being aware of what approach the others were adopting. The result is Three for Tomorrow, which presents Clarke's essay plus three fine original novellas, and makes of the whole something more than the sum of its parts.

"We All Die Naked", by James Blish (which is being considered first in obedience to the familiar Biblical injunction—and also because it is the best of the trio), grabs the theme and runs with it, all the way to the End. The artificial catastrophe that he postulates is not merely a TORREY CANYON on a larger scale; it is not an accident or a malfunction of any human system. Rather, it is the geological cataclysm that is the inevitable consequence of alteration of the rotation of the Earth caused by the melting of the ice caps caused by the increased mean temperature caused by the increased volume of carbon dioxide, et al., in the atmosphere caused by man's industrial civilization. Blish's extrapolation is therefore epochal without being dramatic, like the inevitable advance of a glacier. The novella is marred in the early chapters by several excursions into embarrassingly frivolous camp, as in the catalogue of persona in the central character's circle of friends, who include a multi-media artist named Will Emshredder, a white Muslim named Goldfarb Z., and Strynge Tighe, "a desperate Irishman clad entirely in beads made of blue-dyed corn." This sort of thing represents a jarring note in an otherwise serious novella which, toward the end, is superbly and sensitively done. The comic bookish names notwithstanding, "We All Die Naked" is the most impressive of the three stories, and the one, I think, which most faithfully follows the course charted by Clarke.

Robert Silverberg, in "How It Was When the Past Went Away", takes a somewhat different tack. The story concerns what happens when amnesiac drugs are introduced into the water supply of San Francisco. Who did it and why are not important—the effect and the consequences are what matter. The drug results in virtually the entire population of the city being affected to one degree or another. Silverberg focuses on eight main characters, and manages to a remarkable degree to avoid making them "types", which is a temptation for even a good writer in this sort of story. There are some interesting sub-plots, involving these people and the effect of the event on their lives (disastrous for some, favorable for others). Most people

recover their memories, or the bulk of their memories, in time, and in fact the city is beginning to return to normal in a few days. However, a religious movement has sprung up around the amnesiac (it permits one to erase past sins and guilt and begin a new life with a clean slate), they have a supply of the drug and the formula (it is easy to produce), and are intent with missionary fervor and singlemindedness on bringing the blessings of their new-found panacea to all men wherever they may be. They cannot be stopped and, as the author notes, eventually no one will want to stop them. Silverberg has thus postulated the effective collapse of civilization, less awesomely but no less certainly than in Blish's tale: for ultimately mankind will be reduced to a bunch of contented, empty-headed, identity-less animals starving to death because nobody remembers how to plant or harvest or process food. It's an even less pleasant prospect than Blish's earthquakes and volcanic eruptions (in the face of which men at least retain some final dignity).

Finally, there is Roger Zelazny's "The Eve of RUMOKO", which does not really come to grips with the Clarke theme except peripherally. Oh, there's a disaster caused by man messing around with the environment (via "Project RUMOKO", a sort of latter-day Mohole), and the prospect of an even greater disaster to come, but this is not the central element. Zelazny's novella is about the man who doesn't exist. His name,

at various points in the story, is Ernest Hemingway, Albert Schweitzer and Francis S. Fitzgerald. He is an independent-minded man who manages to have his record deleted from the Central Data Bank, which contains a complete file on every man, woman and child on the face of the Earth. Furthermore, through his knowledge of the computerized system (which he helped create), he can feed false

information into the Central and hence create fictitious identities as needed. He works as a sort of free-lance private investigator, and his current job is investigating attempts to sabotage "Project RUMOKO". It is a fine novella; the characters are well-drawn, the pacing is excellent, the dialogue is sharp (lines like: "I've got a funny thing about death: I don't like to see people do it"), all those things that Roger Zelazny does so well. But "The Eve of RUMOKO", unless I am missing something subtle, does not quite address itself to the Clarke theme and the point of the book, and so for that reason it is impossible to be completely happy with it.

Three for Tomorrow is a book well worth buying and reading. All three novellas are first-rate stories by first-rate writers.

—Ted Pauls



CATHARSIS CENTRAL by Antony Alban—Berkley X1687, 60¢

When I read a book like this, I wonder what the other manuscripts were like that were rejected as not being up to the quality of those accepted. Whether Anthony A. Thompson realized this when he by-lined it "Antony Alban", I don't know



But I wouldn't want to own up to it, either.

Basically, it is yet another in the long string of stories devoted to the idea that mankind must not stagnate in a status quo society. Either Up, or Down, but not Steady-As-She-Goes. In this book, it is long since the Blow-Up and the remainder of mankind is concentrated into a number of Settlements. In these, people go about their daily life in uneventful bliss, their nights spent under the soothing helmets of Catharsis Central. Their every anxiety, fear, untoward emotion is soothed away and the next morning it's Up-and-At-'Em-It's-A-Beautiful-Day!...every day.

Our protagonist is one of the console operators at Catharsis Central. Almost from the first page, he exhibits many of the irritations supposedly sluiced away by each person's individual programmed tape. But not for long. "Suddenly violence erupts..." says the jacket blurb, and his paradise starts coming apart, violently. A small group of CC operators, and others, find themselves fighting an unknown, brutal enemy. They go to a hidden segment of the museum and bring out weapons of pre-blowup times. Our time.

We are then treated to detailed lectures on a variety of weapons that might delight the editor of GUN WORLD. And then again, maybe not, for as the story plods on, violence and brutality and sex are dragged in to heavily pad the thin plot. Scene after scene of crude detail unfolds until the end of the book finally arrives. It arrives at the only possible ending, of course, and one wonders what the real Message was. Was it an anti-war, anti-violence tour de force? Hardly. Piling gore upon gore deadens the impact and the ostensible preoccupation with weapons on the part of one character is more boring than exemplificative of anything. All told, a very low calibre book.

—Ed Cox



MINDBLOWER by Charles McNaughton, Jr.—Essex House 0120, \$1.95

Dick sent me this book because it's a "dirty book about drugs." Well, it's that all right; it's got a lot of very realistic descriptions of the psychedelic experience in it, and it's also what I'd call a genuinely dirty book, in the worst sense of the word. The first half of the book describes a guy and a chick on acid, going through all sorts of sex and sadism adventures. I'm sure the author is a genuine acid-head and he may be a genuine sadist as well (I don't know enough about that aspect of sex to tell, and I'm not sorry I don't), but I still disliked what I read very strongly. I don't like to read about people enjoying pain, either on the giving or receiving end. It doesn't shock me or scare me or make me angry at the author or anything, it just turns me off. I have no more desire to read about sado-masochism than I have to sit in a room full of bad smells or go to work on less than my normal quota of sleep or expose myself to any other form of sensory unpleas-



antness I think you genuinely have to like pain to like the first part of this book.

The second half of the book concerns a "super drug" of some sort which greatly expands the human mind in all sorts of weird directions. Some of the descriptions resemble some things I've experienced on STP, while others seem to be extensions of various ordinary drug reactions combined with various sf descriptions of telepathy and other psychic phenomena. The overall effect is that everyone in the entire city of San Francisco commits suicide in a sort of take-off on the ending of Clarke's Childhood's End. I don't know if the satire is intentional or not, but I found it extremely distasteful to read, and not nearly convincing enough to take seriously.

—Earl Evers



SLAUGHTERHOUSE-FIVE Or The Children's Crusade by Kurt Vonnegut, Jr.—Delacorte Press, \$5.95

My God, what is it?

There is not much question as to why Vonnegut has been accepted by mainstream or why the publisher states he was "once mistakenly typed as a science fiction writer." He is such a damned good writer, I'd say, and one who does not write sf merely to write sf but because it gives him the needed room to make his caustic comments on the state of humanity without having effigies of himself burned publicly from coast to coast. A mainstream critic is likely to argue for hours that because this book contains spaceships, aliens and time-travel is no reason to consider it sf; but the fact of the matter is that what-is-it? is assuredly science fiction (also a serious novelization of an autobiographical, nonfictional social-comment farce), possibly Vonnegut's best book, and definitely one of the best sf (or mainstream) novels this year. I hope it makes Vonnegut a million bucks.

Vonnegut uses tight, ordered prose to tell the story of Billy Pilgrim, whose entire life has been played out from birth to death yet is ever in existence as Billy skips around in time from his first days in Ilium, New York, to his imprisonment in "Slaughterhouse-Five" in Dresden during the horrible World War II fire bombing; to his abduction to the planet Tralfamadore where he lives in an alien zoo, plays house with a terrifically sexy star of the sexploitation movies, Montana Wildhack; and learns that every moment in time, every smidgen of matter, always exists without change. As an alien tells him: "All time is time. It does not change. It does not lend itself to warnings or explanations. It simply is. Take it moment by moment, and you will find that we are all, as I've said before, bugs in amber."

The book is so crammed with wisdom and wit, horror and humor, that nothing I write about it can convey the raw humanity of what it says about Man's terrible affinity for indifference. The entire book is condensed to a point-of-view, which is the subject of the satire anyway — build your p-o-v well, make it

as pleasant as possible and be happy is you succeed. (Who's feeding who a line? Am I? Is anybody? Is this simple logic? Think about it.) Vonnegut's satire is abrasive, soft, vicious, kind...all in the same moment. Dozens upon dozens of tiny scenes show us, simply, how petty things get in the way, sometimes accumulating into a force that is horrifyingly destructive before we realize what we have done. And when we have realized, just how do we bring back the dead? Yet in the horror, there are moments of good that shine so brightly we wonder if they could have even existed without the terrible surround. And, even in tragedy, human beings are so funny!

If the generalities of the various themes give one pause to think, the specifics are what really drag one over the coals. There are some ingenious jabs at science fiction's concern with the trivial, and the characters do things so appallingly lifelike that I cannot imagine a single person picking up this book and not squirming as he finds his own habits in bold print for all the world to see. There are specifics among the characters too:

"The Americans in the slaughterhouse had a very interesting visitor two days before Dresden was destroyed. He was Howard W. Campbell, Jr., an American who had become a Nazi. Campbell was the one who had written the monograph about the shabby behavior of American prisoners of war... 'Blue is for the American sky,' Campbell was saying. 'White is for the race that pioneered the continent, drained the swamps and cleared the forests and built the roads and bridges. Red is for the blood of American patriots which was shed so gladly in years gone by'... He had a broad armband which was red with a blue swastika in a circle of white." (p. 139-140)

There is also Kilgore Trout, the sf writer who had a book about a time traveler who went back to Bible times, where Jesus and his father were glad to have the work of building a cross used in the execution of a rabble-rouser, and where the time-traveler uses a stethoscope to examine Jesus after his own crucifixion: "There wasn't a sound inside the emaciated chest cavity. The Son of God was dead as a doornail." (p. 176)

Cruelty, intentional or stupidly unintentional, is no less painful for its victim because of motive — values change and change and change and are ever the same. This book is certainly the most wicked I've read in a long time; it is also the most humane and touching. I will keep my

copy within easy access and when the world seems to be heaving itself over the rim of a bottomless chasm, I will take it out and read it and laugh: My God, what is it?

—Richard Delap



THE CAVES OF KARST by Lee Hoffman—Ballantine 01507, 75¢

For all that it attempts in its 224 pages for that 75¢, this book achieves little more than a way to spend two or three hours for casual reading. Perhaps nothing more is intended than a diversion. It reads very much like an early fifties effort from PLANET STORIES and indeed is a good example of the pulp story formula.

The protagonist, Griffith goes through the familiar gamut of one trouble after another, getting deeper as he goes, as his watery planet Karst experiences broadening troubles in its relationship with the Colonial Authority. This is the arm of the Earth Empire, of which Karst is an uneasy part, which administers colony planets. The Divers, of which Griffith is one, have their Divers' Guild to protect their interests from would-be exploiters from off-planet. This story is simply that of Griffith's unwilling part in the game when things start happening to upset the balance and probably lose Karstian independence.

A strong subplot of bigotry and prejudice plays through the story, displaying the ills of same, as Griffith, a biological/surgical "adaptive", experiences revulsion on the part of the "Earthies". This may be the Message. Whether or not this be true, it is a simple plot, simply told in traditional form. For the long-time fans, Lee Hoffman continues a practice probably started, and most used, by Bob Yucker in the employment of fans' names and very in-group bits here and there. But even this doesn't make the book more than a mild time-passer, a slightly longer Ace Double—Novel half. Perhaps I was expecting too much from the by-line. Yet it is obvious that we might expect a lot more someday.

—Ed Cox



THE COSMIC CLOCKS by Michel Gauquelin—Avon V2282, 75¢

On the cover are the words: Astonishing new discoveries in astrology. And on the cover is a long curve of the signs of the zodiac.

But these are on the borderline of deception. Gauquelin spends less than half the book tracing the history of astrology and then demolishing it as a viable art of prediction and reducing to rubbish the belief that persons born under a specific sign of the zodiac will possess a specific set of personality and character traits.

There are no new discoveries in astrology, but there are some startling conclusions drawn from experiments dealing with the effects on man, animals, insects and plants—all life on Earth—by the electromagnetic fields of our planet, the sun, moon, and the nearer planets.

A full moon does bring out the beast in us; crops are affected by the moon; during periods of higher solar activity crimes increase and more people die; the eleven year rhythm of solar activity affects our weather, too; and there seems to be some relationship between intelligence and the time of the year in which a child is born; and which planets are in the

sky during a child's birth do seem, statistically, to indicate some effect on his outstanding talents.

The subtle interplay of tiny electromagnetic fields do affect us in many ways we are only now beginning to realize. Perhaps moreso than a lot of us would like to admit.

—Richard E. Geis



THE POLLINATORS OF EDEN by John Boyd—Weybright & Talley, N.Y.

If you want to read a good book, leap quickly for a copy of this second novel from a new writer (see The Last Starship From Earth for his first). The paperback ought to be out soon.

Briefly, the story runs like this: The protagonist is Dr. Freda Caron, Dept. head (of Cystology) at the Institute of Advanced Studies at Santa Barbara. This being the site of the Dept. of Agriculture's Bureau of Exotic Plants. Which explains the intense interest in a newly discovered planet called Flora, or The Planet of Flowers. The flowers thereon appear to be far advanced past their counterparts on Earth. The continuing research into this wonder is conducted by Freda Caron as she plants tulip seeds from Flora with the assistance of student Polino. Many, many events transpire that finally take Freda to Flora where her husband-to-be is in, uh, residence, studying the orchids, the highest form of plantlife on the planet...figuring out how they become pollinated...in a plant-world which appears to have almost animal-like systems. I haven't begun to touch on the multitude of sub-strata of plot-threads that John Boyd has woven into this spellbinding novel.

For, like his first book, this has a sharply defined United States future society...yet all hasn't changed: the inter-bureau/department warfare continues and we are treated to some skillful in-fighting scenes during a Congressional hearing. The class society of the time is etched deeply into Freda Caron and we are given Polino against which to play the threnody of her changing attitudes and behavior. With her initial frigidity assaulted on Earth, her involvement on flora transcends that of most so-called sex novels in a theme that ought to show John Boyd as, if not an innovator, a skillful writer capable to handling any plot thrust he cares to make.

Boyd's is a talent that ought to be a harbinger of good times to come if more of his quality come into the scene. We've had the traditional science-fiction writers and the New Wave stylists with a scattering of "mainstream" novelists trying their hand at the genre (Julius Fast is a successful example). In John Boyd we have a true science-fiction novelist. He has all the skills. He is erudite. He slashes, scalpel-sharp, at our society, mores, values, etc. in satiric asides carefully woven into the continuity of his story. But he is not perfect—there are a few small flaws of minor importance to the story.

In essence, he seems able to write the kind of story

that combines the best attributes of the old-line sf writers and the New Wave emotionalists. But The Pollinators of Eden is far more than that; it is a crackling sharp novel which has much to offer almost any reader. I suggest you do read it.

—Ed Cox

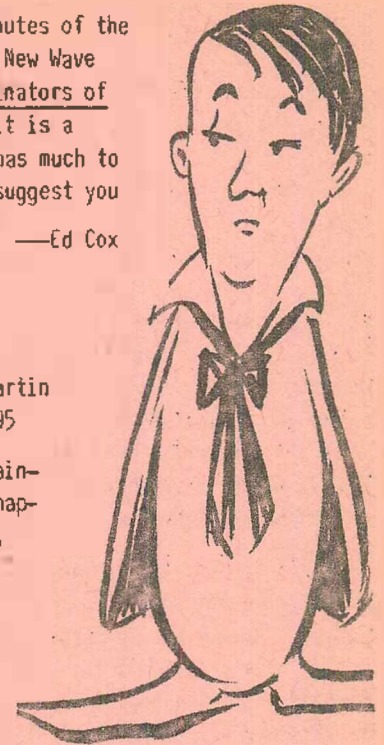


THE MENDELLOV CONSPIRACY by Martin Caidin—Meredith Press, \$5.95

Every once in a while a mainstream writer discovers our happy little genre and exclaims, "My God, look at all these writers making money with stories about rocketships and robots and like that—I can turn out this kind of stuff in my sleep!" Sometimes the motive is different, of course. The writer may enjoy sf and want to do something in the field, or—heaven help us—he may even want to elevate sf by offering his name and talent and showing what a real writer can do with the material. Whatever the motive, the result is almost invariably the same. Oh, sure, there's Kurt Vonnegut, Jr., but he seems to be the exception that proves the rule. Ordinarily, when an established mainstream author steps into the field, he winds up writing a second-rate (or worse) novel that probably wouldn't be published at all but for his Big Name.

Take The Mendelov Conspiracy, for example. Caidin has taken a thoroughly standard idea (flying saucers are real, Virginia, and they are operated by a benevolent secret organization of scientists and industrialists whose aim is to prevent the governments of the world from destroying humanity in a nuclear spasm), added to it one original element (which I will refrain from revealing on the off-chance that somebody out there will actually sink six bucks into the book after reading this review), and produced a dull, empty novel. It is, to be sure, competently written. Caidin, after all, is a writer of some ability, with 59 published titles. But as a science fiction novel, for all its slickness of prose, it compares unfavorably with the average Raymond F. Jones or Murray Leinster book.

For one thing, it is far too long. Given the meat of The Mendelov Conspiracy, Poul Anderson would have written a long novelette, Zelazny or Delany a short story, David R. Bunch a vignette. Caidin stretches his meagre plot over 270 pages. There is lots of dialog, explaining and re-explaining obvious things. There are two long chapters (IV and V) involving an interview with an officer at the Air Force's Project Blue Book; in which all of the natural and man-made phenomena that produce erroneous flying saucer reports are catalogued at appalling length. There are nice lengthy philosophical discussions, not to mention technical discussions, after the hero has uncovered



the conspiracy and the conspirators are attempting to recruit him.

The characters are one-dimensional cut-outs. Cliff Brady, the hero, is a hard-drinking, sharp-talking newspaperman with a heart of gold beneath the rough exterior. Really he is. You will remember him, under different names, from several hundred novels and short stories in the past couple of decades. Early in the story, he acquires a girl friend, an airline stewardess named Ann Dallas, who is an almost complete non-entity. Their antagonist, after a fashion, is Dr. Vadim Mendelov, a psychologist, evolutionist, sociologist and all-around Renaissance Man who is the brains behind the conspiracy to save the world from itself. Elsewhere throughout the landscape are scattered papier mache figures which the reader may or may not notice in the course of his perusal; they're the other characters.

A flying disc is reported near a Strategic Air Command installation out west. Hotshot wire service writer Brady flies out to dig up the poop, and gets the runaround from an Air Force press officer. This excites his sensitive journalist's antennae, so he decides to delve deeply into the entire UFO business. He flies around the country doing research, convinces himself that there are too flying saucers, and begins a series of articles. Suddenly, on word from upstairs, the series gets cancelled. You and I know why, but it takes Brady an embarrassingly long time to catch on that somebody is trying to silence him because he is Getting Close To The Truth. He goes out and gets smashed. By page 133 he has figured out that his ultimate boss, the head of World Press, is part of the plot. Jobless, he continues the investigation on his own, meets Dr. Mendelov, gets talked out of believing in the discs, then is buzzed by one after completing the interview. He goes out and gets smashed again, a sexy blonde picks him up and takes him to her apartment, whereupon he is drugged and abducted to the conspirators' base in the Amazon jungle. After many pages of argument, he joins them, as you and I knew he would all along, and they go about compelling the world to scrap its nuclear arms in a rather grisly fashion.

It is, as I said, competently written, and for a couple of chapters, in which there are some atomic damage scenes reminiscent of Philip Wylie (Tomorrow and Triumph), Caidin actually seems to exert himself to rise above competency. But it's hardly worth the effort.

—Ted Pauls



SCIENCE FICTION WORLDS OF FORREST J. ACKERMAN & FRIENDS by Forrest J. Ackerman—Powell PP142, 95¢

This contains 24 short pieces reprinted from fanzines, monster mags, and even an sf prozine or two: short-short stories, extended jokes, biographical and bibliographical sketches, and less describable material, all of it either written by Ackerman or (I guess the only way to say it) in-

spired by him. If you're not familiar with Forrie Ackerman's style, all I can say is — he considers the pun a high art form and writes accordingly. He not only bases his stories on plays on words, somehow or other he even manages to make puns using ideas. And surprisingly enough, the result is usually quite funny. I rather enjoyed this book, even though all the material (with the exception of a couple of non-humorous descriptive pieces about monster-movies and their various creators) is either silly or downright, deliberately insulting to the reader. I mean you finish a piece and say "Ouch!". Then you start laughing and realize it wasn't so bad after all. Anyway, I enjoyed the book, but it's not the sort of thing I can recommend — it just might appeal to your sense of humor or it might not, and there's no way to tell in advance.

—Earl Evers



THE PRESERVING MACHINE by Philip K. Dick—Ace 67800, 95¢

I have seen only one previous collection of Dick's short-er fiction (The Variable Man, Ace), so this new collection of works dating from 1952 to 1966 fills a gap that has long needed attention. Nearly all the stories included are good or better, and even the three less-than-average stories are not really poor. The author's most remarkable talent is his extraordinary range which is often as adept at farce as at tragedy, as well as an uncanny ability to sometimes combine the two. That a single man could have written all these stories is indeed in itself only a tiny bit less than staggering.

"The Preserving Machine" tells of a machine which turns musical scores into strangely active animals. But the struggle for survival does unpredictable things, and the outcome...is it evil, inevitable, or both? Whatever, it's weird.

"Upon the Dull Earth" is an sf-horror tale of a young woman whose ability to dabble with the unknown dimensions leads to disastrous consequences. Although the climax is foreseeable, it's still a disturbing tale with an eerie, attached sense of dread.

In the book's best story, "War Game," three men carefully examine alien toys from Ganymede, looking for dangerous or subversive elements. One mysterious set of toy soldiers keeps the men in a very worried state as they suspect but cannot confirm a danger. The danger is there, and its subtlety is as appallingly ingenious as is this story.

Following the colonization of Mars and Venus, newly-formed cultural and physiological differences cause humanity to war again in "War Veteran," and one man, a time-traveler, holds the key to changing the war-torn future. It's a bit long, but on the clever side and mostly entertaining.

Implantation of simulated memories causes a lot of problems when used on an ordinary man whose real memories mysteriously coincide with the fake ones. Dick tries hard to make the highly implausible "We Can Remember It For You Wholesale" convincing, but



nothing he does can really excuse the disappointingly stolid plotting.

"Captive Market" is a downbeat but ok story of a business-woman who can travel through a sort of time-warp, moving into the future where the last survivors of a world-scale war need supplies to carry out their plans of taking a ship to Venus. (Dick's on the side of the villain in this one.)

A giant computer is President of the U.S. in "Top Stand-By Job," but union rules have made it mandatory that a human being be placed in a 'stand-by' position. An alien invasion, a computer disablement, and an overweight, all-too-human stand-by give Dick the chance to make some to-the-core statements on Man's inability to eat one potato chip

Is the world really so terrifying? In "Roog," from a dog's-eye point-of-view, Dick makes a short but effective comment on perception.

"Beyond Lies the Wub" is an amusing tale of some men's dizzy encounter with their superior—a fat pig from Mars. In spite of the wild humor, the story says something relevant.

In "If There Were No Benny Cemoli," a search for "war criminals" on an again nearly destroyed Earth, a homeostatic newspaper, and elements of detection and deception mesh well.

A devastated Earth (hmmm, Dick seems to love to ravage this planet), aliens who are dying (literally) to help, and the sometimes terrible consequences of frustration — these are the things used to build "Pay for the Printer." Too bad it disintegrates when the author insultingly uses the last two pages to explain the obvious.

A wheels-within-wheels plot, "Retreat Syndrome" is about a man who suspects he is on Ganymede (but it seems he's on Earth), who knows he has murdered his wife (but she's still hanging around), and who has a psychiatrist who intrudes upon both the real and the unreal. It's a suspenseful, intriguing, very good story.

"What the Dead Men Say" runs high on melodrama while telling of the devious methods employed for power-gains, and concerns a man who during a "half-life" after death still seems seeking to control the lives of others. The intricate plot gets buried under some unconvincing psychology, but Dick did make an interesting prediction (the story was published in 1964) about Richard Nixon that had to be updated by only a couple of years for this printing.

A mostly predictable story, "The Crawlers" still carries a sharp sting in its tail. Radiation is the implied reason for a group of ugly human mutant children who crawl about, building homes underneath the ground and suffering at people's uncontrollable urges

to put them out of their misery.

"Oh, To Be a Blobel!" is a blackly amusing, O. Henry-like whimsy about a man who is human part of the time and Blobel (an alien, uniceelulat amoeba) the rest. His wife, originally a Blobel, has similar problems by being human at times. And Dick does some wicked table-turning with both.

If Ace can get together more collections such as this, they will bring a nice change of pace, as this one has, to the high quality "Specials" line.

—Richard Delap



THIS BUSINESS OF BOMFOG by Madelaine Duke—Doubleday, \$4.50

"This Business..." is British political satire set in the 1990's, with Merrie Olde England again taking a major part in international affairs through "Bomfog", a sort of futurized version of a medieval court, which wines and dines politicians from all over the world while it manipulates them through all sorts of intrigues in an effort to preserve "The Brotherhood of Man, the fatherhood of God", whatever that is. The future world itself isn't particularly convincing, the intrigues and personalities aren't very interesting, and the whole book struck me as something of a bore. If you're really into present-day British politics and British history, you'll probably pick up on all the references that went over my head and find parts of the narrative screamingly funny, but the overall structure of the book is still weak. Even in a satire, you've got to care about what befalls the characters, and the characters in Bomfog just don't deserve it.

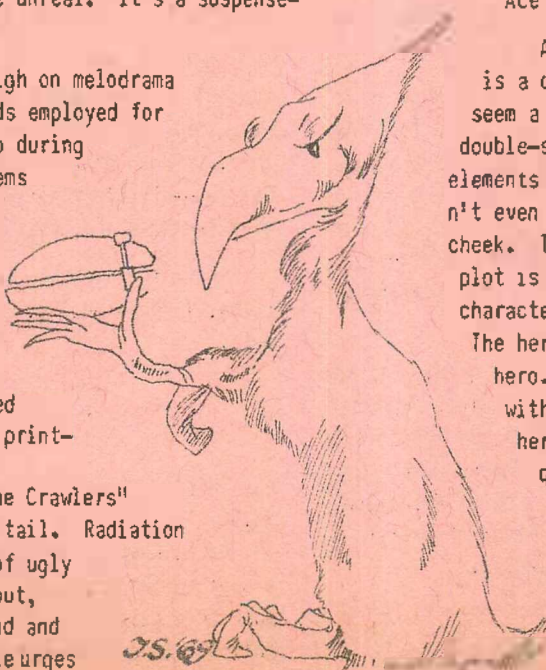
—Earl Evers



THE WARLOCK IN SPITE OF HIMSELF by Christopher Stasheff—Ace 87300, 75¢

Actually, The Warlock In Spite of Himself is a darn good book. It moves fast enough to seem a lot shorter than it is. It tries to double-shuffle you into thinking all the fantasy elements are either superscience or psi, and doesn't even fool itself. Tongues stay firmly in cheek. The characterizations are good and the plot is involuted enough so that most of the characters are cream masquerading as skim milk. The hero is dense enough at times to be a good hero. Whimsy and gore are sprinkled lightly with a master's hand. And the scenes between hero Rod Gallowglass and ghost Horatio Loquire in the darkened twistings of the mountain fortress are the best human-spirit exchanges since Fred Barber left liquor out for the little people. Recommended for the UNKNOWN lamenters in the audience.

—Bill Glass



Little Noted And/Nor Long Remembered by the editor

TO LIVE AGAIN by Robert Silverberg—Doubleday, \$4.95

Silverberg in this novel comes to a new high point in his science fiction career. This one is put together perfectly; everything clicks and hums with meshed quality.

The story is of a power struggle between the wealthy Kaufmann family and shrewd, dynamic, ambitious, equally ruthless John Roditis over the "persona", the mind-soul recording, of recently-died financial genius Paul Kaufmann.

In the middle of this contest is the director of the Scheffing Institute, which alone records and implants persona, who must decide who will receive this incredibly powerful and valuable persona. Few men are able to handle the acquisition of so overwhelming an ego. Kaufmann's possessor will be the most powerful man in the world.

The struggle occurs in a future world culture in which the wealthy (because the Scheffing process is so expensive—to record one's self and to receive another self) sometimes take on as many as four or five persona who reside in the host's mind and advise, share experience, wisdom, but cannot experience the host's bodily sensations. They can only observe in a kind of limbo.

But occasionally a persona becomes very strong, or is taken on by a weak or crumbling personality, and tries to go "dybbuk"—to take over the host's body. Silverberg handles this concept masterfully; the struggle between Noyes, Roditis' neurotic, weak assistant, and Noyes' persona, Kravchenko, is a continuing, absorbing and utterly convincing detailed psycho-drama that is made chillingly real by fine characterization.

The characterization throughout is very good, but with Mark Kaufmann and John Roditis a shade too stereotyped as ruthless tycoons, and Elena Volterra (!) a bit too luridly voluptuous as Mark's mistress. Risa Kaufmann, Mark's teenage daughter who emerges as a tiger is subtly delineated, and with Noyes-Kravchenko and numerous minor characters comes really alive with depth and complexity.

This book is of Hugo quality.



BRAIN WAVE by Poul Anderson—Walker, \$4.50

Written in 1954, this study of the adjustment of Man and men and women to a sudden increase in intelligence of all mammals (or is it all living things with brains?) on Earth is very well done and easily stands today with current sf of high quality.

Poul traces the changes through individuals and their relationships with others, with society and with animals—suddenly—smart. It is all acutely and honestly handled.

He perhaps wisely limited himself in the scope of the book—a consideration of what happened to the rats, the porpoises and whales, the birds, the insects when the solar system came out of an area of space which had for millions of years inhibited intelligence would have been fascinating, too, but likely beyond his plan and word limit.

Poul's vision of what a supremely rational and intelligent—beyond-our-present-comprehension man and society could be like is a fine one; he creates a form of utopia in which most of mankind become something akin to galaxy-spanning gods whose responsibility is to guide the other, less intelligent life-forms (Earthman's Burden) while those remaining on Earth, formerly morons and imbeciles, plus those who could not handle the change, emotionally, live in peace and harmony with the newly sentient animals.



THORNS by Robert Silverberg—Walker, \$4.95

The novel seems oddly made—elements of glossy pulp and very good depth of characterization and emotional involvement—in a love story initiated by Duncan Chalk, an incredibly fat, powerful, evil man who somehow feeds on the emotional pain he schemes to generate in others. In this case he maneuvers a traumatized, shallow, emotionally unfocused girl together with a spaceman who had been surgically rearranged and "improved" by alien doctors.

Chalk "feeds" well on the inevitable unhappiness and frictions of the exploited romance of Lona Kelvin and Minner Burris. But...they actually fall in love, and discover, almost too late, in each other strengths and compassions each need. Lona matures—girl to woman—and Minner comes to terms with his differentness and basic humanness.

Their revenge upon Chalk seems a bit much, however...a pulpy, formula ending. The story is a sandwich: pulp—meat—pulp.



CREATURES OF LIGHT AND DARKNESS by Roger Zelazny—Doubleday, \$4.50

Using Egyptian mythology and gods as roles and identities, a small group of...men?...superbeings?...struggle for dominance on a galaxy-wide stage with superpowers based on incredibly developed psi abilities and superscience.

It is all unbelievable but also engaging, suspenseful and well-told. Zelazny's skill and art can make the most absurd plot and background suffice.



SPLINTERS edited by Alex Hamilton—Walker, \$5.95

Subtitled "A New Anthology of Modern Macabre Fiction," this assortment by British writers is very "English" in setting and style with one or two exceptions. On the whole these stories are not impressive; they mostly lack power and emotional involvement. They seem too much exercises in technique and mood and style and characterization; intellectual, very cultured and civilized.

Three stories impressed me, however: "An American Organ" by Anthony Burgess, a short, chilling story showing a casual, incidental murder of his wife by a husband quite mad, from the husband's insanely logical viewpoint; "The Biggest Game" by John Brunner, a reworking of an ancient sf idea—aliens collect a human trophy—told with highly professional muscle; and "Isabo," a powerful story of demonic possession and exorcism, by J.A. Cuddon.



NOMADS OF GOR by John Norman—Ballantine 01765, 75¢

Volume four in the chronicles of counter-Earth. "Far South of the Sardar Mountains Earl Cabot pursues his mission for the Priest-Kings of Gor. He must find their last precious link to survival. All Earl knows is that it is hidden somewhere among the teeming hordes of the savage Wagon People and that he might well be inviting death to ask for it directly."



THE NEW ADAM by Stanley G. Weinbaum—Avon V2288, 75¢

THE BLACK FLAME by Stanley Weinbaum—Avon V2280, 75¢

Two "landmark" and "milestone" works from the middle and late thirties. I'd like to publish an evaluation of these and a comparison of them with today's sf by a neutral reviewer-critic. Any volunteers?



THE WORLDS OF ROBERT A. HEINLEIN—Ace 91501, 60¢

Five long stories: "Free Men," "Blowups Happen," "Searchlight," "Life-Line," "Solution Unsatisfactory," and a long introduction—"Pandora's Box."

Well worth reading and keeping.



RE-BIRTH by John Wyndham—Ballantine 01638, 75¢

OUT OF THE DEEPS by John Wyndham—Ballantine 01639, 75¢

Re-Birth is a rather slow-paced after-the-bomb story incorporating religious persecution of mutants. Deeps is a story of present-day invasion by aliens. Both were written for a mass, non-sf oriented audience and thus seem old hat and too obvious to the regular reader.



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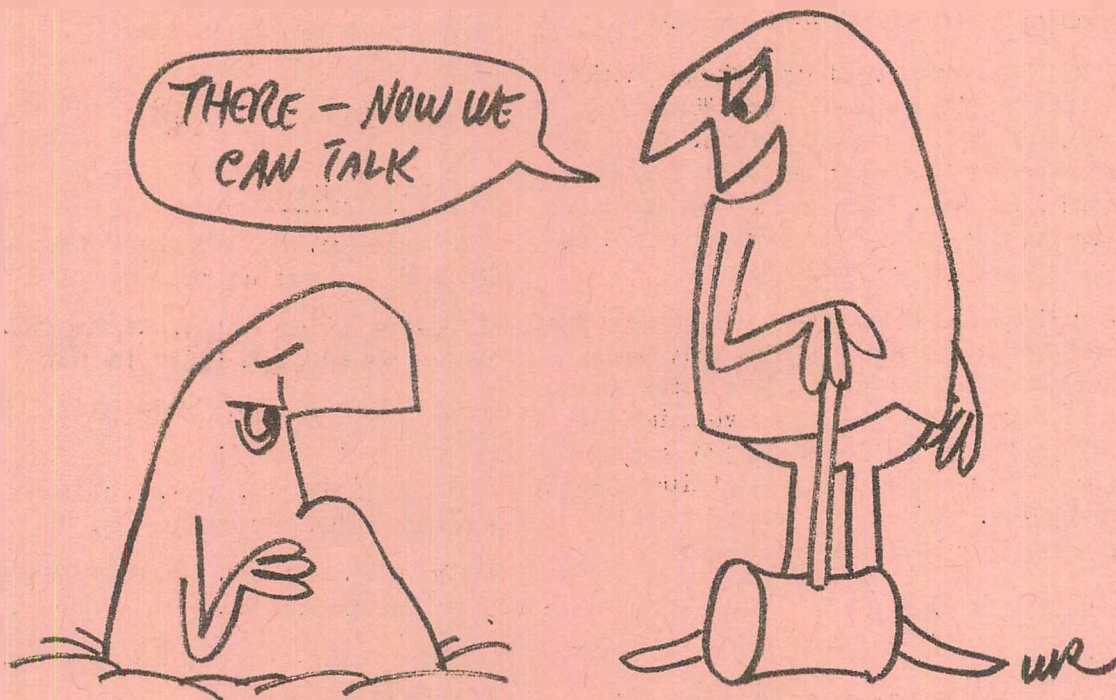


Last Minute Comment—

Just received John Brunner's second installment of his column. It will be in SFB 36.

Tim Kirk and Mike Gilbert were inspired by the Jack Gaughan—Vaughn Bode "battle" in the last ODD and have engaged in a cartooning war of their own. 13 pages. I hope to get it into #36. Too much, man, too much! —REG

P.O. BOX 3116



Samuel R. Delany
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With no thought to ending the New/Old Wave battle, here's a comment from Auden's collection of essays, The Dyer's Hand.

"All the various artistic battle cries, Classicism, Romanticism, Naturalism, Surrealism, The-language-really-used-by-men, The-music-of-the-future, etc., are of interest to art historians because of the practical help which, however absurd they may seem as theories, they have been to artists in discovering how to create the kind of works which were proper to their powers. As listeners, readers and spectators, we should take them all with a strong dose of salt, remembering that a work of art is not about this or that kind of life; it has life, drawn, certainly, from human experience but transmuted, as a tree transmutes water and sunlight.."

I've never had much to do with fan groups, but this afternoon I reread all the A.J. Cox pieces, from PSY 27 to SFR 33, at a sitting. I recognized many, many people (who have nothing to do with fandom): Much that was amusing there, much that was insightful — though I wished there had been less moralizing, particularly at the end of The Punster and The Polemicist. Part Two. As a tertiary thought, some hours after I'd finished reading, it occurred to me the only character potentially vicious (rather than wounded or ignorant) was Sydney Berkowitz — from what was left unsaid. Briefly, he was the only person who seemed to have taken the narrator

in. If making Sydney the real villain of the piece was not the writer's intent, it may indicate a conceptual flaw for which the occasional sentimentalities or moralizings are only surface off-sloughings. Read as a whole, the piece was least cruel when it was most cutting: the same turns of phrase that laid open the various foibles most acidly carried with them a certain affection and respect. Not only was the portrait sharp, the narrator's relation to the portrait was clear — particularly in The Galactic Square, Joe: The Old Guard, and the interview almost-alone with T. Quimby. But when acidity fell off, via the same process affection and respect turned into sentimentality and moralizing — two sides of one coin. But such character study is very difficult; there is only one way to do it, no matter who the object, and that is with a mirror firmly in hand, in which to check all details.

Again, I enjoyed the rereading. Much pleasure and thought there.

A painter friend, Bill B., in a North Beach bar one afternoon over a lot of beer, made a point about "About Five Thousand and Seven Hundred and Fifty Words" that struck me as worthy of a footnote: Not to down commercial literary products in themselves, but the section on subjunctionality only relates to those literary products intended to be sold — or that aspect of a literary product that is intended to attract buyers. As an inverse example: Contemporary poetry, to the extent that it is a non-commercial proposition, asks no particular subjunctive

relation to what the poem is about. It asks, only, that the reader believe those words have been written. The non-commercial artist (or the part of the artist that is non-commercial) wants only one of two reactions: either "Yeah!" or, "No, I don't believe it!" True, he wants both sensitivity and intelligence behind that "Yeah!" And the "it" that isn't believed is not the subject of the work, but the work itself, in the way one responds, "No, I don't believe it," to something in really bad taste. The "Yeah!" or its silent equivalent, is the one that occurs when a situation is somehow transmuted into experience.

The basic Aesthetic Equation is not terribly complexed.

Happenings in the world effect the artistic consciousness and cause the Artist an inner experience, which in turn causes him to produce an object — poem, painting, symphony, or s-f story. Audiences submit themselves to this object, which causes them, in conjunction with worldly happenings they've undergone, an inner experience of their own.

From age to age, culture to culture, some terms of the equation have been taken for granted, some dismissed as nominal. Still others have assumed so much importance entire branches of that culture's aesthetics have been devoted to defining it.

In comparatively small tribal cultures, where the worldly happenings about the Artist and the audience are practically identical, the Artist, in creating his object, need only pay emblematic attention to the real, because reality of common worldly happenings can be taken for granted by all.

In more dispersed, industrialized societies, where the artist and his audience may never have shared one worldly happening together, art objects become, more and more, reproductions of the world, as if to reassure audience (and Artist) that they share a universe.

What tends to get taken for granted here, however, is the inner experience of the audience, once reassurance is over. The demand for a shared universe has gone so far that many comparatively intelligent people have taken up the patently absurd notion that the inner experience of the Artist and the inner experience of the audience must, somehow, be shared as well — in fact, should be identical.

The grossest flaw here: No matter how fast or inspirationally a given story is written, the inner experience of the writer includes a certain number of What-will-I-write-now?'s. If the audience, however, can pick up on all these points, then something is off in the tale.

More germane: The writer puts down words prompted by his memories. The reader's inner experience comes from a reordering of his. These memories are not the same.

Judy Merrill in her article on Sturgeon from F&SF recounted some Sturgeon advice on how to make a reader have the most vivid experience from a scene you are describing. As I recall, it ran something like:

Visualize the scene as completely and thoroughly as possible, keeping clear all the details.

But, as you move your character through the scene, mention only those details that actually impinge on him, physically or emotionally.

The reader will not visualize the same scene, but the one he does visualize will be as real, vivid, and immediate to him as the one you have visualized is to you.

((I wonder what the average level of correspondence would be...about 95%?..and how would you measure it? And...is the writer's ability to create through words in the reader's mind as nearly as possible what he sees in his mind the measure of his skill and talent as a writer?))

Abstracting from this an aesthetic method. The writer first clarifies his own inner experiences or vision for himself. Then, according to his own artistic consciousness, he must select salient verbal correspondences. The last statement is essentially one of faith in that aesthetic method, both in its powers and its limits.

The artist's job is not to communicate — as we usually employ the word — his vision, but to produce a vision in his audience of analogous import and intensity.

((But...granted the impossibility of creating an identical vision in the reader's mind (with the knowledge that your best effort will be flawed by your lack of talent and skill and his conscious and unconscious prejudices and colorings) isn't that the idea, nevertheless? An analog as an aim seems too fuzzy and, in a way, arrogant.))

With the aesthetic method from Sturgeon's template, the artist's business is essentially to keep reclarifying his inner experience, and to keep his Artistic consciousness honed and responsive, yet discriminating and selective. This is an inside operation in the head. Another quote from the Auden collection: "When a successful author analyzes the reasons for his success, he generally underestimates the talent he was born with and over-estimates his skill in employing it."

What is pernicious about the commercial writing field, both as an editorial machine and as a community of writers, is that it is set up almost wholly to convince writers who are not successful that they are; to make writers who write badly believe they are craftsmen.

To talk about skilled or craftsman-like commercial writers is absurd — just read us. What we all are, are writers who, to varying extents, have abused or protected our talent. It is tragic that within the field the greatest abuses by far happen in the name of craft.

For most of us, ideas of craft are set up for just that protection — and often work so well no talent gets into the piece. When a reviewer calls a story " ..a craftsman-like piece of work..." he is usually trying to say, politely, that it was boring. At any rate, he would never say of the same story that it was " ..crafted."

The only skill for a writer is the refinement of what goes on inside his head. "Rules of good writing" emerge. But they are emblems of a process of consciousness. The rule means

something only as it clarifies an inner vision, inaugurates our search for a particular aspect of it, or forces us to avoid self-deceptions. But it is the vision, the search through it, and the refusal to falsify that produce the tale.

Anyone who reads this as a plea either for "honesty" or "self-expression" as they are usually called for in writing is missing my point.

Good master Gaughan's experiment detailed in SFR 32, in which he asked some visitors which of a number of red pigments was "...the REDDEST red," prompts all sorts of proliferations.

First off, the results were instructively chaotic: nobody agreed. Jack suggests a number of reasons: education, natural sensitivity, physiology, et you supply the cetera.

A little speculative-fiction here:

Jack noted down the results of his experiment with various reds, then went on to try the same with various blues, and various yellows. Patterns began to emerge. It became evident that the majority of people who found A the reddest, found d the bluest, and 9 the yellowest. Also, most people who found C the reddest found g the bluest and 6 the yellowest. In short, a whole series of correlations appeared: There were even some groups of one who had correlations all their own.

A theory of color relations could be devised for each group.

At which point the Artist has to decide: Which group do I want to paint for?

The Megalithic-Republic form of government/society/culture in which we live contains dozens of comparatively huge, overlapping, art-consuming audiences — a historically unique, aesthetic situation.

In making his decision which group to paint for (or play for, or write for) the Artist has to consider three groups in particular. First is the group that seems most like the Artist himself. This group has to come first. They are the people who taught the artist to art.

Next is the statistically largest and/or richest group. They've got to come second, because if you can't art in some way, shape, form, or convince them that you can, you starve. In the Renaissance, this group was limited to various courts. But things have gotten more complicated.

Finally there is the group the artist feels capable of the most profound inner experience. This group is very important. In the Renaissance it was the courts of the Sforzas, the Medicis, and the Borgias. What we tend to forget is that there were a whole lot of other courts that it was not, who indeed may have had more money, more soldiers, and more land.

Tolstoy felt the Russian peasantry were potentially capable of a more profound aesthetic response than himself as an aristocratic artist. Mallarme felt only the most re-

fined, sophisticated, and erudite men of the best breeding were proper receptors of his work.

I think, however, as long as the artist feels this third group lies somehow on a line between the first and second, he is fairly safe. I hear far more complaints about the insensitivity of the statistically common man from commercial artists than from anyone else except college professors. Nor is it the criticism of a man who loves his slightly barbaric family. Nor does it have the acidity and wit of someone who realizes his own exceptionalness is merely a refinement of the common. It is blunt, despairing, hurt, and confused. But when an artist feels those capable of the most profound aesthetic response have nothing to do either with himself or the major society around him, his focus is lost.

This lack of focus is another thing fostered by the commercial art (or writing or music) field. Works are commissioned and paid for, but in such a tone of despairing cynicism, the artists, on the most profound level, never know to whom their work goes.

As long as two people do perceive one color differently, hear the relation between two notes differently, see different pictures at the sound of a single word, you cannot talk of objective aesthetic standards, Jim Blish.

That you can't, however, it allows the artist a certain arrogance: To the extent he is true to his aesthetic method (whether it is the one I culled from Sturgeon or any other), he has got to be able to respond to somebody who does not understand one of his works, in whole or in part, not with explanation, but: "Read it again until you do, until it has meaning for you. If you have a vision, I'm not going to be any better for it. You may." Especially in as complex a society as the United States, the artist has to be prepared to say: "I write for the people who understand; I don't for the people who don't." But to insist this practically guarantees expulsion from the commercial art organism. Editors, Art Directors, and other writers muse: "He was just too difficult to work with." — only belied by the monomaniacal personality difficulties they accept around them every day.

What threatens is the juncture of such arrogance and such humility. But the arrogance must be there: it is only by taking responsibility for what you are doing now that you can ever hope to do better.

But all this is a shadow (perhaps too dark and fuzzy) of a delicate process inside the head.

((Which must be largely subconscious.))



NEW ADDRESS!!

Norman Spinrad
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After the better part of a year out of the United States, a lot of things look different but some things still seem the same. Like the J.J. Pierce thing. I don't know what to say to his letter denying the simple truth that he asked me to autograph a copy of Bug Jack Barron

at the Eastercon except that he is denying the simple truth. Having said that, I think I've said enough.

I found the Bernie Zuber letter on my "FIAWOL" article in KNIGHT rather inoffensive but incredibly naive in certain respects. Does Mr. Zuber really imagine that a writer ordinarily has control over the illustrations, blurbs, and presentation of his work in a magazine? Would that it were so, but it is not.

I sold the article to KNIGHT instead of FM & FINE ARTS (a very weird market for such a piece—Harlan's article appeared there and not elsewhere because of Harlan's relationship with the editor) because KNIGHT wanted it, because I've been doing a long series of articles on the contemporary American scene for KNIGHT, and because they pay pretty well. Incidentally, KNIGHT has also been publishing a lot of sf in the past few years, so the publication of such an article there is really not that strange. Finally, if Mr. Zuber finds the illustrations and photos in KNIGHT unbecoming to the high dignity of sf and fandom, let him take a good second look at the quality of the graphic art in the sf magazines. And at sf paperback covers.

((I would quibble re the pb covers—most are good and a few very fine.))



Barry Malzberg
216 West 70th St.
New York, NY 10024

Your remarks defending me against
Pierce are appreciated; Pierce's old
man bloody well is aware of what is
going on and is disturbed enough to

have published widely a letter denying all association with his son's views and activities. I don't know what unfounded rumors I'm spreading about GALAXY but Pierce has proven once again that it is possible to attract notice in this enclave far more easily than it is outside; I don't think it's worth it however and as Pierce grows up he'll probably reach the same point of view.

Ted White, Piers Jacob's sentimentality to one side, is not at all in hell but having the relative time of his life. As one of the two people alive fully qualified to comment on the AMAZING editorship in the 1965-preWhite period I assure you and your readers that their friend will carry on nicely and that the quality of his terror is somewhat less than it might be if he or we were in the Vietnamese jungles. We use these descriptive words "hell", "bastard", "shithead", etc., so cheaply that they have lost their fine original meanings.

One of your correspondents says that all sf writers should have integrity and lay off sexpulp, being intent instead upon building up this fine little field without regard to sex exploitation. Like so many of your correspondents, this man has no idea of the common realities of American publishing at the category/hack level today and those who do — the writers — ain't talking.

Similarly, I have the feeling that very few of your correspondents have any awareness of the sweep of commercial

and literary fiction outside of science fiction: I doubt if one in a hundred has read any representative cross-section of modern American fiction. If they had they would be both uplifted and depressed above their monotone but they would not take the current state of science fiction as seriously as they do. What is happening in a phrase is that science fiction, some 50 years behind literary and commercial fiction, is now beginning to undergo the stylistic convulsions, schisms and innovations that were worked through and out of American fiction by 1930. Brunner is writing Dos Passos, Ellison is writing Farrell naturalism and dada by turns, etc.



HANK STINE
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The science fiction field appears to be undergoing difficult and controversial times: this is an illusion. The world is undergoing difficult and controversial times. What is happening in our microcosm is only a reflection of the turmoil outside. Any real attempt to resolve our differences is futile unless we learn enough to solve the world's problems, too.

There is, of course, a new-wave. Nearly everyone now denying it (mostly in the new-wave camp) once proclaimed it. There are demonstrable new waves in almost every aspect of the world's culture. The world appears to be experiencing an upheaval as drastic as that which produced cro-magnon man. These changes, in our field, manifest themselves as the phenomenon labeled the new-wave.

I think at this time we should note that the three most influential editors in the sf field, at the moment, are Brian Kirby at Essex House, Terry Carr at Ace, and George Ernsberger at Avon. It is very likely they will each have an impact equal to that of Campbell. This may produce a marked change in science fiction. (Mike Moorcock with a paperback line, hmm? And Ted White is making fantastic strides at AMAZING.)



Dean Koontz
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I have often said that Banks Mebane is one of the few truly perceptive and intelligent reviewers in the field, chiefly because he has the wit to understand that any given piece of fiction cannot be all bad or all good. I am appalled, for instance, by such a ridiculous blanket condemnation as Joanna Russ gave The Last Starship From Earth in a recent F&SF.

"Temple of Sorrow" was written as a spoof of the very ancient gosh-wow sf of say the thirties, and Banks is correct in noting this. If it didn't come off as well as one might hope, it is possibly because I was also concerned with making the piece a viable story on its own, aside from the parody. Most parody cannot stand as a story, unfortunately. Also, Banks might be interested in knowing that was the second sf story I sold and appeared so late simply because of Ultimate's screwed up schedules and the swift change of editors there. I tried

to sell a book of stories about Theseus and Mandarin, but have not had any luck. One editor told me it was all too "wildly improbable." When informed that the book had been intended as wildly improbable and was a parody of a certain type of sf, he told me that sf readers cannot abide anything which makes fun of sf, and that the book would never sell. Though I don't believe sf readers are all that narrow-minded, I have to admit he was right on the second part: the book isn't going to sell.

The second story, "Where the Beast Runs" is a follow up to "In the Shield" which If had published sometime earlier. Both pieces were put together along with a third novelet to form the Ace double half fear That Man.

Banks notes that these stories are new wave in content and handling but old wave in plot. Basically, I write two kinds of sf: pulp plots and plots-dealing-with-the-interaction-of-people. And although so many people say they dislike the pulp plot in modern sf and like the more individualistic plot, they usually chose to review the plots that are pulp-based. My more serious stories have gotten scant attention in fanzines while my pulpier stuff gets fair attention. So far, 99% of my serious stories have appeared in F&SF. Maybe a good many fans don't read that magazine. In any event, there must be something to this interest in pulp plots and disinterest in more serious stories. Could it be that there is a swing away from new wavish stuff and back to the older forms? I'm not so sure I'd like that.

And, as a final note, that I have never received a letter from anyone about my pulp-oriented stories while I have received I think about ten letters now on "Dragon in the Land" (from Venture) and an astounding sixteen on "Muse" (from a recent F&SF). A number of the letters were from people not involved in fandom. Curiouser and curiouser...

((I think it's a truism that most readers want comfortable, recognizable story structures within which they will put up with some variations and surprises. Life is inherently chaotic, deadly, insecure...and for diversion and entertainment people do not want more of the same. Most want "law and order".))

((Now to follow with another, more recent, more heated letter from Dean...))

In the past, SFR has taken nominations for the Fughead Award, and I would hereby like to nominate Hank Stine. I know he has not achieved enough stature as an ass, but he is working at it, so I think we should keep him under observation. This letter is, of course, inspired by Mr. Stine's reviews of two of my Ace doubles in SFR 33—and I could almost congratulate him on his perceptiveness if it were not for a handful of totally shitheaded comments he manages to make.

First, he decides from some of the traits of my fictional characters and from their development that I am a "WASP, pure and simple" and that I have a "limited perception of the world". On a purely physical level, it is impossible to say I am a WASP, simply because my family contains Negro blood (which severely limits the pure concept of White in that term) and—on a spiritual level—I am not

even Christian, let alone Protestant, so the definition further suffers. I come from a long line of semi-poverty stricken people, and my own parents only reached the lower-lower scale of Middle Class. I was amused at Mr. Stine's decision that I live a narrow life and come into contact with the "world outside" only through books. Apparently, Mr. Stine styles himself as hip and as an activist, since he mentions that my "violent" scenes show that I have no understanding of Berkeley or Chicago. True, I was at neither. But I had the pleasure of being arrested in Georgia, having seven stitches snapped into my head in Mississippi, spending three days in a Newport News hospital during the voter drives through two summers of my college life. I have a very personal concept of "real" violence, having been on the receiving end of a bit of it. I spent a year teaching in a poverty area in which I handled juvenile delinquents almost exclusively. In that time, I learned how to crush a guy's balls (my students, who were very comradely and strangely open, told me most of the juvie self-defense and attack tactics) with a kick: you kick to catch them against his thigh, then grind—if you kick straight in, you only knock the genitals back into their pre-puberty socket. I found out how to use a collar-stay as a weapon when you're without a knife, plus dozens of other beautiful things. I wrote a book, three years ago now, about my experiences riding around with a pair of night-duty cops, and that was, again, an experience in violence, though this time I was able to watch it from a different viewpoint.

Why, then, Mr. Stine might ask, do I not work these things into these Ace doubles. First, the doubles were designed as high entertainment (and I was pleased to see Stine understood this at least a little bit) and first had to succeed on that level. Second, a novel of sheer entertainment is not the place for political polemics or for propaganda of any kind. I was writing something to entertain rightists as well as leftists, and I see no room to draw Berkeley or Chicago into the act. And if the action seems like that in a Western, then so be it. If Stine has really been anywhere where the pressure has been swinging over his head, he knows damn well that organized, social violence as produced by hippie-activists as well as by cops DOES have an air of unreality, a dreamlike quality. When sixteen uniformed Georgia state patrolmen descend on a Negro shantytown of three hundred and start using baseball bats to break up an innocent voter registration, it IS NOT REAL. You do not stand around thinking about how socially significant the scene is or about the details. Things move dream-swift, dream-slow. The blood hardly seems like real blood. And when a Mississippi vigilante, not a policeman but riding with the policemen, cracks your head open with a chair leg (or something quite resembling a chair leg) there isn't even any god-damned pain. That comes a helluva lot later. At the time, by God, you even find yourself laughing!

I'll run through the rest of Stine's assinine remarks in swift order. It was the first part that really irritated me, because that was a purely unfounded and baseless slash of my personality and struck closer home. Next: Stine says that Cokley's weaponry and traits in Fall of the Dream Machine are not original but were really first used by Howards in Bug Jack Barron. A simple check of copyright dates and use of gray mat-

ter (that seems highly distasteful to Stine) would show that my book and Spinrad's books were more than likely being written at the same time. Mine would have been sold before I had any chance to read Spinrad's—chiefly because Spinrad's was not even published yet. If some things of mine seem similar to Delany's style, so be it. I wrote in this style before I had read Delany, before Delany had become popular, and before Delany had published much of anything. A simple tracing of my first works would show this.

((With as much science fiction being written by so many writers, there is bound to be a lot of similarity in some stories, characterization, even detail and bits-of-business.

For instance, I have had published a sf novel which utilizes a "Show" type helmet such as you used in Fall of the Dream Machine. But I didn't "copy" you, Dean. My Raw Meat was based on a story that appeared in an ADAM READER in 1960 or '61. Hmm. Maybe you read the story and....)

Finally, I am somewhat irked at Stine's conclusions that Ace Doubles are all I will ever write. And that my style will not advance. I wrote some mediocre short stories when I started, but I feel that I have now conquered that form. The same thing holds with novels. I am not a born novelist. I must work at it. Anyway I will probably continue to write books like Fall of the Dream Machine and Fear That Man, even after I've done "serious" books like Stine apparently prefers. Why? Simply because I enjoy them, readers enjoy them, and they help pay the bills. I am glad that Stine realizes that I try, even in these first novels, to use new and old wave techniques rather than exclusively one or the other. I firmly believe there will be a melding of the two and that the writers who profess total loathing of one or the other form are being unrealistic. By the way, Dick, when my 125,000 word The Broken Moon sees print, I'd be amused if Stine reviewed it.

((I'll see if I can arrange it. In the meantime... Hank, the humble pie shop is just around the corner. It isn't bad, once you get used to it, believe me....))



Avram Davidson
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94947

REG, sir, I snum, but I'm getting old. SFR #33 is crammed snug with oofus of a sort which at one time would have caused me to lay about on all sides with my obsidian-studded war-club, but I instead am presently only going to make Sage and Kindly Ol' Comments, yes sir. —Although, mind you, many of the Sage and Kindly Ol' Comments which I make are not intended to be substitutes for the obsidian etc., no sir: often they are intended to be Sage and Kindly etc. of the First Intention, i.e. comments on non-oofus.

Shall we start all over again? Thank you, G. Piers Anthony says that in 1966 he asked via the SFWA BULLETIN for advice from other writers about his projected rewriting an Arabian Nights story. I have a distinctly vague remembrance of sending him a letter on the subj., and also mentioning

that I was sort of engaged in rewriting the medieval Virgilean Legends.

Much more to the point, though, is Piers Anthony's well-understood vexation with the resultant book's (Hasan) being nixed by several publishers because it "didn't fit into a category..." Walker Books' Mr. Roxburg gives, I suppose, as good a justification of this sort of thing as can be given. But it comes close to being tragic, and I suffer and have suffered from it myself. It is perhaps a secret ill-concealed from an indifferent world that I have not been totally happy writing the books which I have had published over (approximately) the past five years. In fact, my struggles to write and publish other things have resembled those of a rat trying to escape from a lab maze: and one of the labels I find frequently on the sundry doors which slam in my face is It Doesn't fit Into Our/Any Category...

In one instance a recently published book (The Phoenix and the Mirror) was published as science fiction when it is clearly not, it is certainly fantasy of a sort, but it is equally Romance...or several other things... or, mostly, uniquely its own. The book was written over five years and came out just this year as the result of matters not involving Category and I am of course grateful to Doubleday (Ashmead, Haefele, and many others) that it was published in hardcovers—Ace will bring it out in soft—but I would have much preferred that it have appeared sans the science fiction label, —and this is not at all because I am "ashamed of science fiction", for I am certainly not. It is that it is (a) no more SF than a multitude of books published without being so-labelled and is certainly not routine SF, and (b) I should like to make my way into the world of letters at large and unlabeled, and I think that I am capable of so doing—if They'll Only Let Me—and without having to spindizzy into say, a novel of sex in high society or anti-sex in big business or non-sex in old virginny. I feel that because for c. 15 years I have been known as a Sci-Fi writer everything I write for the next 15 years is going to be either categorized as such or rejected for being non-such.

More. I have long and often been assured and am myself personally assured that I do have a talent for projecting "a feeling of place", hence it has long been my opinion and that of others that I could do good "travel books". Under what circumstances and at what costs, I shall not burden you, but about three years ago I wrote a book about British Honduras which nobody will publish. I call it A Memoir of Travel. Maybe I haven't the status to write memoirs, and, admittedly, some publishers gave it as their reason for rejecting it that they thought it wasn't a good book. But my current agent, Virginia Kidd, has summed up much of the negative reaction as "It jumps category lines..." Sheest, couldn't we all fill a page with good books and books which sold well, which also "jumped category lines"? And this same attitude has kept any number of my shorter things from being published, too. —To use your own vivid metaphor, G., "Let's let it all hang out"—I am almost every day almost ready to shoot up and explode because I am sick to death of writing Category SF/fy (voice from outside: "It shows!"), New Wave, Old Wave, Non-Wave, take it away, I can't read it, I can barely write it and

I only lash myself to the typewriter because it's the only way I can make enough money to live on...and I barely make that, too.

And of my genuinely desperate attempts to write what I want to write and feel I can write well, there has scarcely been one which hasn't been scuttled: and the most in the name of Category. I feel it's not for nothing that the Talmud calls Satan "Ha-Mekatrif"—the Categorizer, or Accuser. —I am not breathless and screaming for want of a publisher brave enough to let me say fuck, shit, or God Is Dead, or do interior monologues in odd typography without using capital letters, I am screaming and breathless for a publisher or publishers who will let me say things whose sin consists of not fitting into a Category. —I feel that Piers Anthony is alas too right in writing of the "taboo of classification"...

End of shriek.

Unlike Richard Delap, I cannot rate Harlan Ellison's "Shattered Like a Glass Goblin" too highly; he has either had the psychedelic horrors himself or observed with infinite horror, pity, and accuracy, those who have (Orbit 4, Damon Knight, ed.)

It was the right thing, G., for you to have made it clear that John J. Pierce, of Second Foundation, is not John R. Pierce, of Bell Labs, Echo Satellites, and some good short SF pieces in the past. As I had known Col. Pierce ("J.J. Coupling"), had forgotten his middle initial, and had never heard of his son, I was confused, and badly, till you cleared it up. Onward!

Let's see now, Graham Hall was staying at Charles Platt's place and Platt flew in from the States "bearing a copy of SFR 32", containing his "New Worlds and After." Hall read it, was infuriated, wrote a letter comparing it to "illiterate...idiotic...lunatic...ludicrous...arrogant...twee and misguided..." Hmm. I wonder where Graham Hall is living now?

—"Something lost beyond the Ranges. Go and find it. Go!"=

Bernard Zuber and Norman Spinrad's "FIAMOL" in KNIGHT magazine. "...what really annoys me...is not so much the contents as the packaging. (...)why have your article printed in the back of a sex magazine?" Well, I snum again. I am speaking sage and kindly to you, Mr. Zuber, when I say that I don't think that Mr. Spinrad was consulted as to which end of the magazine his piece was printed in. And I expect that if ATLANTIC or HARPERS would have bought it, then Norman wouldn't have sold it to KNIGHT. He's a poor man, and he needs the money, you see. It isn't at all that he despises good magazines and prefers to be published in cheaper ones. I know him, you see. And I know that he'd hit me in the mouth if I said he does. It is true that last year Harlan Ellison sold an article about fandom to FM & FINE ARTS. That is why they wouldn't buy Norman's article about it this year. Honest, I do appreciate that you'd rather that "FIAMOL" were printed where you could show it to all your friends and relatives without risking criticism. I wrote an article about Al Capone years ago,

and another article about Prohibition era events in my home town. Both were printed in a book called Crimes and Chaos, which I should have liked to have shown to all my friends and relatives. But in the Capone article I had used a dash in one place instead of a dirty word. And somebody put a dirty word in the book in the place of the dash. So I just was never able to show that book to all my relatives and friends. But if my book and Spinrad's article had never been printed at all then neither you nor I could have shown either of them to anybody at all, anyway. Try to think of it that way, Bernard.

Harry Warner, Jr. is justly bothered by SF tales of the future in which the authors have merely extrapolated or perhaps just extended today's problems instead of thinking up new ones. You should have seen the ones that got away, Harry. Ask any SF editor past or present. "Joe wished his old Chevrolet would go faster. He didn't want to miss the express from Proxima Gesundheit when it came down at the rocketport. Nervously, he lighted a Chesterfield." Etc. And always, "lighted." Never, of course, "lit".

Where in thee Hell is West Henrietta, N.Y.? Or, for that matter, East Henrietta? Anyway, from Out There, Mike Gilbert asks "all /us/ dirty pros out here...how do /we/ feel about what appears on the covers of /our/ books?" —there, I sure chopped that up and I still haven't made all the right transpositions. Oh well. Twee and misguided, that's me. —Well, Mike, I not only care what appears on the covers of my own books, I even care what appears on the covers of other writers' books. While reviewing for F&SF I usually tried to "review" the covers as well, mentioning the artists' names, for example...when I could find them...cover designers need a union as much as or maybe more than authors...imagine leaving an author's name off the book..! And I was told that I was the only reviewer who did mention the covers at all. I liked the Dillons when they illustrated for GALAXY. Their covers for Ace SF Specials, I like, too. It makes it at once apparent, even from a distance, which books are Ace Specials. However, it has of late occurred to me that until you get fairly close up it is possible to confuse one with another. They seem to have become just a bit too standardized.

((Have you noticed that Paperback Library of late has paid the Ace Specials the ultimate compliment—by copying the Specials cover format...?))

—Generally speaking, I consider myself fortunate in my covers. Ed Emsh's cover to my and Ward Moore's Joyleg, while a good art-job, was not faithful to the mood of the book; and Ed told me that he hadn't even been allowed to read the book! He'd been sent another artist's attempted cover to finish, plus someone's precis of the book! Ace bought a Double of me which I called Ilaloc and which Ace re-titled Clash of Star-Kings (better, I suppose, than something like Aztec Goddesses From Outer Space With Big Boobs, though not much). Jack Gaughan did a beautiful head of Ilaloc for it, he obviously had gone to the trouble of looking up just which one I meant—and Somebody—probably an Art Director From Outer Space With Small Brains—completely ruined the entire effect by planting right in front of The Head a sleazy horrid thing described

to me as "A green lizard with funny things on"—probably a picture of the Art Director. More. On the cover of a book of mine called Rork! someone put a cover with a creature resembling a puffin. Whatever a rork is like, it's nothing like a bird. Either the artist wasn't allowed to read the book or, likelier, they just had this old cover laying around, see, from a book on puffins which got lost, and, "What the f---, BJ, it's Science fiction! so who'll know the difference?" —Hannes Bok, of glorious memory, when I approached him for a cover at the suggestion of F&SF publisher J.W. Ferman, said that art directors had driven him out of magazine illo'ing; only after I assured him that F&SF didn't have one did he begin to thaw to the idea: the result was his last cover, ever, the memorable one for Roger Zelazny's "A Rose for Ecclesiastes"...

Onward!

John Berry of Belfast mentions Ted White...re-minding me that the name "White" is said to be of Irish origin, which might explain much, much... He says (says Berry), "I have followed / Ted White's / career with considerable interest, and under no circumstances could it be said that his path has been prepared by buttering up to the Big Names who are supposed to have all the Influence"—this I consider the understatement, not merely of the 20th century, but all centuries. Jaysus! ...If I may be permitted to name-drop again, when Ted was assistant editor of F&SF he said he thought that Ziff-Davis might sell "the twins" and that it might be a good idea if Mercury were to buy them. I mentioned this to the Fermans, and either then or thereafter I said that Ted White would make a good editor for them. They did call up Ziff-Davis, but Ziff-Davis never called back... I should think that all but the most grudging of us must be glad that he has the magazines which it was his boyhood ambition to edit.

Dick Ellington! Hello! You say "If everybody submitted nice clean manuscripts they could lay off most of the editors as there would really be very little sandbox work for them to do" and Dick Geis, he says ((I've an idea most pro editors would disagree with you.)), he says.

I've an idea most pro authors would, too—though, mind you, "nice clean manuscripts" sure do help a lot—though, mind you, some copy editors are beyond help and will manage to bollix even the nicest, cleanest of MSS. I know one, for example, who refuses to acknowledge the existence of the Portuguese language. He is certain that in Portugal and Brazil they speak Spanish. If any Portuguese word in any way resembling a Spanish word appears, he at once "corrects" it... Dick, you refer to the fact that many, maybe most, maybe all but one paperback houses refuse to permit galley reading. Now that Ace, or at least Terry Carr's department at Ace, not only permit but request that the author read his galleys, it will be harder for the others to insist that it can't be done. Of course, maybe not very much harder. There are whoremongers. And there are bookmongers, too.



Alfred Bester
Senior Editor
HOLIDAY
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New York, NY 10022

I'd like to speak to Mr. Dick Ellington's speculations about submitting clean copy. This can be an important aspect of author-editor relations.

Writers should understand that they must make it as easy as possible for editors to read their Ms's. This can be a crucial factor with border-line pieces, and a large number of submissions are border-line cases: Yes? No? Maybe with a revision? Although it's our job as professionals to remain coolly objective in our judgments, we falter now and then. A careless Ms which is difficult to read may produce just enough exasperation to tip the balance the wrong way.

But this is a minor point. The crux of the Ms situation is the fact that an editor is thinking a long way ahead of the writer. He's asking himself, "Is this man a professional? If I ask for a revision, and he agrees to it, will he be able to follow the guide-lines I give him? Will he be able to deliver the revision? Will he be able to meet our deadlines? Can I depend on him?" In many cases, not all, but many, a sloppy Ms indicates a lack of professionalism. Then the editor may be afraid to take a chance on the writer. Authors should understand that editors take great professional pride in their writers, and dread a failure as deeply as the writer himself. We suffer too, you know.

From the mechanical standpoint clean copy is essential for our editorial procedure. Here at HOLIDAY as soon as a Ms is accepted it's immediately xeroxed for editing. Sloppy, careless Ms's don't reproduce very well. If the author has made changes in pencil they don't reproduce at all. Too many authors make changes in their own handwriting which is legible to them but to no one else. Too many authors do not leave wide enough margins for editing-room. Too many authors use typewriter ribbons so faint that it's virtually impossible to read their xeroxed Ms's. Too many authors neglect to clean their machines and we have a hell of a time trying to distinguish between "e" "c" "o" and so on. These are really unnecessary burdens.

Galley proofs are sent to all authors for final revision. Sometimes an argument will spring up between author and editor, the author claiming that he never wrote such a phrase or sentence; that he never used such a word. As editors we don't tamper with writers' work, except in unusual cases. We're forced to cut, of course, because of space constraints, but we try to do this tactfully. If changes in the text are necessary we always write or call, explaining the reason and asking permission. When authors claim that there unauthorized changes, and they prove to be right, the reason inevitably is sloppy copy which the printers could not decipher.

I hope that the writers who read this letter will not interpret it as a fussy, old-maidish point of view. If a Ms has merit it doesn't matter if it's scrawled in longhand on the back of telegram blanks. But in this tough profession of ours, why place unnecessary obstacles between yourself and success?

FOR AUTHORS WHO MAY NOT KNOW

1. Do not submit first drafts. We can spot them in a second,

and they imply disrespect for yourself and for us. If you're not professional enough to prepare a fair copy, which means that you've written carefully and edited yourself, how can you expect us to trust you? Milton Berle once told me, "Good shows aren't written; they're re-written." He was absolutely right. It's true, also, of all writing.

2. Type with a clean typeface, a reasonably dark ribbon, double-spaced with margins 1½ inches wide on all four sides. We need the margins for editing space. Also, the eye becomes fatigued when it is required to read too long a line.

3. All corrections in black ink, printed clearly using caps and lower case. It wouldn't do any harm to learn and use the received proof-reading symbols in Webster's New 7th Edition Collegiate Dictionary. Never forget that your Ms will eventually go to the printer who only knows this language.

4. Your name, address and phone number on the title page of your Ms, please. Don't make it tough for us to get in touch with you.

5. And for God's sake keep a carbon on file with which you'll never part. Writers have no idea how easily Ms can get lost in a publishing house that receives scores every week. If yours is lost, don't send the carbon. Have a fresh copy re-typed.



A. E. van Vogt
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I finally found the time to read your current issue (#33), and I noticed in it Perry Chapdelaine's defense of The Silkie. I hadn't originally intended to defend this story

from Toomey's disgusted review. But since someone else has taken the trouble to take up cudgels in its behalf—or my behalf (I can't quite decide which)—I feel I ought to say a few words, and point out a significant fact. Toomey has evidently never heard of Pavlov, for he mentions that his pop beat him up every time he read one of my stories—I say he mentions this without, apparently, realizing that the therapy was completely effective. I can picture him approaching one of my stories, already cringing inside (He's waiting for that kick). As he reads, his father's value judgments on science fiction—but it was always a story of mine—keep running through his own mind. Only, not being aware of Pavlovian automatic responses, he thinks the judgments are his own... Is it possible that we have here, accidentally, observed the creation of the new type of critic in the sf field, whose number is increasing with each individual's discovery that wholesale sf author slaughter—but with an occasional loving review of an almost-mainstream story—is the way up?

((A highly engramatical analysis. I'm sure it's all clear to Bob, now...))

The real problem with The Silkie (in the writing) was

my unwillingness actually to get back into the hard work of writing science fiction in my old scene method. So, Toomey in comparing it to my previous work is in error. Silkie is written in an incredibly condensed style—except for the prologue. Fred Pohl had asked me to do sf again, and I was reluctant to become involved—but in a moment of weakness (or something) I promised him I would. Each segment took an interminable time to write. As a comparison, I finally this year decided I would again write science fiction, really. I thereupon committed myself to write six sf novels for 1970 publication. Only one of these (titled Quest for the Future) is based upon previous material. The over-all theme of Peace and Violence permeates all six, which are respectively titled—in addition to Quest—The Battle of Forever, Children of Tomorrow, I—You—, The Other-Men, and Indian Summer of a Pair of Spectacles.

((Six new A. E. van Vogt sf novels in one year! What a feast!))

I considered Dean McLaughlin's "Hawk Among the Sparrows" the best story published in 1968. But I noticed that, despite ANALOG continuing to out-sell all competition, the fans have moved away from it. So there's a falseness in the field now.

((Granted...but where? In ANALOG or in the fans' attitude?))

As a result of Piers Anthony's promotion of Hasan, I read into it for about a chapter, far enough to realize that in writing it he was trying to cash in on the sword and sorcery fad—which was never for me (or, really, for him; so he has paid the price). In his supporting article about its origin—in FANTASTIC—he cites examples of harem women degrading themselves by letting themselves be "enjoyed" by slaves. My instant evaluation of that: in a society where women are made nothing of, they quickly make nothing of themselves, also. It's not otherwise romantic, and certainly not sexually stimulating, but just sad.

If anyone has a dozen or two copies of The Silkie that they'd like to dispose of at half-price, I'll be glad to buy them. I haven't found a single copy in the used paperback stores. I have at the moment no copy of this book.



Brian W. Aldiss
Heath House
Southmoor
Nr. Abingdon
Berks., ENGLAND

Warm gratitude for one thing in SFR 32—for printing Mr. Barry Malzberg's letter which explains that John J. Pierce is not John R. Pierce. I for one had the two confused, and for many months have been wrestling with the problem of how that quiet and perceptive gentleman, John R., could be doing and saying all those crass things that you (among others) have been reporting.

For the rest of the contents, less gratitude. Revulsion, in fact. Even the people one might normally like to hear from—the Carrs and Platts—absorb a grayness from the company around them, from the author of the aptly named "Beer Mutterings" defending the poor beleaguered Chicago police, and from authors like Panshin, Brunner, and Anthony going on, for the umpteenth time, about their own dreadful novels.

The nadir was reached by Piers Anthony who, after bringing a long, boring, and mercenary line of argument to an inept conclusion, says, "I suggest that any writer who does not feel much the same is a fool or a hypocrite or an independently supported dilettante or a saint." Egotism can go no further — "If you don't think the way I do, you're a shit!" is what this man is saying. The superb courtesy with which he concludes his letter is, I'm sure, entirely in character.

Thank God, there are people who do not think, feel, or write like Piers Anthony. I believe I must be one of them, since I see no relevance in his approach to the whole question of why one writes. For that matter, I suspect that your Review may do more harm to than good to real writers (as opposed to those who are in it to expand their egos). Personally, I'm too old to be corrupted in this way, but I dread to think what your influence may be doing to nice young lads like Charles Platt, who is still at an impressionable age.

I can't ask you to cancel his copy, but would you please be kind enough not to send me SFR any more. While appreciating the kindness of your gesture, it just isn't for me.

((I think Mr. Aldiss is hoist by his own petard in this letter, but I hear and obey.))



Charles Platt
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ENGLAND

I was pleased to see more of your own stuff in the pink pages. It's all very entertaining; what more can I say? Your short reviews are good, too — they say just as much

as is necessary, which is a lesson Bob Foomey ought to learn. His turgid ramblings and pretentious nonsense is really getting me down. Still, let's not get personal. I was very pleased to see your mention of the E.C. Tubb book, and even more pleased to see your verdict on it — I think Ted Tubb (as we know him) is one of the most fluent writers in old-style science fiction, and I have enjoyed everything of his that I have ever read. Unfortunately I don't think he believes this; I am too firmly labelled New Wave for anyone to credit me with enjoying honest story-telling. But it is true.

I understand Brian Aldiss has become disgusted with SFR and has sent his copy back. This is a pity, because one should be more tolerant, and your fanzine is, to me, the best of the lot. I think what got Brian down was the presence of writers such as Paul Anderson, Alexei Panshin, Jack Gaughan, and, in particular, Piers Anthony. These people have a tendency to write as if they are fans rather than writers, in that they are chatty, egocentric, boring, dull, and give the impression of sheer dim-wittedness. This is a pity, because it doesn't really lead to the sort of slam-bang nastiness we used to get. The phrasing of someone like Piers Anthony is too laborious to meet the necessary standards of unpleasant repartee.

((Careful, Charles! Poul may sick the Chicago police on you, Alexei may decide England has violated a Law of the Ships, Jack may caricature you in GALAXY or (shudder) IF, and God only knows how Piers may Strike Back.))

As regards SFR again, I thought the Terry Carr article was very interesting — informative, plain, unpretentious, unusually clear and devoid of in-group isms, for a fanzine or science fiction article. "Beer Mutterings," on the other hand, is so self-concerned and dull I find it impossible to say anything about it. I am not against light-weight articles. I just abhor boring articles, where the person writing as nothing much to say and no imagination to speak of.

((The overwhelming response to "Beer Mutterings" has been favorable, however, and I enjoyed it, which is more important.))

About my own article, all I can say is, it seems rather heavy, and maybe it could have been helped by a few jokes. But then, fans can never tell the difference between the jokes and the serious bits, so perhaps it's just as well.

Offutt's article is a little confusing. He keeps quoting from Asimov, as if that writer was the last word on politics and philosophy. The paraphrases may seem vaguely plausible against the unreal background of interplanetary conflict, but compared to the contemporary scene, they are so shallow as to be meaningless. Things are more subtle and complex than Offutt seems to realize, to put it mildly.

Overall, and I may be wrong, his article doesn't actually say anything; is more a resume built largely on facile quotes from other people. Let me suggest to Offutt he recall another part of his beloved Asimov "Foundation" trilogy — that where a visiting diplomat's speech is semantically analyzed and found to carry no actual meaning or information whatsoever.

Rotsler cartoons? As I said when I saw you, they are great, and it's a pity you couldn't include the whole lot of them. Censorship!

Who is Robert E. Heinlein?

((Robert E. Heinlein is a widely noted typo. It is Robert A. Heinlein who will be interviewed in PLAYBOY next year.))



Jack Gaughan
P.O. Box 516
Rifton, NY
12471

Busy! Busy! But I must dash this off. I hereby retract the phrase, "tin plated obscenity" from my remarks about Ross Chamberlain's drawing. As is usually the case, obscenity is in the eye of the beholder. And

unfortunate, not to say inaccurate, remarks are the lot of fugg-headed reviewers (which the letter I wrote was supposed to emulate if not actually parody). Ross! My apologies, sir.

Pax!

fer krisesake!

P.S. Unless the production schedule becomes more predictable on GALAXY and IF aint nobody gonna be used in the mags—including me!*

*I'm bushed!

But if it ever becomes bearable, Bode will be used—that is if he will agree to it.



Robert Moore Williams
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Valley Center, Cal.
92082

You may consider this a public appeal for information. I live in a cave in the Big Rock Candy Mountains. (Mt. Palomar and its associated ranges.) Life

is very pleasant here, my cave is roomy, and soft sweet winds blow forever. Communication, of course, is by smoke signal and by grapevine. Normally, the grapevine is a very trustworthy instrument, reporting happenings far and near with accuracy and speed. However, these days it has grown nervous and irritable. And possibly inaccurate.

I can't say that I fault it for this. It has to pass out of my roomy cave where the soft sweet winds blow and where life is very pleasant and go down into the lowlands where live the assholes who talk from the inside out. Communication among this unusual group is very interesting. It is accomplished by shitting on each other. (Shit on you, Jack!) This, of course, is normal procedure among them and they think this is the only way to do business but it seems that recently their aim has been more inaccurate than usual and they are shitting on the grapevine too.

Under such circumstances, I can readily understand why the grapevine becomes nervous, irritable, and possibly inaccurate. I don't mind them shitting on me, of course, they have shat upon me for years, but the grapevine is different and deserves better treatment than any mere human. (A mere human is sort of like a mere wolf.)

As a result, the reports of the grapevine have become dilatory and confusing. It says it hears rumors that some kind of a big power play is being attempted among the assholes that talk from the inside out, that a select group is being organized, and when this group comes out of hiding, its members will have the right to shit upon everybody.

For writers, this is progress, this is movement forward. Up to now, only publishers had this right.

Does anybody know anything about this group? I am making a public appeal for information.

The grapevine also says that dissatisfaction is large and is growing larger in the lowlands about something called the Nebular Awards (I don't know what these are) and that somebody is starting a campaign to get as many people as possible to vote a straight NO AWARD ticket in the novel, the novella, the novelet, and the short story categories in the next and in all elections that are to come, as a protest vote against setting up an award winner who will automatically have a better go at the feed trough than other writers.

Does anybody know anything about this suggested straight ticket NO AWARD in all categories campaign? I need the in-

formation to check the grapevine if for no other reason. Of course, I am going to vote a straight NO AWARD ticket but I am only an old hack who lives in the Big Rock Candy Mountain and does as he damned well pleases. I am also returning as refused all the lovely free books the publishers are sending me. I wonder how long it will be before the publishers get tired of paying return postage on those beautiful books? The fact that I have returned the books will not deter me from voting NO AWARD in this and all other categories in the next election. Should I vote for a book and thus automatically set up the winner as a competitor who has a better go at the feed trough than I have? At this point, I move over and join the assholes that talk from the inside out and speak their language very clearly, I say, "Shat upon you, Jack!"

Thus the only difference between them and me is that I say it right out in the open, in Dick Geis's fine magazine, instead of in private meetings and by long distance telephone and by buzzing around the country for many private interviews with select groups.

Anybody who sees any correlation between the assholes that talk from the inside out and the SFWA not only does so at his own risk but obviously does not know who is shatting upon him the most, after the publishers, that is.

((First, I find the anal terminology unfortunate, but will let it pass... I don't see the point of the letter's coy indirection re SFWA and the Nebula Awards. But your meaning is clear and I hope you get your information...and I hope you'll share it with the rest of us, since, as a member of SFWA, I'm naturally curious, not having been approached by the Secret Masters of SFWA.))

((In another letter, Mr. Williams comments:))

\$500.00 for all rights to a booklength seems to me to be exploitation of writers of the very worst kind! The wet-backs working in the orange groves around here are far better paid than this!

And now Greenleaf proposes to publish SF, claiming that for SF it will pay better rates than for its classics. Let's ask Greenleaf to demonstrate, let's ask them to state clearly for publication in your magazine the amount of advance they propose to pay for SF, against what percentage of what cover price, the rights bought, when and how the royalties will be paid, how big their print orders will be, and who gets to help count the sales.

Then let's check with writers who have sold SF to them (if such there be!) and find out what these writers have to say. While we are about it, let's find out what the writers who have sold them classics have to say about treatment and rates.

It is my impression that Greenleaf has a lot that needs hanging out in full view of everybody. May I suggest that you carry through with the job you have so ably begun and which the SFWA is incapable of doing. Greenleaf may hate you but I think you will find that all writers everywhere are on your side. Including specifically me!

((Greenleaf has not accepted my invitation to detail their contract, but I did get this defense from Bill Blackbird:))

Bill Blackbird
2077 Golden Gate Ave.
San Francisco, Calif.
94115

In your Monolog on page 26
((SFR 32)) I notice you make a
fundamentally unfair statement
about Greenleaf Classics, Inc. As
far as I know, this publisher's

policies have remained consistent over the past few years, with \$500.00 being the rock-bottom, or crap, price they pay (largely in order to maintain their monthly distribution guarantee of fifty paperback titles, they must publish a certain amount of crud, like it or not). For books they like — and they receive plenty from numerous writers in the sf field — they have been known to go as high as \$3000, with royalties. I know they pay up to \$1500.00, on a royalty basis, and send 25 free copies to the author, and have the contract as evidence. Unestablished new writers, who almost always send their potboilers to this kind of market (it's beneath their dignity to send really good work to a sex house, after all!); or established writers who also try to fob off crap, get the \$500.00 if their work is found to be not wholly illiterate and to contain the usual succession of raunchy scenes, although even this price can be dropped — it has gone to \$400.00 — if the submitted work is below the generally required length of 60,000 words. On the other hand, the writer who is willing to trust Greenleaf with some really good examples of his writing (and several have been received and purchased already) is received and paid with according enthusiasm. Editor Earl Kemp can supply you with details and names on request, and I imagine a number of readers of SFR who write for GC, like myself, will cite their own instances in letters aplenty. Of course, as at any other publisher, the editor's decision is basic in matters of quality and content. I happen to think Earl Kemp has excellent taste and lets very little of worth get past him or go ill-paid. Others may differ. But that is not, of course, the point of your bit of misinformation. Of all of your "data", the only point that is valid — so far as I know — in regard to all purchased MSS, is that Greenleaf does purchase all rights. I am not happy with this practice, any more than any other professional writer can be. But it is imposed on Earl from above, and he will certainly get it amended when (and if) he can.

(About the minor matter of ((Greenleaf's refusing to give)) titles and dates of release: is there really any writer who goes into turning out sex novels wholesale who doesn't visit the biggest dealer of same near him several times a month to see what's new in his field? If he then still manages to miss his work, even though renamed, he must be a singularly unobservant individual. In practice, the staff that would be involved in sending out fifty copies of their books to fifty authors every month would be — and are — better put to reading incoming work for worth and to working closely with new and promising authors.)

((Thanks for the clarification, Bill.))



James Blish
2, Fisherman's Retreat
St. Peter Street
Marlow, Bucks,
England

A P.S. on the obvious in criticism: Piers Anthony has misused a common technical term. A Case of Conscience is not written from the omniscient viewpoint. Each section is written from a single point of

view — mostly, that of Ruiz-Sanchez — except for the two brief pieces dealing with Egtverchi's embryological development (pp. 85-87 and 95-98, Walker edition), where omniscience was necessary because the character in question isn't sentient yet. This is multiple viewpoint, not omniscient viewpoint; for discussion of the difference, with examples, Mr. Anthony might look at pp. 85 and 111-112 of The Issue at Hand.

Case can defend itself; my point is that there are some technical matters in fiction that seem to need repeating to every new generation of writers, no matter how obvious they may seem to people like Chip. Nobody can read everything; while a comparison of Barchester Towers with Ulysses would show the difference between author-omniscient and multiple viewpoints strikingly, that all by itself isn't a good reason for reading either novel, and the technical critic can help by providing some strictly technical shortcuts.

Chip's enthusiasm for La Merrill suggests to me — very tentatively — that what he enjoys most in criticism is impressionism a la Spingarn, and absolute value judgements.

((Are absolute value judgements anything like the objective aesthetic standards Chip feels you talk of? Verry interesting...))

Well, I enjoy them too, but I also agree with C.S. Lewis that the primarily evaluative critic is almost useless; in fact, one cannot even enjoy him until after one has read the work under discussion and formed one's own opinion. There are of course many mansions in criticism, but so far as usefulness to the practicing author is concerned — and this is the criterion Chip placed first in his EXPLODING MADONNA letter — the evaluative critic occupies the lowest house.



E.C. Tubb
67 Houston Rd.
London S.E.23.
England

Like Bester I deplore the violence of the controversies — not having read John J. Pierce's article which seems to have aroused so much fervour I can't comment on it but surely it couldn't have been so vile as to merit the storm of abuse poured on his luckless head? As for the penchant to use those old-fashioned four letter words in science fiction together with steamy sexual episodes it seems to me that we're either writing science fiction or pornography. The trouble with pornography is that it gets so damn boring — the one thing science fiction should not be. I suppose we can always give birth to a new medium — Sexual Fantasies — and so please everyone.

The book reviews prove what I've always suspected — they can say anything and nothing at the same time. The double-review of The Jagged Orbit backs this contention. Personally I see no point in one-letter-and-a-hyphen chapters but that is

the author's business. ((But upon publication it becomes the critics and reader's business.)) But as both reviews cancel out, both become meaningless. ((Not always. And in the case of the reviews of Jagged Orbit I think Ted Pauls and Richard Delap together delineated the book's strong and weak points, with each review by itself incomplete and one-sided.))



Donald R. Benson
Executive Editor
BERKLEY PUBLISHING CORP.
200 Madison Ave.
New York, NY 10016

SFR 32 arrived and was as usual fascinating. I was particularly interested in John Foyster's comments on Cordwainer Smith's The Underpeople,

which I purchased and saw through publication for Pyramid, and can clear up some questions he raised.

About five years ago, I bought a Smith novel called Old North Australia, the first page of the MS of which carried the author's wordage estimate: 60,000. As we approached publication time, a castoff was done, and the minimum length any estimate gave us was 110,000; at that time, an unacceptable length for an original paperback. I pointed this out to Paul Linebarger and, with his agreement, split the book in half at approximately the division point Fred Pohl used in doing it for his magazine. I did the patch job at the end, using some material from the next part; and Linebarger was kind enough to say that he felt it was a good job.

He then prepared a new opening (including the Hansgeorg Wagner bit) for the second half; but did not quite specify how it was to connect with the original MS. He died before this could be worked out, and I put off for some time the editorial work necessary, largely because I didn't feel up to it. It had to be done, though; and, using the author's new opening plus (as I recall — it's over a year ago now) either some of the magazine version or at least some approaches from it, I did it, and it was published as The Underpeople.

The MS I worked from was, as far as the author was concerned, a final draft, and had been in work for about five years. The typos, therefore, resulted from normal typesetting gremlins (and, presumably, lackluster proofreading at Pyramid) and not from working from a handwritten draft. It is a great pity that the book had to be split in this way, since the original version is a powerful and coherent novel. I hope that Pyramid will someday feel it worthwhile to get hold of the original MS and do it as a unit—the market can stand higher prices now, and it would be recognized as one of the real classics of SF.

Since coming to Berkley, I have bought reprint rights to Smith's first collection, You Will Never Be the Same (Regency), plus eight more uncollected stories. If I can work something out with Pyramid, who hold the rights to The Space Lords, I would like to put together a complete collection of the Instrumentality stories (except for the novel),

arranged in chronological order. (Tony Lewis of Boston has worked up a complete list of the stories in this order, plus other valuable information and analyses.) I don't know if Pyramid will stand still for this, but it is worth a try.

It is interesting to hear that there may be a partial MS of a new Smith book in his files. I have asked the agent—Meredith, who took over from Altshuler—to look into this, but have had no word from them. I'll prod them again, with this specific bit of information.

((Thank you for the background information. I hope your project goes through.))



Poul Anderson
3 Las Palomas
Orinda, Calif.
94563

It was a great pleasure to meet Andy Offutt in St. Louis, and of course I also enjoyed his kind remarks about my writing in the last SFR. So I hope he will realize that what follows is written in the friendliest spirit, simply to correct a misapprehension under which more people than he labor.

He calls me "apparently a heavily-biased authoritarian, judging from his attitude toward my being allowed to read a copy of the guest of honor speech at the 1968 World Science Fiction Convention (in an SFWA publication)." May I try to make clear what actually happened?

Phil Farmer's talk was interesting and important, whether or not one agrees with everything it said. Because it made specific proposals for correcting certain major—potentially catastrophic—public mistakes of the present day, it necessarily to some degree was a political manifesto.

When SFWA printed it, a few members, including myself, questioned the wisdom of doing so. We did not, repeat and re-repeat not want it or anybody else's words suppressed. As a matter of fact, Phil's speech had already been published elsewhere—by you, Dick, wasn't it? ((It was printed in SFR 28, but a few weeks after SFWA publication.)) We did warn against the possibility of this precedent, the official publication of a partisan document, leading to the eventual disruption of the outfit.

If this happened, it would emphatically not be Phil's fault. Rather, it would result from various opinionated people demanding equal time for their own views. Such bitchery could lead to infighting which, in turn, could open the way for manipulation by those to whom any organization is preferably a grindstone for political axes. It would end with SFWA maneuvered into taking official stands on major public issues. (This is not a paranoid's nightmare. For example, look what's been happening in the civil rights movement. Far too many groups within it are now involved with everything except civil rights.) If this happened, of course every member in opposition to a given stand would resign; many others would drop out on principle, even if they supported the politics in question; and there would go the only writers' organization which is currently worth diddly-squat.

As a matter of fact, what hassling has already occurred appears to have cost us one extremely distinguished colleague.

Obviously Phil's temperate statement could do no such harm in itself. My group merely wondered if it might, without the least wash on his part, prove to be the camel's nose in the tent. At the same time, we recognized this was a very borderline case, since a guest of honor speech is, beyond cavil, of genuine professional interest. My own suggestion was that, if similar instances occurred in future, SFWA's publications board should simply notify the membership where copies might be obtained.

Well, after a certain amount of quite amicable argument, we found ourselves in a pretty clear minority. Evidently most of our lodge siblings see no harm in the official circulation of controversial material dealing with subjects outside the immediate interests of the profession. So be it, then. My side has bowed to the general will—and, after all, our qualms may prove to have been unfounded. I hope so.

((The points you raised will be carefully remembered in the future, I should think.))

Far from being an authoritarian, I consider myself an old-fashioned libertarian. True, I don't believe you can have liberty without a legitimate authority for framework—but this could better be the takeoff point for a Beer Muttering, or better yet an occasion for rereading Edmund Burke.



Alexei Panshin
Open Gate Farm
Star Route
Perkasie, Pa.
18944

Cory and I were wandering through the lobby of the Chase-Park Plaza at three in the morning and I happened to notice a board in the shape of the hotel with half a dozen green lights on it, and so I said, "What's that?" Cory said that it was the numbers of people who had mail waiting at the desk. I looked closer, and By Damn!—Room 6543 had mail waiting. Thank you, Geis. (but covered with 1½¢ stamps?) ((I ran out of ½¢ stamps.)) It made my convention to read SFR in the lobby of the Chase-Park Plaza at three in the morning.

I read the first half sentence of Bob Toomey's review of Heinlein in Dimension and started laughing. It said, "Alexei Panshin opens this remarkably good, perceptive, lively, and scholarly study..." I said to Cory, "I think I've got a favorable review." Toomey's sentence goes on: "...with a statement that I find myself at immediate odds with: 'Science fiction is not a widely influential field, and it shows no real sign of becoming widely influential in the future.'" And Toomey disagrees with the contention for two full columns. As it happens, I think Toomey is right. I've changed my mind since 1965 when I originally wrote HiD. On the first page of the book I talk about people who don't know the difference between a planet and a star. I had in mind a long-time friend of my mother's. And in her last letter to my mother, she said that these days she has given up reading

mysteries almost entirely in favor of science fiction. And The Andromeda Strain—wretched book that it is—was published as a novel period, but was reviewed everywhere as science fiction, and still was a Book-of-the-Month Club selection and a best seller. As I said in HiD—didn't I?—"Science fiction is an increasingly influential field, and it shows real signs of becoming widely influential in the future."

I liked Charles Platt's turn as the John Jeremy Pierce of the New Wave. I liked Norman Spinrad's frank admission that Bug Jack Barron is nothing but a direct copy of Keith Laumer—but then we all knew that already, didn't we? But Norman's not right when he says, "It is something of a measure of the editorial immaturity and general literary stagnation of the conventional sf literary marketplace that Laumer is still grinding out Retief stories, and space opera." It's a measure of Laumer. If he wanted to do something better, he could step up to writing Spinrad stories the same as anybody else. The star is just waiting there for him to grasp.

Best, however, I liked Piers Anthony. He is one twitchy, cross-grained, narrow-minded, arrogant fugghead, and enjoys it, and I like him for it. Vardeman, Lucker and Lockett took him apart, and he had the grace to say, "Thank you, gentlemen. Do it again." And then proceed to shoot his mouth off for three pages just to give them the ammunition. He wants to sell his best work without a struggle. Come on, Piers—who sells his best work without a struggle? Struggle is good for you. It hones your artistic sensibilities and gives you something to talk about. If I were able to sell my best work without a struggle, I wouldn't have any conversation at all. And Piers wants an award so that he doesn't have to write any more drivel about muscular men, adultery and fighting with clubs. Nobody is keeping him from doing it now that I can see. He should knuckle down to business and write his Keith Laumer novel if he has it in him instead of talking at such great length about all that is constraining him. And Piers thinks that to mention your own work sparingly and to speak with modesty at all times is the way to win an award. Does he? That sure does sound like naked ambition, all right. And Piers—"Arrange to have your work published in the early or middle part of the year, and see that it is prominently reviewed." Who manages that? Either part? How? I wish I could do that.

Piers—if you do want an award and if you think being an officer of SFWA helps, I have a proposal. I'm the Chairman of the SFWA Nominations Committee—what, again?—yes, again—charged to do my best to find qualified candidates to run for office. You may be a twitchy, cross-grained, narrow-minded, arrogant and likeable fugghead, but you also seem meticulous and conscientious and capable of serving as Secretary-Treasurer should you beat Anne McCaffrey for the job. Are you willing to run?

Finally, Piers describes himself as "one of the youngest and turkiest of the young turks." Young? Piers is middle-aged, a father, practically a grandfather already. Is he confusing himself with sharp young writers like Vernor Vinge and Bruce McAllister fifteen years his junior? Smile and say, "Thank you," Piers.



Bob Silverberg
5020 Goodridge Av.
New York, NY 10471

I'd like to second Spinrad's remarks about the excellences of Keith Laumer's writing. I ought to note that I find very little of interest

in Keith's themes; with a few honorable exceptions, his stories strike me as free of significant content or comment. But that doesn't mean I don't respect his work for its real virtues. Whenever fatigue or strain or whatever has blurred my own feel for technique, has dulled my prose or scrambled my sense of plot, I reach for a Laumer to get my grip on the fundamentals again. I went through a pretty bad seige of fatigue following our fire in early 1968, and quite frequently found myself turning to this much-put-down writer to regain my grasp on the mechanics of writing. I wish Laumer would put his crisp style and remarkable knack for imagery and action to the service of some substantial idea; but in his limited way he's exceptionally good, a true writer's writer, and his work deserves careful study by those attempting to master the craft.



A. Bertram Chandler
Cell 7, Tarra St.
Woollahra, NSW 2025
AUSTRALIA

Issue No.31 - June 1969 - of SFR arrived for which many thanks. It will be some time before I can get around to reading it properly as I am one of those people for

whom Finagle's Law invariably operates. I was at home for the first five weeks of my Annual Leave and nobody, but nobody, condescended to drop me a line. I have just returned from a three weeks' tour of Central Australia to find my desk piled high with assorted bumf-bills, cheques, prozines, fanzines, personal correspondence and business correspondence. And, apart from anything else, I have still to transcribe the notes I made during my incursion into the Never-Never country...

Anyhow, I did skin through SFR. I was intrigued by the review by Piers Anthony of Sherbourne Press's Encounters With Aliens, in which my own "The Tie That Binds" appears. Like Mr. Anthony I was annoyed by the Preface and the Introduction, in both of which the science fictioners are accused of being unkind to the poor, dear saucerites.

I worked off my bad temper in a short story, in which I suggested that the aliens manning and operating the UFOs, realising that sightings are, these days, unavoidable, deliberately make contact with Adamski-type Earthlings, assuming rightly that nobody with the merest smattering of scientific knowledge will believe stories about little Green Men from Mars and Beautiful Blondes from Venus...

My everloving wife/secretary said that the story stank, and almost had me believing it. Much to her surprise - and, frankly, to mine - it sold promptly, both to MAN in Australia and to ANALOG in the U.S.A.

I now feel a certain benevolence towards the writers of the Preface and the Introduction...

L. Sprague de Camp
278 Hothorpe Lane
Villanova, Pa. 19085

Your Mr. Foyster denigrates pop science articles like those of my colleagues Ley and Asimov, saying that one can get more and solidier science from ISIS, SCIENTIFIC AMERICAN, &c. The trouble is, if the average SF reader subscribed to several such learned journals, he would find most of their articles pretty hard going; moreover, if he tried to read them all he would have time for nothing else. Besides, there are speculative and borderline pieces like Asimov's recent dissection of Velikovsky, fun to write & (hopefully) to read, for which SCI AM &c. afford no outlet. (I take 8 such learned periodicals, including SCI AM, & read them, but then I'm in the business, too.) Furthermore, a scientific specialist can write only about his specialty, & rarely well even about that.

((Yessir, and Mr. Asimov agrees with you...))

Isaac Asimov
45 Greenough Street
West Newton, Mass.
02165

Mr. John Foyster writes an interesting review of Another Look At Atlantis by Willy Ley (on whom forever be peace) in SF REVIEW 33, and I just want to comment on his statement that

"I've often found it difficult to justify the existence of these general columns of Asimov's and Ley's to myself."

Hw wouldn't if he had a chance to look over the letters I receive from readers (and, presumably, that Willy received from his.) I get very little for my column; the payment hasn't increased in eleven years, despite inflation of the general economy and of my own reputation; but I would write it for nothing in exchange for those letters.

I have no doubt that Mr. Foyster could get more out of Sarton and Thorndike than out of me, but the truth of the matter is that most of the readers of F&SF wouldn't. You see, Sarton and Thorndike don't write for those readers and I do.

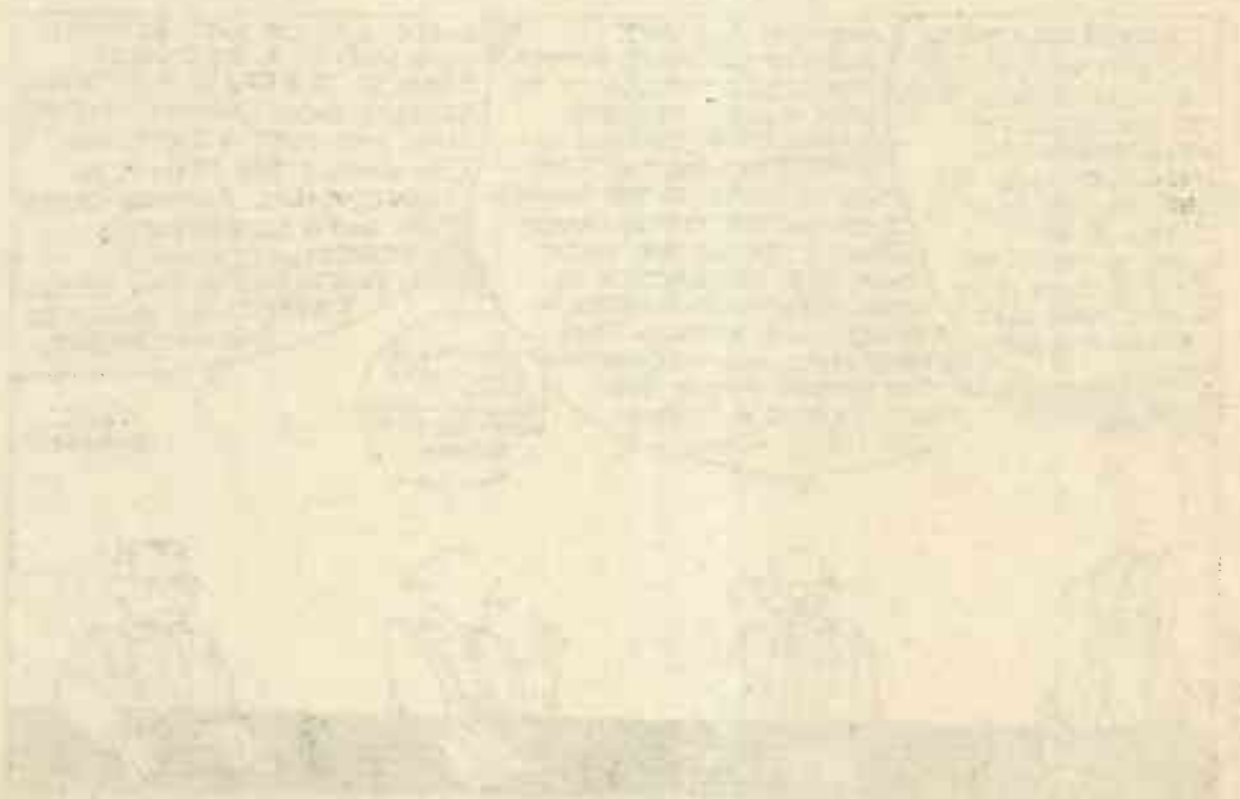
To another topic—

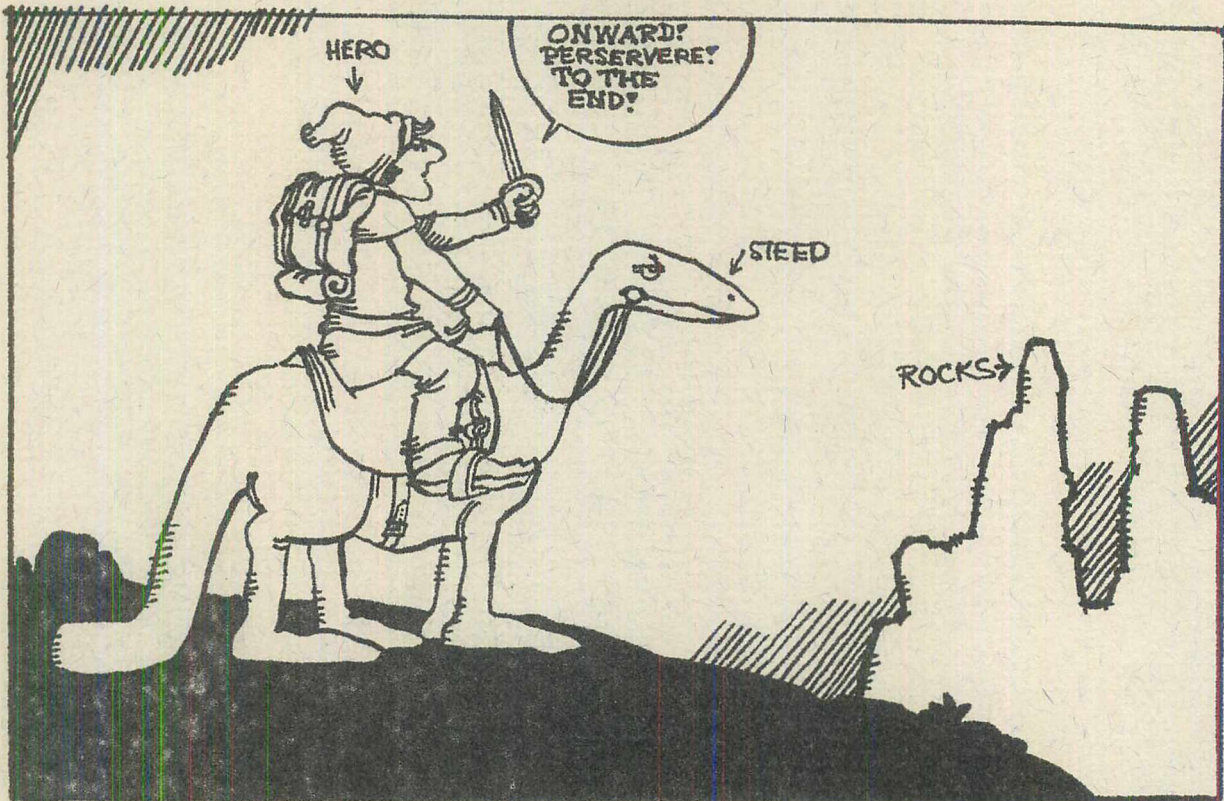
Mr. Justin St. John seems considerably subdued in his letter in SF REVIEW 33 and is much less offensive, which is a good thing, for I hate offensiveness in general and I find it difficult to tolerate offensiveness directed against me.

However, if he is a little worried about his assumption that I know how to read, let him relax. Yes, Mr. St. John I know how to read. I even know how to read obscenity, although I prefer not to. The fact that I don't defend my ideas may not mean that no defense is possible, as you suspect; it may be that I consider that no defense is necessary. Think about it a little; logical thought may come hard to the unpracticed but I think you can manage.

((And with that zinger hovering in the air we leave the tranquil land known as "Box 3116" until next issue...))

I ALSO GOT LETTERS FROM— RONALD K. HOEFLIN, DICK ELLINGTON (twice), JOHN FOYSTER, JUSTIN ST. JOHN, CY CHAUVIN, LON JONES, HARRY VARNER, JR. (Aiii!), TOM HARPER, PAULINE PALMER, MIKE V. MATHEIS, DICK GLASS, BILL GLASS, H. HOWARD COLEMAN, DOUG BRENT, TOM MULLEN, DAVE BURTON, ALEX KRISLOV, PAUL ANDERSON, SCOTT BRADFIELD....continued exhaustively in or on page 15





OKAY GENTLEMEN, AS YOU KNOW, WE ARE GATHERED HERE TO DISCUSS THE PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE ABOVE CARTOON. I WOULD LIKE TO BEGIN BY SAYING THAT IT IS QUITE MARKEDLY FREUDIAN, AND-

AND WE ALL ARE AWARE OF YOUR RATHER PIGHEDDED TENDENCY TO LINK EVERY MINUTE DETAIL TO FREUDIAN INTERPRETATION, DOCTOR. NO, IN SPITE OF THE SWORD, I THINK THE IMPORTANCE HERE LIES IN THE FACT THAT THE CHARACTER IS DEFINITELY ANON-HUMAN IN A FAIRY-TALE WORLD. THIS REPRESENTS AN ALIENATION OF THE ARTIST FROM THE REAL WORLD IN WHICH HE LIVES - UM...

WELL, LET US NOT BECOME INVOLVED IN A VISCIOS CIRCLE. I REFER YOU TO THE ARTIST'S OWN COMMENT: "NO, MAN, IT'S JUST A CARTOON." OBVIOUSLY THE MAN IS A FUNCTIONAL ANIMAL-CRACKER WITH WHEATFIELD PERSONIFICATIONS. NEEDLESS TO SAY, I STILL DEFEND HIS RIGHT TO DIG ICE-CREAM.

I, PERSONALLY, FIND IT VERY HARD TO BREATHE - WHAT WITH THE TIES AND ALL...

PANEL BORDER →

W.D. 69

