

SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW

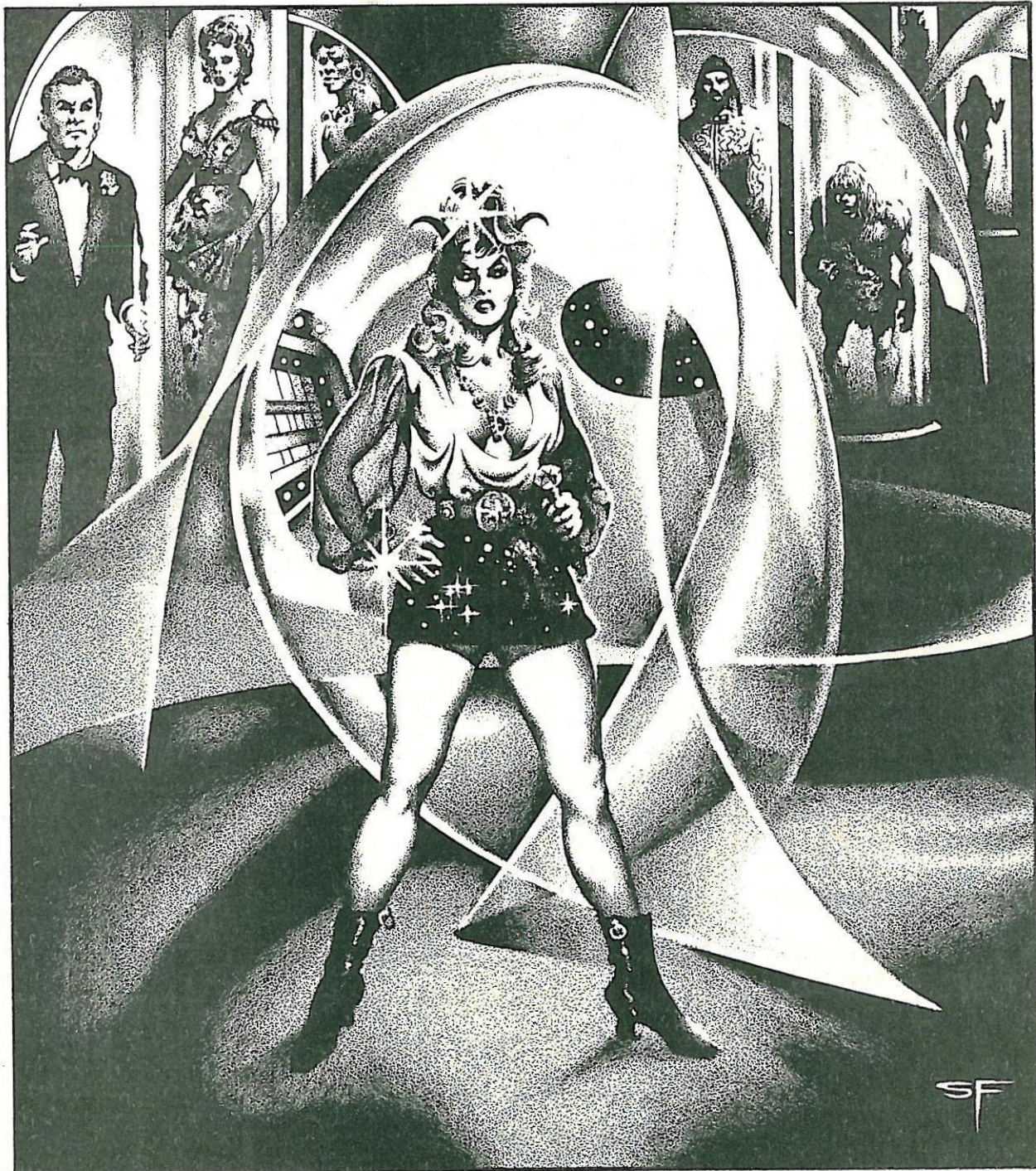
SFR INTERVIEWS

\$1.25

George R.R. Martin

Robert Anton Wilson

17



ALIEN THOUGHTS



In spite of the hopes of the space program optimists, I'm inclined to think the U.S. space program, now in the scaled-down doldrums, will be phased out even more firmly in the next ten years.

The motivation is gone. We beat the Russians to the Moon, didn't we. We got men up there five or six times, set up all kinds of experiments to help justify the expense, and had an orgy of Superiority for a few years. Great stuff.

But I can't think of anything, now, that would impell us to invest another empty-ump billions of bucks into another manned program for bigger and better space-craft, and space platforms and the necessary advanced technology....

The voters are pissed off enough about taxes and welfare. They see space shots as a space industry boondoggle; just another welfare-for-engineers program. (And a cost-plus subsidy for large corporations.) Like pyramid building.

Where is the profit in space? Until Exxon can see a way to turn that trick I doubt the Congress will see a reason for further vast expense. The "public sector" needs it more.

The most we can hope for is using the space shuttle to ferry radioactive wastes up and out, so that the nuclear power plants will be more acceptable to the environmentalists.

In the meanwhile I can't think of a damn thing the Russians are capable of doing in space that would provoke another national pride-saving effort.

And without fear, or the national ego at stake, or the lure of making a buck present, the space program in this country appears wiped out.

Did somebody mumble about mining the Moon? Too costly, of course. It's a Catch-22 situation; by the time we will desperately need whatever oils or minerals are in the Moon, we'll have used up so

much of Earth's resources that it will still be too expensive.

The only chance for a space-adventuring future for mankind, as I see it, is a revolutionary energy breakthrough in science—nuclear fusion or anti-gravity—or we're going to be facing a time soon when our mass-production civilization will break down because of shortages in key (and obscure) resources and the vast organization and technology required for a manned space program will no longer be possible.

It begins to look like space will not be our new frontier. Space is probably a dead end; an expensive ego-/military/-trip possible only for a temporarily wealthy, high technology few nations.

We'll have to wait for Godot—the aliens—to come to us and give us the Secret. On the other hand, once we pass the point of no return in resources and technology, the "flying saucers" may lose interest in us: they'll return to their home planets and report, "Sorry, sir, the natives of Sol III blew it. Where do we try next?"

The death of a space-travel future may kill off science fiction as we know it. In fact, the souring of technology and mass-consumption may kill off science fiction completely...leaving us with various forms of fantasy.

Of course we'll have spy satellites and new generations of missiles for as long as it is humanly possible to build and maintain them. The military will always have first priority.

I might even point out that if the military hadn't seen the obvious benefits to them in satellites and space technology, the glamorous, dazzling sheepskin of the manned space programs clothing the military wolf, wouldn't have been funded by Congress and sold to the people.

So—given the space-less future I see ahead of us, what are the "bottom-line" harsh truths we face?

More and more nakedly, the "free world" dominated by the United States, will be in an open struggle with the "Godless Commies" for the Third World resources. The world pie is shrinking, everyone's appetite is growing, and we'll have to give the geopolitical devil its due and admit to our citizens that their standard of living depends on our controlling (through "foreign aid" bribes, threats, CIA covert operations, and "virtuous" military interventions) South and Central America, and as much as possible of Africa, the Middle-East, and

the Asian Rim.

Will it be possible to abandon the hypocrisy of saying it's okay for Ford and Kissinger to bribe Sadat/Egypt to cut loose from the Russians and not make waves, while pointing an outraged moral finger at U.S. corporations for bribing lower-level foreign officials to sell goods and services?

Can the voters be eased into the eye-opening and morally uncomfortable position of knowing clearly that their self-interest lies in assassinations and expeditionary forces to exotic places?...that their nice cars, stereos, long vacations, etc. depend on looting (in a nice way) other peoples' lands?

Will we trade a son for a Caddy and a trip to Vegas?

Well?

"Don't be in such a hurry! I'm thinking!"

If the naked truth surfaces and refuses to be repressed, the cynical and selfish arguments will boil down to: Hell, if we don't grab the iron and bauxite and nickel and tungsten and oil in X, the Communists will! The rest of the under-developed world will be plundered, sooner or later, so we might as well get it now—or we'll have to fight like hell for it later.

But, not to worry, I'm sure 99% of the citizenry will cower from such grim choices and decisions. The old reliable lies of self-justification will suffice: we'll keep the peace and do good and be patriotic and hate the Evil enemy.

The bloody handwriting on the wall will always be papered over....except....

There is this growing counter-culture: libertarianism, ecologyism, isolationism, the back-to-the-land movement, the pagan religions....

It'll be interesting to see how the establishment is going to sell another foreign adventure to the youth of this country. The young won't follow a Hubert Humphrey or a Ford or a Reagan or a Jackson. They just might trust a Jerry Brown or a Jimmy Carter or a Ted Kennedy.

In the meantime, friends, buy a wood stove for back-up service when the oil is cut off again or goes to \$1. a gallon, pay off your house, and insulate it to the hilt...so you can be warm as you read up on home gardens and the tactics of fighting off armed gangs of thieves.

Ah, Doom-saying...a delicious, virtuous avocation.

Continued on page 4

SCIENCE

FICTION

REVIEW

COVER BY STEPHEN FABIAN

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ALIEN THOUGHTS-----2

AN INTERVIEW WITH
GEORGE R. R. MARTIN
Conducted by Darrell Schweitzer-6

PHILIP K. DICK:
A PARALLAX VIEW
By Terrence M. Green-----12

THE DEVIL IS DEAD or
FINNEGAN'S AWAKE
By R. A. Lafferty-----16

MICROCOSMOS
By R. Faraday Nelson-----20

THE ALTERED EGO
By James McQuade-----23

AN INTERVIEW WITH
ROBERT ANTON WILSON
Conducted by Neal Wilgus-----30

ANGEL FEAR:
A Sort-of Review Column
of SF Art
By FREFF-----41

THE ALTER-EGO VIEWPOINT-----45

ALIEN CONCLUSIONS-----46

LETTERS

Michael G. Coney-----11
Philip Jose Farmer-----17
Bud Webster-----18
Robert Bloch-----18
Andrew Weiner-----18
Harlan Ellison-----19
Paul Walker-----19
Harry Warner-----22
Karl T. Pflock-----25
Jerry Pournelle-----25
Charles Platt-----26
George Warren-----26
Charles C. Ryan/GALILEO-----29
Forry Ackerman-----34
Peter Mandler-----35
Fred Roux-----37
Darrell Schweitzer-----37
Peter Weston-----40
Byron Preiss-----41
David Gerrold-----44
Ron Rogers-----47
Geir-Arne Olsen-----47
Don Keller-----47

PHONE (503) 282-0381

REVIEWS

RAX-----5
KILLERBOWL
Reviewed by George R R Martin-10
NAMELESS PLACES
Reviewed by Jeffrey Miller-----16
WHEN FOOTSTEPS ECHO
Reviewed by Wayne Hooks-----17
THE PROMETHEUS CRISIS
Reviewed by Keith Soltys-----18
TRITON
Reviewed by Donn Vicha-----24
EPOCH
Reviewed by Mike Glycer-----27
MARUNE:ALASTOR 933
SHOWBOAT WORLD
THE GRAY PRINCE
Reviewed by Lynne Holdom-----36
NEW WORLDS #6
Reviewed by Darrell Schweitzer---38
EYEWITNESS TO SPACE
Reviewed by Freff-----42
VIEWS
Reviewed by Freff-----44
IMPERIAL EARTH
ECOTOPIA
STAR MOTHER
THE IMPLSION EFFECT
MANKIND AT THE TURNING POINT
ODYSSEY
THE BEST OF STEPHEN FABIAN
FANTASTIC NUDES
A HANNES BOX SKETCHBOOK
THE SCIENCE FANTASY CORRESPONDENT
THE SPACE VAMPIRES
THE TRIUNE MAN
Reviewed by Alter Ego-----45-46

INTERIOR ART

Tim Kirk 2-3-45-46-48
David Haugh 4
Grant Canfield 6-29
William Rotliser 8-29-21-24-30-33
Alexis Gilliland 13-16-18-32-35-39
Jim McQuade 19-23
Mike Gilbert 22-34-37-44
Vic Kostrikin 27-47
Todd Klein 31
Jim Shull 36
Freff 41

NOTE: I've mislaid the name of the artist
who did the heading illo for the Green
article on page 12. Come forward, sir,
and claim credit...next issue.

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SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW is published
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4-20-76 The post office is forgiven: I
just got my second class mailing permit.

I had been considering adding a heavy cover this issue, a la #15, but then I read a report in the Kiplinger Newsletter that the post awful is scheduling another round of 2nd, 3rd, and 4th class rate increases in July.

I cringed as usual and ran screaming around the house threatening to disembowel the next postman I saw...but that phase passed as usual. I grimly concluded it wiser to stick with the current 48-page self-cover newsprint format. Those heavy covers, besides costing over \$100. per thousand, also weigh as much as the rest of the issue. Who needs a nearly doubled postage bill?

And the price of newsprint has gone up, too, insuring that the printing bill will be up again.

(And besides, as many readers have said they like the easily folded newsprint as have said the heavy covers are nifty to look at.)

In fact, I expect inflation and price increases to come on hot and heavy later this year, with the p.o. whimpering and whining "crisis" and "bankruptcy" to the Congress every two weeks until Congress gives a whopping two billion subsidy. Rates can't be increased much more (especially first class rates) without a catastrophic loss of volume. A utility company in an eastern state recently found it could deliver its own bills by hand cheaper than postage. A raise to 15¢ (say) for a first class letter would trigger an avalanche of defections to alternate bill delivery systems.

Already several book publishers are sending review copies via United Parcel Service (After that incredible million-package foul-up they had in...was it the Detroit post office? I can't conceive a supervisor letting machinery chew up hundreds of thousands of parcels (mostly books) without doing something about it. It took a visit by a Congressman to expose the mess.)

Bruce Arthurs sent me a long letter detailing (from personal p.o. work experience) the various stupidities and inefficiencies he observed.

And...the high muck-a-mucks in Washington D. C. still haven't okayed my second class mailing permit...no doubt still hopping in the interim I'll quit publishing on schedule so they can deny the application and save a few hundred bucks... It is not

paranoia that points to an unwritten law of delay concerning small-press second class applications, both locally and at national headquarters. A minor p.o. official let slip the existence of the policy in a conversation with me a few months ago. Let a major publisher launch a new magazine, however, and its application is okayed promptly.

I really weary of complaining about the post office. Let me say only that (especially in the New York area) if you don't get your copy of SFR in a reasonable time—usually by the end of November, February, May and August—don't suspect me of running off to Las Vegas with intent to abscond and indulge. Like as not the p.o. has "lost" it. Overseas subscribers, of course, must expect to wait up to and beyond two months. No, I don't understand, either, why it takes so long. Boats aren't that slow!

Still another reason for avoiding the expensive covers is my typewriters. The Sears Medalist 12 which I use for rough copy and manuscript work has taken to sticking. I'll be typing merrily along, I'll look up and lo, I've pounded out six words in one space. And this loyal Olympia standard which is perhaps the best manual ever made, with its lovely 17 space per inch tall elite, is frustrating because it was not designed for a carbon ribbon, and my jury-rigged feeder and altering of the ribbon take-up mechanism is so often cranky and eccentric that I often have to retype a "missed" letter or word or phrase.... So I'm going to buy me a dual pitch Selectric which takes drop-in carbon ribbon cartridges.

The dual pitch Selectrics start around \$835, I think, and by the time I add the extra typing balls I want, and buy a dozen or so cartridges....and a service contract ...

In order to afford the Selectric I wrote another porno epic. This one is called (my working title) MOTHER LUST, and will bring in \$1500. I have the first \$750 check in hand. The balance is due on publication. For those who are interested, the first book I did for Beeline a few months ago (the money went into reprinting TAC #5 and #6 and a few ads upcoming in ANALOG) is out on display in adult bookshops nationwide, I guess, and was retitled by the editors to DADDY'S HARLOT. By-lined Sheila Kunzur. Heh-heh.

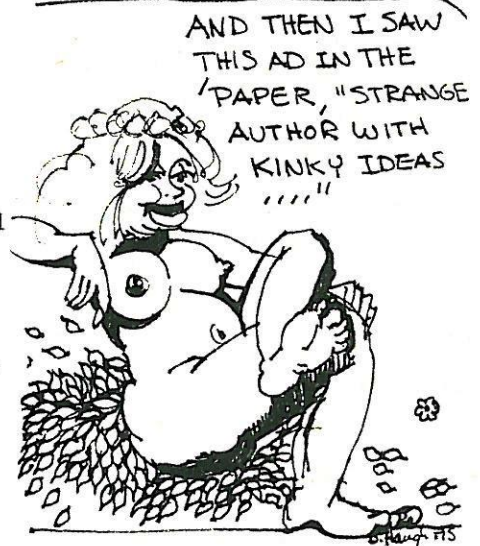
By the way, please don't ask me for the address of Beeline's editor and his/their editorial taboos and needs and etc., so you, too, can "knock off a sex novel" and

"rake in that easy money". And don't send me sample chapters for my opinion. If you must try the market buy a few of the books, study them, and then write to the address given in the back of the books. If they're interested they'll respond.

I may write another to finance some house improvements and some dental work, and...whatever emergency shows up. SFR doesn't yet clear enough to keep me in all the Red Rocket wine and peanuts I drink/eat.

Speaking of RED... Ummm, about the red print of last issue... I have never experienced such an outpouring of vehement opinion—such unanimous opinion—about an aspect of one of the issues.

Readers—dozens of them—complained bitterly of seared eyeballs, weakened vis-



ion, blurry type, fogged brains... NEVER, EVER, DO THAT AGAIN, GEIS! they gently suggested.

So the color change for the covers and six interior pages is out! Black ink is easier to read, yes. (And besides, it saves another seventy dollars or so.)

What a lot of people don't realize in their dazzled initial something-for-nothing euphoria concerning a nationalized health care service and/or the recent assertion by a few black/poor groups that everyone has a right to food, is that it is a two-way street.

It is still True that There-Ain't-No-Such-Thing-As-A-Free-Lunch. There is always a price, sometimes in coin you don't expect or hadn't considered possible.

Beware of politicians bearing gifts.
Their price is power—over you.

In this case—health care and food—there is an unspoken and often unrecognized (by the recipient) "social contract":

If you get "free" food and "free" medical care you will be required to perform a "free" service for the State. First, subtly, you become dependent on the state for food, shelter, medical care, amusement And then, once all the machinery is in place and the structures are built and society re-arranged...then (or reasonably, gradually, during the seduction) you become the property of the State.

Whoever feeds you and shelters you and cares for you is your master. Some people prefer to be their own master.

Jimmy Carter has now joined Hubert Humphrey, Scoop Jackson and Edward Kennedy in favor of a cradle-to-the-grave national health service. They all insist it be a compulsory program. They never seem to explain why people must be forced to participate if it is such a wonderful deal.

The key is that with a voluntary program people could withdraw if they find it isn't as great a deal as they thought in the beginning.... And politicians and bureaucrats HATE to lose control of people.

The dynamics of these in-place and proposed social programs: federalized welfare, food stamps, health care, etc. is that they always tend to spread, to bring more and more people into their care/control, and to ever-diminish the number of people who are essentially free of the State.

Sharp-eyed SFR-watchers will note that with this issue Space Age Books in Melbourne have become SFR's subscription agent in Australia.

Australian subscribers may renew with Space Age Books if they wish. It simplifies matters considerably for everyone. Rates are:

- 1 year (4 issues) \$4.00 Aust.
- 2 years (8 issues) \$6.00 Aust.

To: SPACE AGE BOOKS
305-307 Swanston Street,
Melbourne 3000 Victoria.

Rates have changed for U.K. subscribers, too. No sooner had I received a letter from W. Dawson & Sons Ltd. quoting new pound rates, but the British pound suffer-

ed another sinking spell—down to around \$1.85 in U.S. currency.

I have whipped out my handy seven dollar pocket calculator and have arrived at the following rates to send to Wm. Dawson & Sons Ltd. for a new subscription or renewal:

- 1 year (4 issues) £2.48
- 2 years (8 issues) £4.35

To: Wm. Dawson & Sons Ltd.
Cannon House
Folkestone, Kent CT19 5EE

GROWING UP IN ERT0

On the cover of Michael G. Coney's new novel, RAX (DAW UY1205, \$1.25) is a quote from Theodore Sturgeon: "It is heartening to see a good writer become very good."

And that is true of Mike with RAX; it's the best novel he's written, and I suspect he has crossed an invisible border to a territory of new skills and more effective technique...and a greater knowledge of what he wants to say and how best to say it.

I'm reluctant to give specifics about the story in RAX. It's about coming-of-age on an alien planet by a humanoid boy (who is extremely human in almost every respect) during a war and in a culture and technology roughly 1875-ish in our terms.

It deals with the strange and fascinating climatic changes of the planet, and with the equally fascinating alien flora and fauna and unobtrusive companion humanoid species everyone seems to ignore as unimportant until...in the end...

It deals with an astronomical catastrophe, hidden at first, which is structured into the final section of the story to reveal the essential nature of government and rulers...

Hell, it's a hell of a novel. Detailed, persuasive, gripping. It starts slowly, but Mike can now carry a reader with incident and character as he develops his story at his chosen pace.

This novel inspires great admiration in me. Coney is now Very Good. He'll get better.

'Little souls wish you to be unhappy. It aggravates them to have you joyous, efficient and free. They like to feel that fate is disciplining you. It gives their egos wings if yours are clipped. You can ruin your life in an hour by listening to their puerile opinions.'—David Seabury

Govt. of the politicians, by the bureaucrats, for the non-producers.

Society may be kept moving by its misfits ---people who fail to respond to the expensive housebreaking procedures educators call "socialization."

If this is so, it raised some crucial questions. How much of this essential eccentricity---this disorderly behavior---can a society tolerate? Are a society's rigidities gratuitous or do they produce entrepreneurs by giving them something solid to push against? Or can we begin to imagine a society in which eccentricity is the norm and the entrepreneurial impulse, in one form or another, is expressed more universally?

---Richard Cornuelle

Scotland Yard detectives use a simple pattern to decide whether a burglar is a professional. If they find that all the drawers of a cabinet or dresser are open, they suspect a professional; if only the bottom drawer is open, they look for an amateur. The reasoning, as Sherlock Holmes would say, is easy once you have the key. Pros know it's quicker to start at the bottom drawers and work up, leaving drawers open as you go. If you start with the top drawer, you must close it before you open and look into the drawer below.

"Newsline", PSYCHOLOGY TODAY
Dec. 1975.

Among Frank Harris's flickering claims on our memory was his preposterous MY LIFE AND LOVES, which was one of the financial props of his declining years. It has an assured place in the history of pornography; generations of randy schoolboys have passed it from desk to desk and countless travellers have smuggled it through the Customs wrapped in woollen underwear. I always thought, even as a schoolboy, that it was rather a bore, and more than faintly unattractive, particularly in its advocacy of the use of a stomach pump as an adjunct in the successful consummation of erotic activities. After Miss Pullar's revelations we can judge it in a different light. When we realize the background against which it was created it emerges as a baroque tragedy, and Harris's last and most stupendous lie. For when he wrote MY LIFE AND LOVES he was completely impotent. It was the final flicker of a burnt out body and an exhausted brain.

---Beverley Nichols,
THE SPECTATOR, May 24, 1975

AN INTERVIEW WITH
GEORGE R. R. MARTIN

CONDUCTED BY DARRELL SCHWEITZER

SFR: How does one go about constructing an alien world? How do you do it?

MARTIN: Well I just wrote an article on constructing aliens for Charlie Grant's WRITING AND SELLING SCIENCE FICTION, which SFWA and the WRITER'S DIGEST are doing, so in some ways I had to think about that much more analytically than I ever had to before. Up to the present, up to writing that article, I had always not thought about how I did it. I just did it intuitively. I do not use the Hal Clement/Poul Anderson world building method where they essentially start from a planet a certain distance from a sun, and they give it certain climatic features, and then they work out what the ecology would be like from there, what sort of people would develop on the planet. They'd have aliens at the end, and perhaps the planet would suggest some storylines.

I work it the opposite. For me the story comes first, and the characters, and I start with that. Then I design the alien world to make the points that I wanted to make in the story. Like, "A Song for Lya" was simply a story about love and religion and loneliness and things like that, and there were things I wanted to say about those issues. So the world was designed to enable me to make the statements I wanted to make most effectively.

SFR: I think there's a problem in many stories of this type, including "A Song for Lya", and that is that the alien world comes off not as a society of another species but just as a foreign country. Would you agree?

MARTIN: That's true about the Shkeen, I think, to an extent. But that again was the requirement of the story. It was necessary for them to be mentally very close to humans, so they could feel the same need for love, the same need for religious background that humans feel, so that humans would be susceptible to the Greeshka, the mass mind. My protagonist refers to that in the story when he names other alien races and says, "This one feels no emotions at all," and of another one, "I feel their emotions very strongly, but they're alien emotions," but the Shkeen are very close to humanity. So in that case, yeah, I do think a certain amount of that is true, but it was deliberate. That was what I was

getting at.

SFR: Do you think it is safe to assume that the products of a completely independent evolution would have things so anthropomorphic as cities and religion?

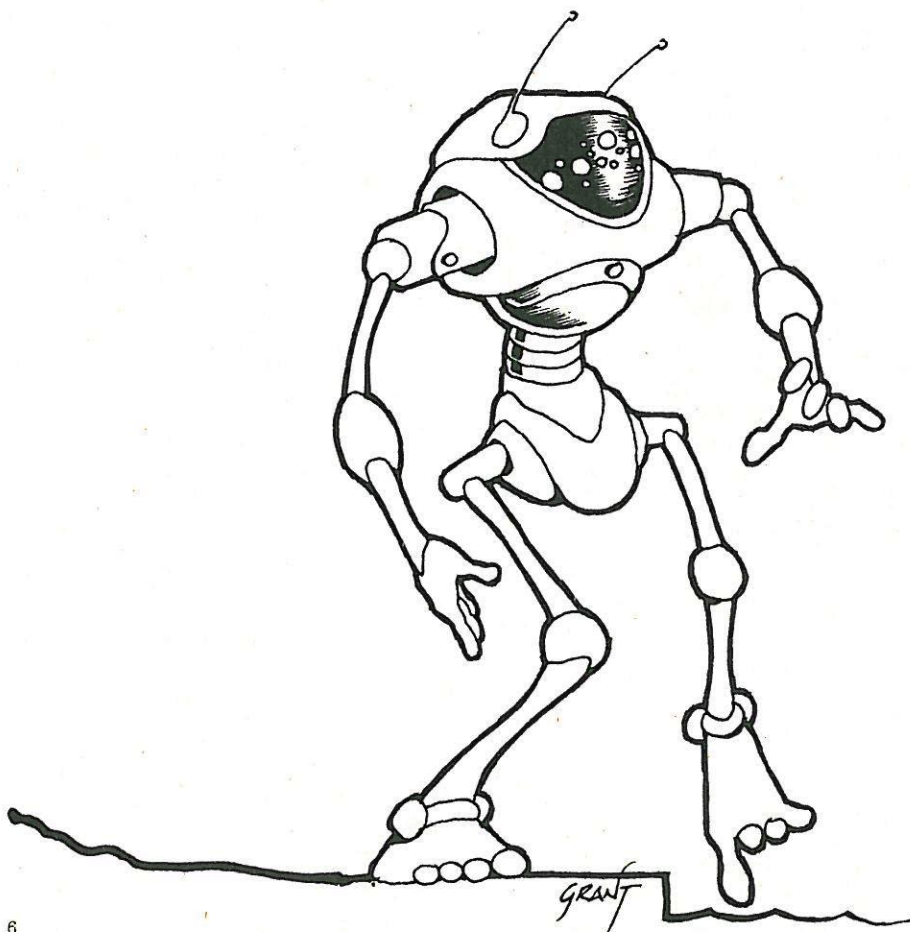
MARTIN: I think you can get things going both ways. There's a lot of space out there and really anything may happen, which is one of the interesting things about science fiction to me, that you can set up your conditions any way you want, and if you're pressed long enough you can justify them. I do think that there will be races that are similar to us, like the Shkeen, and there will be races that are completely alien. In a sense I'm going over some of the things I said in the article.

The really alien alien is one of the hardest things to do in science fiction. I don't think it's ever been done well. Some

people have come close. Strangely enough, I think Lovecraft is one of them in "The Colour Out of Space" which is an alien that is normally not considered when people are talking about science fiction aliens, but is one of the most terrifying alien and different entities I've ever seen, and also, of course, Lem's SOLARIS. But other than that how many different kinds of aliens are there? There are not many. Most of them are, if they're simply a foreign country, then they're human beings with a minor quirk. You know, they make some physical difference and extrapolate from there, but the basic premise on which they're operating is still humanity.

SFR: Have you ever considered the biological aspects of this, the amount of chance twists in evolution which would have to be duplicated in order to get something with two arms and two legs?

MARTIN: There was a period in science fiction when a number of articles appeared arguing for parallel evolutions simply because man is an optimal thing. The writers of those things postulated that any al-



alien races would be virtually identical to humanity in most aspects, simply because it works better.

I don't buy that, but in a sense I do go to a modified theory of it. Simply for story purposes it is much easier to deal with that sort of thing than a completely alien being. The utter alien is quite a challenge, and it's something I would like to write about someday, but not necessarily in every story.

SFR: Often when writers try to create a completely non-human being they simply take human traits and reverse them, the traditional one being the aliens have three sexes instead of two. Can you think of any way so it isn't just anti-anthropomorphic? Most aliens are reflections of western culture.

MARTIN: What many writers do, and what I think is a very lazy thing, is not simply to reflect western culture but to reflect other cultures. For some reason they'll read an anthropology text and they'll find out about some African tribe or South Pacific group which has very odd customs and they'll extrapolate those into aliens and say it's supposed to be non-human. Just because it isn't part of our particular culture that doesn't make it nonhuman.

Aliens are very hard to do right. I don't think it's easy to get around the reverse thing. Just the starting point is very difficult.

SFR: When you project a future human society, is this derived from contemporary western culture or directly from the story?

MARTIN: I derive it from the story in most cases. I do not extrapolate what direction our society is going to take most of the time. Some of my stories, the near-future type things, are or were extrapolations of some of the things I thought were likely to happen. But most of my stories are pretty far future, other worlds, and the story is the thing. The story takes primacy over everything else. So the extrapolations are built for dramatic purposes and what is necessary in terms of the story.

SFR: Then where does the story itself come from? Does it come from an idea, or perhaps something as abstract as an image?

MARTIN: Both at various times. It comes from my life; autobiographical things are sometimes at least the seeds from which stories grow; from things I read, stories by other writers. I respond to them. 7

SFR: Are you a conscious writer or an unconscious one? Do you make careful outlines or does it just happen?

MARTIN: It just sort of happens. Generally I get an idea, and I have an idea sheet, which is simply one sheet of paper, and it consists mostly of titles or maybe one word descriptions that kind of act as a starting point for a whole idea. So I just type out the title, the phrase on the idea sheet, and then when I want to write, if I've got nothing going at the moment, I pick up the idea sheet and sit there and look at it, drink a lot of coffee, and eventually I may start daydreaming about one thing or another, and that's how I write most of my stories, by day dreaming, writing on the el or staying awake at night, listening to music or whatever, and scenes and characters and stuff start to fit themselves together in my head. The story starts to come alive, and when a large enough amount of that happens, the story starts to come alive with the scenes, then I sit down and begin to write it. Usually it goes pretty quickly once I'm past the beginning. That's where the more conscious work comes in, taking some daydreams and rejecting others, fitting them all together and filling out the spaces between the powerful scenes.

SFR: If you were to tell someone a story idea in advance, would you lose the story? Do they "die" on you once exposed? Do you have that problem?

MARTIN: I generally don't like to talk about my stories overly much before they're written. I have very much delayed myself by talking about a story idea in the past. Once, very early, after I'd sold Ben Bova like one story, I was in his office and I told him the whole next story I was going to write which I had daydreamed out pretty well but hadn't put a word on paper, and at the time I kind of lost interest in it for a long while. I finally did get around to writing it, but it was several years later and it was a much different story by that time, because I had daydreamed on other things and I guess the changes I had made had altered the story enough to reawaken my interest in it.

SFR: Why do you think it works this way?

MARTIN: I don't know. When I have a story in progress, when I'm thinking about it or when I've started to write it—let's say I'm half way through—I daydream about it. It's on the burners of my mind cooking, and I think of scenes and I alter scenes and I rework characters and pieces of dialogue,

and am always getting new ideas. But when a story is actually finished, done, and off, I cease to daydream about that story. It's gone, like wiped clean. I don't daydream about "Song for Lya" anymore like I did when I was writing it. It doesn't come in to my mind on the subway and things like that.

So I think that when you talk out a story, in some ways it's equivalent to writing it. You're making the decisions. You don't have to make the decisions before. You can daydream a scene one way and you can daydream it another way. But when you write it down it's frozen, and when you tell it to someone it's also frozen. You've told the story. There it is. So it's gone from you and it's not in the process of creation anymore.

SFR: You mention that you write quickly. Do you ever revise much?

MARTIN: Generally speaking, I revise as I go along. I do not do drafts. I sit down and I'll type a page, or a sentence, and if I don't like that page I'll rip it up and retype it. If I'm typing something, a sentence, and I say, "Oh, that sentence is garbage," right then I'll change it before I do anything else, as many times as I have to until I've got it the way I like it. Sometimes it goes through rather quickly, and after a story has been written parts of it are the first draft and other parts have been considerably revised. Parts of it I have been satisfied with and haven't been changed. Then I'll go through it once again with a pen, and I'll make final revisions. Mostly that consists of just tightening it, cutting words. Maybe I'll redo one or two pages that a bit displease me. But that's the extent of the revision. I type fairly hard copy the first time out. I don't really think it needs that much revision.

SFR: Did you always work like this, or did you change as you became more professional?

MARTIN: No, essentially I've always worked like this. I don't do rewrites except usually on editorial demand, and I'm growing more and more reluctant to do even that, because I've discovered that the stories I've rewritten most never seem to work. I rewrote one story about six times, and that's one of the great horror stories of my life. I finally managed to sell it. It did improve in the process, but meanwhile it just took years of aggravation and work for one small sale when I could have had six stories sold instead of one sale



THE WRITER

and five old drafts in the file cabinet, and, I think, improved myself just as much.

Rewriting serves several functions as I see it, and the most obvious one is simply to improve the story. Another function which I think is equally important is to make a writer aware of his faults, his problems, to get him to analyse his own material. And if you just write stuff out first draft and send it and sell anything you can write, sometimes your work suffers because you're not aware of your own problems, because you're not going back and critiquing your own work. I participate in writers' workshops extensively, and there I think I get that sort of thing, which is very important. And if I have a story which is heavily critiqued at a workshop, which lots of people see problems with, I'll go back and revise and fix the minor problems. But generally I will not overhaul the story and do extensive rewrites, changing the structure and stuff like that. I would prefer to take that knowledge about myself and my writing and use it to make the next story superior, and meanwhile sell the previous piece of work. Maybe that's just an intellectual justification, but the fact is emotionally I find rewriting a loathsome chore. I really hate to do it. I'd much rather work on a new story than rewrite an old one.

SFR: Aren't you afraid that years from now you'll have a long trail of stuff you'd rather forget, the intermediate versions?

MARTIN: I suppose that's possible, and to an extent it's true of every writer. No matter how well he goes about it, even if he revises extensively and spends a year on each story, the fact is that if you're learning anything from your craft at all you'll be a better writer ten years from now than you were when you first started, so you'll be embarrassed by your early work to an extent.

SFR: How do you feel about these claims by people like Silverberg and Malzberg that there's no room in science fiction for a serious writer?

MARTIN: In a way I'm not really in a position to judge their claims, because my career is in a much different stage than their careers are. Both of them I think from their comments would like to do a Vonnegut in a way, to transcend science fiction and achieve considerable mainstream financial or critical success. In a way what they're saying is there's no room in science fiction for that. They're saying a writer cannot do that if he's too closely associated with the science fiction label. And it may or may not be true. It depends a large part on who's doing it, and just on very mundane things like marketing and how they handle themselves. But certainly my writing is serious and I work in science fiction, so there seems to be room for me. Silverberg was a serious writer and for all that he's quitting, now he was active in it for many years and he produced many excellent books, and there would continue to be room in science fiction for him if he continued to be active. I'm sure Robert Silverberg could sell any novel he cared to write.

SFR: His objection is that they go out of print quickly after he sells them.

MARTIN: Well, that may be so, and that is unfortunate. As a matter of fact I wrote a review of Silverberg's latest thing for the Chicago SUN TIMES and I lamented the fact that his books do go out of print, but books that go in and out of print are influenced by other factors. I don't think it's all quite so simple as he said, because his good books are all out of print that's a bad sign, that there's no room for a serious writer in science fiction. I don't know. I'd have to have more informa-

tion before I could answer that question, maybe more experience with my own writing career. I want to see the sales figures, how they would look for serious work. But there are many serious writers working in science fiction, Le Guin for one, Gene Wolfe for another, two writers I admire immensely. I think they're both as good as any mainstream writers and they're working primarily in science fiction and they appear to be satisfied and having good success. Now that I've said that they'll probably quit next week and make me look like a fool by the time the interview comes out.

SFR: It seems that everybody is lusting after critical acclaim from people who are sufficiently bigoted that they won't read a book if it has the words "science fiction" on it. Is their approval even desirable?

MARTIN: It's desirable in a very pragmatic sense. It's desirable to get any acclaim because eventually that translates into money. Leslie Fiedler tells the story that he was one of the judges for the National Book Award and he wanted THE IRON DREAM considered as best novel and the other judges refused to consider it. They said some year they may have a special science fiction category, but they would not consider science fiction for the novel award. This is one story, and in some ways it says very bad things about the people who give the National Book Award, that they would not even consider the book. On the other hand I would certainly not turn down the National Book Award if it were offered to me. It can do absolutely fantastic things for your career, and I do think it is a meaningful award, and that there are perceptive critics in the mainstream for all that there are also assholes. It's true of science fiction critics, too. There are some science fiction critics who

are very good and very perceptive, and there are some who are not. We see that within our field.

There was VERTEX, for example, with its review columns where they would automatically pan any book if it had authors in it that were associated with the so-called New Wave.

SFR: Their definition.

MARTIN: Yes.

SFR: Allow me to go out on a limb for a minute. It seems to me that no science fiction writer can be any good unless he has a literary background outside of the field. Otherwise he produces only stale rehashes of other people's science fiction stories. Now having made this dangerous statement, let me ask you what is your background in writing, who are your influences, and so forth.

MARTIN: My literary background is actually primarily science fiction, although I have read mainstream and taken literature courses in college, and I read a fair amount of mainstream. I read much more science fiction than anything else because that's the field I'm working in, for that pragmatic reason as well as others. I want to keep up with the field I'm working in and see what other people are doing. It's a valuable source of stimulation. Also, my academic background is in journalism. I have a master's degree in journalism so I've had newspaper experience and things like that, which is kind of a different literary influence than anything else.

That had a profound effect on me, writing in journalism, just in my style. When I started writing in high school and such, I had a tendency to write very heavy, adjective-laden prose, long sentences, heavy description, purple prose. That I think was modified considerably by my journalistic experience where the emphasis is on terseness, tightness, clean copy, maybe too much so. I think that to a degree I'm holding back in the other direction now, but I think it is necessary to admit that the journalism thing was a very valuable training ground for me. The stories I'm doing now are richer in terms of style, and generally more Fitzgerald than Hemingway, let us say. I like Fitzgerald better than Hemingway. I like his style of writing much more.

SFR: What exactly do you mean by style? You may have heard Delany's claim that style and content are inseparable. It

seems to me that no two people mean the same thing by style.

MARTIN: The way a writer handles words. You know, your story, your plot is one thing. Content can be many things. It can be the plot, or your theme, the things you're trying to say, but I think style is the language that you choose to say it in. It's the difference between saying you're up shit creek without a paddle or you're up the proverbial estuary without the proper means of locomotion. They convey the same message, but stylistically they're far apart. I think one of science fiction's primary deficits in the past has been poor style, lack of style. The words were workmanlike. They told the story, and they told what happened in the story, and you got from point A to point B, but when I read a book by Fitzgerald, to name one of my mainstream favorites, I read a section from THE GREAT GATSBY and not only does he convey the thing happening, but the images from it would just be so powerful, because of the choice of language. Are you familiar with GATSBY at all?

SFR: Yes.

MARTIN: Like his description of Gatsby's parties. You could just describe them by saying there were a bunch of people boozing and bumping into each other, and that's the stylistic device you chose, and it makes the point, but he describes them as brightly colored moths fluttering together. That's a beautiful image to me, and it conveys the same information, but much better. Also the language itself is an additional source of pleasure to the reader. I just sat back and said, "That's lovely." It sticks in my mind and I remember it. Now that's one thing that I want to do.

The kind of science fiction I'm interested in writing, the kind I'm doing right now anyway, I think of as rather traditional science fiction. I deal with traditional SF things that are very much within the genre, but I want to add to it style, as good as I can make it, and characterisation which is another weakness that science fiction has had.

SFR: Don't you think these are highly related, because it is by the author's use of language that you can tell one character from the other?

SFR: They are related, but I don't think that they are necessarily identical. Yeah, a good style will help you in your characterisation. It's good to have command of a good style and you can make it sit up and

beg for you, but there are novels that have good characterisation and a style that is basically workmanlike. I don't want to denigrate a workmanlike style. There are places for it and there are stories where you should have it. Style should be an instrument and you should be able to choose what you want.

I went through a period early on where I would see something I admired and I would try to write something like that, in the style of a certain author whom I admired in order to get inside his head and if I could do it, master his trick. Like I would write a Lovecraft story. Lovecraft had many flaws as a writer but I also think he did some things extremely well. So I would try to write a Lovecraft story or a Robert E. Howard story, so that I could learn to do the things that they did. And after I thought I had learned that I would go on and do something else. A writer should have command of many different voices, so he can use one that is appropriate to his story.

SFR: Do you think that the deliberate writing of pastiches is a worthwhile learning tool for most people?

MARTIN: It can be, but there are dangers to it, and I think you have to know what you are doing, what your intention is. Like my Lovecraft story was very different from all these Lovecraft pastiches that I did. Lovecraft gave me a certain feeling when I was in high school and reading him. He scared the shit out of me. They were lovely horror stories and they really affected me, and I wanted to write that, so I tried to write stories that gave the same feeling. I looked at some of the things he did to try and get that feeling. But I didn't go around and borrow all his names and all his characters like some of these other people did. August Derleth did it, and Lin Carter in his pastiches of him—they take everything from Lovecraft except the feeling, which they don't get. So their stories for me at least just don't come alive. They're total failures. I would certainly never make a career out of pastiching another writer. It can be a learning experience, but remember that what you want is not the trappings but the effect.

SFR: Have you done any supernatural horror stories professionally?

MARTIN: I've done two professional fantasy stories. One was my second sale. It was a science fiction fantasy story called "Ex-

it To San Breta," a ghost story but set in the future in a science fictional sort of world where the highways are deserted and a man encounters a ghost car. The other one was a story called "The Lonely Songs of Laran Dor," which is a fantasy. It has not yet appeared. Ted White has it scheduled for a forthcoming issue of FANTASTIC. It'll probably be in print by the time this interview comes out.

I may do more fantasy. I'm interested in doing more, but there is simply not the market for it that there is for science fiction.

SFR: How much of what you write is controlled by what there is a market for?

MARTIN: I don't know. To an extent it certainly hinges on it. I write as a communicator. There are things I want to say and I want people to read them, I do not write like some writers who write only for themselves. I do not write only for myself because if I knew there were no magazines and no way I could get my stuff published, I probably would not anymore. I might still daydream. I don't think I could ever stop that, but I wouldn't go through all the work of putting it on paper. So the fact that there are markets makes me write, and what they are determines what I am writing. I'm much more likely to express the things I want to say in the kind of story where I can place it and get across to a lot of people. If I haven't succeeded in communicating and it's not going to go anywhere, then I have to put it in my drawer, and I'd rather not bother.

SFR: Thank you, Mr. Martin.

SUPERBOWL XXI

KILLERBOWL by Gary K. Wolf
Doubleday, \$5.95.

Reviewed by George R. R. Martin

Sports fiction was once one of the major categories of the old pulps, but in the last twenty years or so there hasn't been much of it around. Unlike the SF magazines, the sports pulps didn't manage to hang on; unlike the mystery and western genres, the sports story didn't get itself transplanted to television. Sports fiction just died.

But within the last two years, it has been staging a minor comeback, perhaps as result of a society drenched in Big Time Sports. And much of the new sports fiction is sports SF. First there was Norman Spin-

rad and his short story, "The National Pastime," which achieved a good deal of notice and was picked up for a Best. Then William Harrison sold another short, "Roller Ball Murder," to ESQUIRE, and that was picked up for a Best too, and soon spawned the movie ROLLERBALL. Recently not one but two publishers have released competing reprint anthologies of sports SF.

And now we have Gary K. Wolf and KILLERBOWL.

KILLERBOWL is the story of Superbowl XXI, played in the streets of Boston on New Year's Day, 2011. They don't use stadiums in 2011; the game is called "street football" and the rules bear faint resemblance to those used today. Players are encased in armor. They have to be; the defensive team is allowed to use its long knives and short clubs on the ball handler. Then there's the player called the "hidden safety," who carries a rifle and one bullet. He sneaks off and hides at the beginning of every game, and you'll never guess how he deals with touchdown threats...

A street football game lasts from midnight to midnight, and Wolf assures us that the sport is the most popular ever devised. Deaths are very common—players speak calmly of their LPR, or lost player ratio, which is the sort of statistic you get when you mate a pass completion percentage with a body count. In 2011, the fans love gore, and like nothing better than to see their idols carried out maimed and bleeding. Since every death boosts the ratings, the television network that sponsors street football schemes to insure more deaths.

Wolf's plot is built around the conflict between two players. Protagonist T. K. Mann is the aging quarterback of the San Francisco Prospectors. He plays quiet, conservative football, and has the lowest LPR in the league. The villain is Harv Matison, charismatic young quarterback of the New England Minutemen, who is determined to prove that Mann is past his prime and replace him as street football's top superstar. He'd like to kill him too. Matison is a sadist; he started out as a hidden safety and he has the highest LPR in the league. Matison is also a fraud; even his football prowess is faked, since IBC—the rotten corrupt street football network—is feeding him game information illegally via an electronic implant, so that he can spice up play with more deaths. T. K. Mann finds out about this sinister plot, but because Matison has killed his best friend, he refuses to go to the authorities and testify. Instead he waits until the Superbowl, and then smashes Matison and the IBC 10

plot. The ending is oh-so-ironic; the brutish unwashed fans hiss and boo at Mann for ruining the game by making Matison confess rather than killing him out of hand.

Anyone who has noticed similarities between KILLERBOWL and the film ROLLERBALL should go to the head of the class. Begin with the title, an obvious echo. Proceed to the plot, a fraternal if not identical twin of the movie's. Not only is the structure virtually the same, but whole scenes are nearly identical. In the movie rollerball champion Jonathan E. watches as his best friend and long-time teammate is callously murdered on the track. He gets revenge. In the book, T. K. Mann watches as his best friend and long-time teammate is callously murdered on the field. He gets revenge. In ROLLERBALL, Jonathan E. faces the last surviving member of the enemy New York team at the end of a bloody world championship game after everyone else has been slaughtered. He triumphs and stands alone. In KILLERBOWL, T.K. Mann faces Harv Matison at the end of a bloody Superbowl after everyone else has been slaughtered. He triumphs and stands alone. Both stars get into trouble because they are incorruptible; Jonathan E. won't retire, T. K. Mann won't cheat and kill enough. Both sets of baddies try to get at the heroes through their women; both female leads turn out to be working for the other side. And so on. And so forth.

Conclusions are obvious; KILLERBOWL is exploitation. Doubleday is pushing this shoddy book very hard—mailing t-shirts to reviewers, among other things—in a rather cynical attempt, apparently, to cash in on ROLLERBALL's popularity. Sadly, the t-shirts read better than the book. The novel has none of the virtues of the film it seems to exploit, all of its faults, and some new faults of its own.

The recent spate of SF-sports stories all seem to have one common factor; they project that sports will grow bloodier and bloodier in the future, and that the fans will love it. None of the authors seem to understand sports very well, since this extrapolation is cockeyed nonsense. In fact, the whole history of sport has been a steady growth away from violence, towards ever more subtle and sophisticated games in which the conflicts are increasingly sublimated. Boxing, perhaps the most primal and direct of sports, went from spiked fists to bare knuckles to padded gloves, and the padded gloves grew larger and larger, and despite that the sport has waned steadily and might be dead today except for

the charisma of Muhammed Ali. Today's football is stately compared to the era of leather helmets and the flying wedge. We have staid trotting instead of chariot racing, jousting is a dead aid forgotten pastime, and in baseball post-Abner Doubleday it is no longer possible to get a baserunner out by braining him with a thrown ball. The trend is damned clear; tomorrow's sports will be less violent, not more.

So Wolf, like Jewison and Harrison and Spinrad, is peddling an empty cliché. And his is even more empty than theirs. For the other presentations of the Bloody Future scenario at least had something going for them. Spinrad's combat football—a blend of football and boxing—was at least feasible, and he shored up his doubtful thesis by having his promoters exploit real ethnic and social tensions as well as an unreal bloodlust. William Harrison's "Roller Ball Murder" was a fine, well-crafted short story, and the film based on it had undeniable visual impact and a fascinating pseudosport. Rollerball, like combat football, could probably be played.

Street football could not be. The players run through the streets of a city for twenty-four hours, ducking in and out of high-rises and department stores and alleys, stabbing each other with knives and trying to make yardage. Each player is followed by his own cameraman and referee. Each game requires the evacuation of thousands of people—several dense urban blocks—and the closing of numerous streets and businesses. As a game, street football is rather a joke, as shoddy and one-dimensional as the book's plot and characters.

KILLERBOWL deserves to be roundly ignored by SF readers and sports fans alike.

LETTER FROM MICHAEL G. CONEY

February 16, 1976

'SFR 16 received safely. Two gripes; one major. In general, SFR very interesting as usual, particularly Brunner and Lupoff. Minor gripe—your questions to Pournelle prompted replies demonstrating that Jerry is about the most normal, average, boring writer in a field consisting mainly of interesting oddballs. Couldn't you have somehow sparked him off? In person, he never struck me as the 1920's ultra-conservative your interview depicted.

'Major gripe, coming up.

'You, Geis, have joined the ranks of the hypocrites. The one man whose integri-

ty commanded my respect has proved to have feet of soft shit. That soul-searching honesty which I admired was a sham, a device. Beneath it, you are a fucking great stereotype of rigid thought-tracks, triggered into conditioned responses just like every goddamned stupid quasi-liberal I've fought for forty-three years.

'Listen to me, you sniveling rat. I spent a lot of thought designing a careful reply to Denys Howard intending to let him down as lightly as possible without ignoring him completely. I could have torn the silly twit to shreds, and you know it. But I was careful—and you can bet I was bloody careful not to make any assumptions about him which I couldn't support. Couldn't you have credited me with that intelligence?

'No, of course you couldn't. The reflexes had taken over, the Geis knee was jerking. A homosexual was under attack. Rally round, Richard, and support the underdog, the minority member. Regardless of right or wrong! Hit back at the demon Coney! Hoist him with his own petard!

'So what did you do? You said, "Seems to me you make a number of assumptions about (Howard) that you have no personal knowledge to support."

'And it seems to me you're wrong.

'It might be said that I assumed the following:

'1. That he is a queer... But he said so repeatedly!

'2. That he is an unhappy person... LeGuin makes him 'angry.' Straight males make him 'very, very depressed.' LeGuin 'oppresses' him. He has been 'denied his humanity.' Geis—I would say my word 'unhappy' was a mild statement of fact—certainly no assumption.

'3. That he has a grudge against straight males... Now—is that self-evident or not? Be honest!

'Okay. Three statements about Howard, each of which is lifted directly from his letter ((in SFR #13)). Where is my 'number of assumptions?' Can you answer that, without playing word games? Can you?

'I'm sure you can. But to do so would be to admit you were wrong.

'Can you do that?'

((Admitting I've been wrong is one of the things I do best in SFR. However, in this case...

((It has been my experience that the

letter-person is not necessarily the real-person. From my reading of Denys' personalzine, WaM, I get a broader view of his life, and I would not conclude that he is in fact an unhappy individual. He is deeply involved in the causes of women and homosexuals and in his letters often overstates and uses radical rhetoric. His grudge is your word.

((The items that triggered my comment on your letter in SFR #16 were your use of positive statements about his life and attitudes: '...he is an unhappy person... ..target for his bile... ..his bitterness...' (My italics.) If you had said apparent unhappiness...seeming bitterness... I wouldn't have said a word. And you did say you had no personal knowledge of him.

((This is a tempest in a teapot.

((I freely have admitted to having feet of clay. It never occurred to me they were actually soft shit as you say. But you may be right; it would explain why people near me keel over when I take off my shoes.))

'Indeed, the CIA was long welcomed by liberals as a kind of good FBI, an FBI of our very own. The good guys were doing the manipulating in this case. But of course that is what most of the nation has all along thought of the FBI itself. It was the good guys, and it was out to get the bad guys. Who cared how that was done? Since they were bad guys, you could not handle them with kid gloves. Agencies that deal with them have to destroy the law in order to save it. Un-Americans don't deserve the protection of the law anyway. And who was un-American? We all are, until we prove different—take our loyalty oaths, submit to security checks. Stand up and be counted. If you are not willing to be snooped on, manipulated, observed, then you must have something to hide—foundation in itself for a prior assumption of un-Americanhood. The only good American, the only one who deserves to be free, is the one who puts his freedom at the disposal of our secret police system. Alas, this makes most of us pretty good Americans.

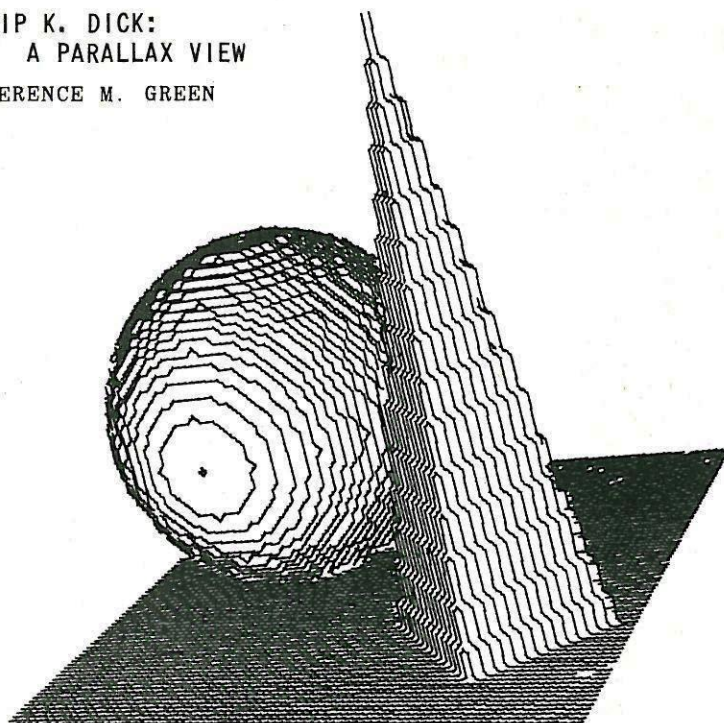
'And so we advance the 1984 equations: freedom can only be guarded by destroying privacy; only secrecy can protect the open society; and the law must be denied those Americans who are sneaky enough to obey the law while thinking things we do not like. Right, Comrade?'

—Garry Wills,

NEW YORK REVIEW of Books, Nov. 13, '75
11 *****

PHILIP K. DICK:
A PARALLAX VIEW

By TERENCE M. GREEN



I had just re-read Philip K. Dick's 1962 novel—the Hugo Award winning *THE MAN IN THE HIGH CASTLE*. Being fascinated with Dick's books was nothing new to me; I'd been a fan of his for years—buying and devouring each new paperback edition of his novels as they were printed. And saving them. Organizing them. Like a collection. (Like the characters in his novels who compulsively collect their own trivia and savor it.) I'd always liked the off-beat humor in Dick's books, and felt his characterizations were the best in SF. But I'd never more fully identified with a Dick character than I did with Juliana, near the end of *THE MAN IN THE HIGH CASTLE*.

At six-fifteen in the evening she finished the book. I wonder if Joe got to the end of it? she wondered. There's so much more in it than he understood. What is it Abendsen wanted to say? Nothing about his make-believe world. Am I the only one who knows? I'll bet I am; nobody else really understands *GRASSHOPPER* but me—they just imagine they do.

Still a little shaky, she put it away in her suitcase and then put on her coat and left the motel room to search for a place to eat dinner. (p. 182)

This was me! I'd finally experienced the paranoia that his characters experience constantly. It was happen-

ing to me as I was reaching the closing pages of Dick's book. Could it be that I was the only one who knew how brilliant Dick really was? The paranoid feeling was softly comforting, yet insistently disturbing.

Dick had really done it to me.

He'd left me with the feeling that I'd unravelled something horribly yet wonderfully complex, that I'd seen through the surface trappings of his book. And with the feeling came the insight into everything else I'd ever read of Dick's, the certainty that the man was indeed a Master in modern literature.

I went back to his earlier novels (to 1955) and ahead to his later ones (circa 1970), scanning, thinking, amazed. I saw growth, development, experiment, change; but beneath it all was the consistent Dick Vision. And I began to see how *THE MAN IN THE HIGH CASTLE* could be viewed as the Central Work, which radiated both backward and forward (time doesn't matter much in his books; maybe he's right); for it is, indeed, *THE BOOK OF DICK* (apologies to DAW publishing house here).

It was as if I'd somehow peeked into one of those alternate worlds his characters often stumble upon. I was now a Dick character. The metamorphosis was thrilling (yet awful—imagine being one of those incompetent failures with which he populates his books—

especially the men!).

Simply put, *THE MAN IN THE HIGH CASTLE* is not about what would have happened if Japan and Germany had emerged as victors in WW2. Many of the surface incidents of the novel revolve fascinatingly around some of the possible or probable developments of such an alternate present. But this is not, I repeat, what the novel is about; (it's just as Juliana says about Abendsen's novel in the excerpt). And I contend that this is true of the entire Dick canon: what happens in the novels serves only as a surface layer to the real meaning implicit in the "Vision" that Dick has about Man's plight; this vision, furthermore, is sustained and elevated by the tone of wit and the power of Dick's invention and imagination.

I realize all this is going to need further explanation, much illustration. Let me try. The paranoid delusion of having attained insight compels me to try.

As I said, *THE MAN IN THE HIGH CASTLE* is central to an understanding of Dick, because in many ways it has the "key" to "what's really going on" (what's really going on is always the big question). Dick's vision of Man is classical, biblical. Within the novel *THE MAN IN THE HIGH CASTLE*, his characters are reading another novel: Hawthorne Abendsen's *THE GRASSHOPPER LIES HEAVY*—a novel about (seemingly) what would have happened if the Germans and Japanese had lost the War! (If?) The title of Abendsen's novel, we are told, is from the Bible (p.53). Follow up this clue, and see where you arrive.

Well, you arrive at Ecclesiastes, 12:5. Depending on which version of the Bible you consult, you will find various translations and paraphrases of this idea, among them, "the locust shall be made fat"; "the grasshopper drags itself along"; "the grasshopper shall be a burden". What the phrase refers to, in fact, is that the grasshopper (metaphorically man), in old age, can barely sustain himself; he has become a burden to himself, and "lies heavy".

If we include all the twelfth chapter of Ecclesiastes (not merely verse 5), we quickly learn that this book asserts that all worldly things are in vain, or, even more succinctly, "All

is Vanity" (12:8). Furthermore, an ironical note to this investigation, (and to Dick's novel within a novel) is added in 12:12—"of making many books there is no end." (Was this author a precog?)

Now let's proceed to the next expansion of this route—to the entire Book of Ecclesiastes. From the beginning to end, most would agree that its overall motif is simple: the futility of all effort; it deals with the "sameness" of all time and all place, and the folly of the vanity involved in ignoring this.

- there is no new thing under the sun (1:9)
- there was no profit under the sun (2:11)
- and how dieth the wise man? as the fool (2:16)
- all things come alike to all (9:2)
- there is one event unto all (9:3)
- that which hath been is now; and that which is to be hath already been (3:15)

It is in Ecclesiastes, too, that "the sun also rises", and "earth abides"!

In Ecclesiastes the wisdom that a man can gain does not alter his condition, other than to deepen the sorrow caused by his comprehension and awareness of the "useless striving" of life. The "sameness" of fate is an evil inherent in existence. Effectively then, we are doomed to moral confusion, unless God is just!

Ecclesiastes is a vast, deep, difficult book—a problem book (most scholars would agree with this, I think). It leaves loose ends, strings untied, leading in various directions, always insufficient in length. (Sound like any Dick books you've read?)

Do I dare to go the next step in this geometrical progression? To a consideration of the Bible itself? Obviously this is beyond my meager scope. Suffice it to say that it is the book of reference in our society today.

Where is all this heading now?

Perhaps you've seen some of the mirror-like labyrinth of connections already. Let's backtrack a bit now.

Dick chooses, for the title of his novel within his novel, (is everybody

confused yet? Dick would like it if you were...) a quotation from the Book of Ecclesiastes—a book with (coincidentally?) the same major themes as all Dick's own work. And he tells us near the end of THE MAN IN THE HIGH CASTLE that the characters are left in total bewilderment when they discover that their world is an illusion (a vanity?), and that THE GRASSHOPPER LIES HEAVY is "true". To further dazzle us with the intricacy of the concept, THE GRASSHOPPER LIES HEAVY was written, we are told, not "really" by Abendsen, but by the Oracle, by the I CHING or BOOK OF CHANGES. (Who "really" wrote the Bible? What is Revelation?)

What was that I quoted earlier about there being no end to the making of many books?...

So Dick has us going round and round, books within books—one writing the other; one within the one we are holding; the title of the one within the one we are holding based on a Book (Ecclesiastes) within another Book (the Bible). Dick has been described as pyrotechnic, you know...

Consider, too, some of the dialogue within Dick's novel:

"We are absurd," Mr. Tagomi said, "because we live by a five-thousand-year-old book. We ask it questions as if it were alive. It is alive. As is the Christian Bible; many books are actually alive. Not in metaphoric fashion. Spirit animates it. Do you see?" He inspected Mr. Baynes' face for his reaction.

Carefully phrasing his words, Baynes said, "I—just don't know enough about religion. It's out of my field. I prefer to stick to

subjects I have some competence in." As a matter of fact, he was not certain what Mr. Tagomi was talking about. (p. 55)

I'm sure we all understand Baynes' reaction to one degree or another...

Later, another character (Reiss) talks to himself:

They know a million tricks these novelists. Take Dr. Goebels; that's how he started out, writing fiction. Appeals to the base lusts that hide in everyone no matter how respectable on the surface. Yes, the novelist knows humanity, how worthless they are, ruled by their testicles, swayed by cowardice, selling out every cause because of their greed—all he's got to do is thump on the drum, and there's his response. And he's laughing, of course, behind his hand at the effect he gets. (p. 97)

This latter excerpt, I submit, is Dick's outrageous way of portraying both his themes and his method. Dick is indeed "laughing behind his hand at the effect he gets" as he shows us how worthless we are. As Mr. Tagomi has observed, "Tone is everything". (p. 177)

Can we sum up some of this? (I'm still trying to communicate my "insight" you see...) To simplify (if such be possible):

The themes in Dick's books are inherent in the Book of Ecclesiastes; this is certainly not true of all his themes, or of all his novels, but generally speaking, it provides a solid thematic foundation for his work.

The method of Dick's communication



goes one step further. Not only are books (novels specifically) the media for his "vision" (thus his dazzling juggling of them all within one another while we search about for an answer to what the hell's going on here), but the stories told in the books are merely the surface layer. One must remove the trappings to see the "vision", to earn a glimpse of the Dickian wasteland of confusion. Thus the surface change—from past to present to future, from novel to novel; but the situations, places, and people have an elemental "sameness" about them.

The Tone of his novels is what makes them bearable—or, if you choose (I do), delightful, fascinating, humorous, and—generally speaking again—immensely enjoyable. Tone would have to be "everything" if you insist on telling how all effort is futile, how all time and place are the same, and how we are basically incompetent failures with bagfuls of neuroses and psychoses. I mean—who wants to read that? Unless it's either funny or filled with fascinating trivia along the way.

Let me try to give a few examples from works other than THE MAN IN THE HIGH CASTLE to illustrate the seemingly vast generalizations of the last three paragraphs. (Somebody must comprehend my vision of his vision of our visionless lives!) Remember my contention that the grasshopper in the quotation from Ecclesiastes was "metaphorically Man"? Even Dick, I feel, bears me out on this, for he has Mr. Tagomi comment to his secretary that "we are all insects...groping toward something terrible or divine." (p. 76)

Consider some further examples of Dick's "insect imagery". In GALACTIC POT-HEALER we read:

I got down a cup from the cupboard, a cup I hardly ever used. In it I found a spider, a dead spider; it had died because there was nothing for it to eat. Obviously it had fallen into the cup and couldn't get out. But here's the point. It had woven a web, at the bottom of the cup. As good a web as it could weave under the circumstances. When I found it—saw it dead in the cup, with its meager, hopeless web—I thought, it never had a chance. No flies would ever have come along, even if it had waited forever. It waited until

it died. It tried to make the best of the circumstances, but it was hopeless. I always wondered, Did it know it was hopeless? Did it weave the web knowing it was no use?

"Little tragedy of life," the robot said. "Billions of them, unnoticed, every day. Except that God notices, at least according to my pamphlet." (pp. 86-7)

In DO ANDROIDS DREAM OF ELECTRIC SHEEP? Pris snips the legs off a spider because "it'll die anyway (p. 136), and Roy Baty, two pages later, unfeelingly holds a lit match near the spider—which now has only four of its eight legs—"until at last it crept feebly away." (This novel ends with another character checking the yellow pages for electric flies for her electric toad!)

Dick's vision of our astigmatic insect-like existence is remarkably similar to Hemingway's thematic insert near the conclusion of A FAREWELL TO ARMS; for it postulates us as ants on a log that is being burned. All the "savior" need do is lift the log off the fire; instead he tosses hot coffee on the ants, and they fall into the fire. (And as we know, Hemingway knew the Book of Ecclesiastes; after all, "the sun also rises"...)

To illustrate the Ecclesiastes theme that "there is no new thing under the sun" (1:9), I suggest you take note of the eternal business strivings of all Dick's characters. As it is presented to us in THE SIMULACRA, "we must have business as usual. That's the watchword of the day—if not the century" (p. 38). WE CAN BUILD YOU opens and ends with "business". In UBIK and COUNTER-CLOCK WORLD, death has been made into a "business" (even half-alive states are commercialized). DR. BLOOD-MONEY is another novel that opens and finishes with "business" concerns, while in CLANS OF THE ALPHANE MOON, business is even carried on by a "slime-mold" (p. 23)—which collects things, by the way.

To a greater or lesser extent, it is fundamentally significant and important to the purveyance of Dick's vision of our futility (and absurdity) that this is dealt with in all his novels. We "busy" ourselves with the trivia of our everyday "business" concerns because, as T. S. Eliot has put it, "Mankind cannot bear too much reality." 14

Perhaps the "All is Vanity" theme of Ecclesiastes could best be illustrated by referring quickly to the "surface" changes in our dress patterns in the future, as shown in Dick's outrageous descriptions in UNIK:

...girl...wearing a cowboy hat, black lace mantilla and Bermuda shorts...

...this one in a floral mumu and Spandex bloomers... (pp. 53-4)

And I shouldn't omit—

G.G. Ashwood, wearing his customary natty birch-bark pantaloons, hemp-rope belt, peekaboo see-through top and train engineer's tall hat... (p. 55)

All this will help explain the notion of "surfaces" changing and individual "vanity", while also showing how nothing has "really" changed. We are still run by advertisers; we are desperately striving to strike an individual pose or identity that is somehow significant. We are still helpless buffoons in the future, dazzled and confused by technology. So what has really changed? Maybe our clothes...

We still get divorces in Dick's novels, and we have hang-ups galore; we must drink coffee still, and smoke; we must be entertained, to distract us from our "true" plight, and we are just as ardent about personal-interest trivia and collectables as ever. Different types of drugs allow us to bear life; but we still need some sort of "boost". Women are still concerned with breast vanity (and men remain as interested as ever!)

So where have we gotten? Nowhere. Today differs from yesterday in that neckties are wider, dresses a different length, cars faster. In the future, perhaps we'll have precogs, drugs that will alter time; but we won't be any closer to an "Answer", to what the hell is really going on—and this is Dick's fundamental message. (Dr. Bloodmoney circles the globe, which has been reduced to a wasteland, reading excerpts from OF HUMAN BONDAGE to listeners below, to "amuse" them. Is this what Dick is doing to us?)

"There is one event unto all" (Ecc. 9:3). The suggestion here is that time and place are immaterial. If you haven't yet realized that Dick would subscribe to this, consider the various alternate worlds created in his

novels; consider the way he handles Time (COUNTER-CLOCK WORLD, NOW WAIT FOR LAST YEAR, MARTIAN TIME-SLIP, TIME OUT OF JOINT, etc.). Probably the ultimate example of this blending of time and space occurs in THE GANYMEDE TAKEOVER:

Throughout the milling confusion rushed a battalion of Brownie Scouts, cracking skulls right and left with overbaked cookies, while a kosher butcher, with his vorpal meat cleaver, reduced the enemy to meat knish. Red-assed baboons charged in behind him, pushing supermarket carts armed with fifty-calibre machine guns. A rock and roll group headed by a young long-hair trumpeter named Gabriel played the "jerk" while a team of trained surgeons removed one appendix after another, throwing in an occasional lobotomy to avoid monotony. (p. 100)

The ludicrous and the serious begin to blend and mesh as well.

In NOW WAIT FOR LAST YEAR, Tijuana (definitely a modern metaphor for the wasteland) remains unchanged at all times; we are told this specifically three different times (p. 188, p. 218, and finally p. 220). "Time", Dick writes on p. 220, "moves too fast here and also not at all."

Many of the examples cited are in themselves evidence of the Tone of Dick's work. Again, I think you get the message. Dick's power as a writer lies in his Tone and his power of invention and imagination. After all, if there's "nothing new under the sun"—I mean if even your themes and basic concepts date back to biblical times—you've gotta have an entertaining tone, and a captivating display of trivia to hold your audience. The result of this is that Dick strives to make the intricacies and details of the novels as interesting to us as trivia and collectables are to the characters in the novels. Just for one last example of tone mingled with detail, to create the effect at which Dick can "laugh behind his hand" at our reaction, listen to the following conversation from GALACTIC POT-HEALER:

"And your pamphlet," Joe said, "is the Book of the Kalends."

"Not exactly," the robot said at last.

"Meaning what?" Mali demanded sharply.

"Meaning that I have based my various pamphlets on the Book of

the Kalends."

"Why?" Joe said.

The robot hesitated and then said, "I hope to be a free-lance writer someday." (p. 86)

Is Dick putting us on? You bet he is! But the "vision" of "Things" with ambitions, dreams, hopes is multi-level. Are we them? Are they us? Did we create them thus? Again, the mirrors within the mirrors...

The number of times Dick's characters have conversations with "things" (doors, suitcases, cabs, robots, balloons...) may be indicative of the isolation of the human condition, the failure of meaningful communication, the ultra-complexity of our ultra-absurdly dominating technology.

But the tone of these dialogues! Jeeze. I mean, read some of them if you don't know... There really is a brilliant wit at work here.

Some conclusions? (Generalized, of course; how else can one deal with someone as complex as Dick in an article this size?)

Philip K. Dick is not interested in studying aliens, or studying alien cultures, or planets (his aliens are space-opera parodies: Papoolas, vugs, slime-molds, reegs, Frolixians...). His concern is the study of Man and the Human Condition; in this sense he is truly a writer in the mainstream of literature.

Dick may not be as "noticed" in Literature because he writes SF (we all know how that limits public exposure immediately); and he is not as "noticed", quite often, even in SF, since he doesn't deal with major new "ideas" or "concepts" (in the RENDEZVOUS WITH RAMA tradition), as do the standard "classics" of SF.

His picture is, basically, an Agnostic one (agnostic in the largest sense). We are unable to know anything really—especially by using our "reason". Occasionally we are given glimpses, peeks into the "Truth", when our sense of time and space falters. The wisdom that results is inherent in the maxims of the Oracle in THE MAN IN THE HIGH CASTLE:

No blame. No praise. (pp. 18-19)

My own delusion (illusion? reality?) of being a Dick character occurred when my own sense of time and space

faltered, and I felt paranoiacally certain that I too had been allowed a brief peek at the truth of Philip K. Dick's "Vision". It just happened. Random chance.

I guess maybe we should let Juliana from Dick's "central" novel have the last word here. After all, she's probably just as "real" as I am.

And she did see it first...

Truth, she thought. As terrible as death. But harder to find. I'm lucky. (p. 190)

Note: The page numbers in this article refer to the following paperback editions of Dick's works.

CLANS OF THE ALPHANE MOON, Ace, 1964.
DO ANDROIDS DREAM OF ELECTRIC SHEEP?

Signet, March 1969.

GALACTIC POT-HEALER, Berkley Medalion, June 1969.

THE GANYMEDE TAKEOVER, Ace, 1967.

THE MAN IN THE HIGH CASTLE, Popular Library, January 1964.

NOW WAIT FOR LAST YEAR, Manor Books, May 1974.

THE STIMULACRA, Ace, 1964.

UBIK, Dell, May 1970.

The following books by Dick were also consulted:

SOLAR LOTTERY
THE WORLD JONES MADE
EYE IN THE SKY
TIME OUT OF JOINT
THE GAME-PLAYERS OF TITAN
THE UNTELEPORTED MAN
THE PENULTIMATE TRUTH
MARTIAN TIME-SLIP
THE THREE STIGMATA OF PALMER
ELDRITCH
THE ZAP GUN
THE CRACK IN SPACE
COUNTER-CLOCK WORLD
WE CAN BUILD YOU
OUR FRIENDS FROM FROLIX 8
THE BOOK OF PHILIP K. DICK
DR. BLOODMONEY

"Raising" children is primarily a matter of teaching them what (life) games to play. Different cultures and different social classes favor different types of games, and various tribes and families favor different variations of these.

—Eric Berne, MD,
GAMES PEOPLE PLAY

A FANTASTIC WASTELAND

NAMELESS PLACES, edited by Gerald W. Page
Arkham House, 1975, 279 pp., \$7.50

Reviewed by Jeffrey P. Miller

The editor says in his introduction that this book "offers a fairly comprehensive picture of the state of fantasy and fantasy writing at the threshold of the last quarter of the twentieth century," and if he's right I'm worried.

Quite simply, NAMELESS PLACES is the worst collection of all original short fiction I have ever read. Some of the contents consist of leftovers from August Derleth's consistently mediocre THE ARKHAM COLLECTOR, so Page can't be blamed for everything, but still I find it amazing that in a field where writers are many and major markets few and far between, he failed to obtain even one truly first rate story.

The best, or perhaps I should say the least bad, are these:

"In the Land of Angra Mainyu," by Stephen Goldin, another of his Angel in Black series which gained him some reputation in MAGAZINE OF HORROR. I genuinely enjoyed this piece for its unfamiliar background, quick pace, and wit. Were it appearing elsewhere I might object that the language is a little too larded with modernisms to be wholly appropriate for an ancient mythological adventure, but here it stands out for sheer good writing like a diamond in a dungheap.

"The Night of the Unicorn," by Thomas Burnett Swann. Like all Swann stories this one is about a mythic event, and like most of them it strives to be fully human without quite becoming so. For this book it's a noble effort. The setting is present-day Yucatan, something of a departure for the author.

"Dark Vintage" by Joseph Pumilia, a competent enough yarn about a gang of warlocks who plan to bring back the Dark Ages with a bottle of the essence of the bubonic plague. There's a bit too much frenzied exposition of fiendish plans for my taste, but I was carried through to the end still interested.

"Black Iron" by David Drake. Like his stories in WHISPERS, this one is extremely strong on historical setting—the Middle East in Roman times, made incredibly vivid in a very few pages—and weak on fantasy plot. Maybe Drake is in the wrong field and should try a historical novel.

That's it, folks; all the ones worth

reading. Comparing these four to what's published elsewhere, I'd say they would be a little below par for WHISPERS or F&SF, average for FANTASTIC, and above average for WITCHCRAFT & SORCERY, FANTASY & TERROR, or WEIRDOBOOK. These are the best in the book by far, and after a few marginal stories by Drake again, Arthur Byron Cover (who spends most of his time talking about dope), Carl Jacobi (who conveys a nice sense of unreality, covering ground more ambitiously plowed by Philip K. Dick a dec-

ade ago), Bob Maurus, Brian Ball, Walter C. DeBill, and Ramsey Campbell, things go downhill very rapidly.

Scott Edelstein tries to make us laugh with two very short items, the first of which is called "Botch," and in which God speaks to a clergyman saying a mistake has been made in the creation of the universe and it has to be erased. Is mankind doomed? No. "I am the experiment that failed," says God, fading out. Somehow Edelstein

THE DEVIL IS DEAD or FINNEGAN'S AWAKE

a song after THE DEVIL IS DEAD

By R. A. LAFFERTY

Tell us the story of one who was said
To live like the Devil and die like the dead
Roll out the sidewalks and paint the town red
Today is the day that the Devil is dead.

Look for that faint mark that's under your skin
Say your prayers once more before we begin
Drink from the bottle you keep in your head
Today is the day that the Devil is dead.

You've been dead before, it was no big thing
The left-footed killer has presents to bring
Boys it's been fun, yes, a bang up, a revel
Now someone must try to bury the Devil.

I know you believe it was Noah's great flood
That wiped out your brothers of the double blood
Our back-brain's much bigger, and wiser it seems
We'll always exist in the corpse of your dreams.

The voyage is over, this song it is done
The Devil has lost but nobody has one
I saw him get hit and I watched as he bled
I swear I cried tears when the Devil was dead.



took a page and a half to deliver this weak joke. His other one, "Businessman's Lament" has a genuinely funny idea—a price war among the Give Me A Buck Or I'll Kill Myself racketeers—but does very little with it.

No Arkham anthology would be complete without a few stories in August Derleth's Cthulhu Mythos (in which the good gods and the bad gods play macrocosmic cowboys and indians, as opposed to the Lovecraft Mythos, seldom used these days, in which mankind stands alone against unknown and extra-moral forces) and if Lin Carter's "Out of the Ages" is any indication, three generations of these things have finally produced a form of highly mannered self-parody about half way between a Dracula remake and a TV situation comedy.

Carter tells us a comfy bedtime story, managing to evoke every Mythos name imaginable (Did you know there's a Mrs. Cthulhu named Idh-yaa—pronounced "id-yot"—and they've spawned by "awesome copulation" two strapping young Unmentionables?), and of course he wouldn't be able to scare a two-year-old out of his afternoon nap with the result.

His other tale, "In the Vale of Pnath" moves Clark Ashton Smith's sorcerer Eibon out of Hyperborea and into Lovecraft's Dreamland with a minimum of explanations, and his search for the elusive Glund Fluid is tame stuff, but amusing because some of the descriptions are rather funny. Eibon meets a learned wizardly sage:

This Shoggob was an elderly and gentlemanly Ghoul of quiet, scholarly habits, tall and lean, grey-skinned, and somewhat the worse around the nostrils, the eyelids, and the corners of the mouth for the deprecations of maggots. (p.211)

There are also moments of inadvertant comedy in Joseph Payne Brennan's "Foringer's Fortune" where the plot hobbles from "The Graveyard Rats" to "Pickman's Model" and then brings in the Deep Ones. Brennan has written well in the past, but this time the prose, especially the dialogue, is on a Tom Swift level:

"Great heavens, Forringer!" I exclaimed. "What is the purpose of this tunnel?" (p. 147)

And the author's inventiveness is shown more in his said-bookisms than anywhere else:

"Fascinating!" I commentated. (p. 147) 17

Brian Lumley also has written passable stories before, but my chuckles while reading "What Dark God?" were stifled by yawns. An impromptu sabbat is held in a passenger compartment of a train, and the ultimate shocking revelation is that one of those weirdos is a Thing!!!! Tedious.

Approaching now the bottom of the scale, entering the realm of the totally illiterate, we meet David English's "Sim-aitha," a CREEPY comic book "Oh no! He's returned from the dead!" story told in a style wholly innocent of grammar:

The older woman, her name was Simaitha, listened to the whispering of the sea. (p.99)

Robert Aickman's "The Real Road to the Church" is unreadable. I gave up after I realized that four pages of incredibly florid and cluttered prose, reminiscent of M. P. Shiel at his worst, had told me nothing. This is shocking when you remember that Aickman won a prize for best short fiction last year in Providence, and came close to winning another one for a lifetime of contributions to the fantasy field. (Fortunately standards still exist—outside of NAMELESS PLACES—and Robert Bloch got the award.)

Last and least, E. Hoffman Price's "Selene" is hopelessly garbled, jumping back and forth between scenes, never telling the reader the whos, whats, and wherefores, like a freshman litcomp by somebody who has never heard of transition, and unless the printer has mangled the text (in which case I apologise) I can only conclude that Price, who wrote some of the best short stories to appear in WEIRD TALES in the 1920's, has lost his touch in the intervening years.

The ugly truth is this: NAMELESS PLACES should never have been published. It is no credit to the writers, the editor, the publisher, or the (sadly dilapidated) fantasy field in general. If better material is not available, then it's time to stop issuing all original anthologies and make do on the glories of the past before the readership is driven away entirely.

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LETTER FROM PHILIP JOSE FARMER

Feb. 2, 1976

I'm five novels late, the third Riverworld book, THE MAGIC LABYRINTH (the final title, a quote from Burton's KASIDAH) keeps getting longer and longer, but I now hope to have the first draft finished by the end of February. It'll probably be 20,000 words or more, but I'll be cutting it for the second draft. And probably, alas, adding to it, too.'

DON'T LOOK BEHIND YOU!
AAAAARRRRRGHH!

I TOLD YOU NOT TO LOOK!

WHEN FOOTSTEPS ECHO by Basil Cooper. St. Martin's Press, 1975, \$7.95, 184 pages.

Reviewed by Wayne Hooks

Horror is an elusive element. In order to succeed, horror must strike a responsive chord with the reader. What is effective for one person, fails with another. Dread, as well as fear must be evoked. At all times, the author must be in control of his material. Trends in horror change. Where once Poe's and Lovecraft's styles were much emulated, today the trend is towards a more stark, action related plot. Where Poe's and Lovecraft's emphasis was upon mood and setting, today such a fulsome overblown style is boring, rather than terrifying.

This is one of the reasons WHEN FOOTSTEPS ECHO by Basil Cooper must fail. Despite distinguished acclaim for this anthology of Cooper's short stories by such people as Derleth and Haining, WHEN FOOTSTEPS ECHO does not succeed as a horror anthology. The quality of the stories is very even, but there is no brilliance in monotonous mediocrity. The most noticeable defect of Cooper's writing is his style. It is reminiscent of Doyle in its overwriting. Adverbs and adjectives are used entirely too freely. "Camera Obscura,"

"The Janissaries of Emilion," and "Amber Print" suffer from hackneyed, overworked themes. "Doctor Porthos" and "Cry Wolf" lack imagination. In none of the stories is there a single original plot or idea. The characters are overdrawn. Cooper loses himself and the reader in detailed descriptions of the characters. Rather than character development advanced through action, he contents himself with mere physical descriptions. Phrasing is clumsy and there is too much padding. Characters are under-



COUNT FROGULA

developed and characterization is flat. The action is static in contrast to the unevenness of the progression. Motivation is lacking throughout, the characters are puppets manipulated by the author, rather than viable individuals. The handling of the language is deficient. Pacing is too leisurely, lulling the reader to sleep. Dialogue between the characters is unnatural and forced, creating an atmosphere of artificiality.

In order to utilize an archaic style such as Poe's or Lovecraft's, a tapestry of emotions and reactions by the reader must be woven by the writer through the skillful manipulation of setting and mood. Cooper does not attempt to establish a mood, rather he relies upon setting, and fails. His attempts at setting fail because the setting is seen through the eyes of the author and not the characters. There is no reaction or catharsis on the part of the reader.

In an earlier century, Cooper might have been an outstanding writer of the macabre. Today he is merely outmoded.

LETTER FROM BUD WEBSTER

2/10/76

'Way back in whichever issue you said "Did any of you catch on to the fact that she was black?", referring to Eunice in I WILL FEAR NO EVIL by Robert A. Heinlein.

'Dick, I have been over that book with as much care as I can muster for such a bad (comparatively) book.

'Where the hell did you see this?'

((I didn't. But in a phone conversation with Mr. Heinlein, he mentioned that

Eunice was black and that there were clues pointing to that conclusion in the book. I take him to be the final authority on his writings.))

LETTER FROM ROBERT BLOCH

10 Feb., 1976

'An excellent issue! But might I take the liberty of revising one sentence in Dick Lupoff's column, as follows?

"But science fiction has been dominated for 50 years by a crew of editors and writers bearing names like Campbell, Boucher, Pohl, Palmer, Conklin, Ley, Heinlein, Clarke, Bradbury, Anderson, Williamson, Elwood, Hamilton, van Vogt, Pratt, de Camp, Moore, Lowndes, Smith, Bova, Neville, Aldiss, Brunner, Rocklynne, Farmer, Ballantine, Tremaine, Sloan, Bates, Nourse, Hamling, Shaw, Carr, Wright, Mills, Matheson, Moore, Russell, Iaine, Fearn, Stapledon, Wells, Huxley, Orwell, Simak, Leiber, Le Guin, Niven, Pournelle, Lafferty, Zelazny, Delany, Disch, Knight, Burroughs, Derleth, Wyndham, Long, Farley, Wylie, Hubbard, Clement, Sturgeon, Blish, Norton, Dickson, Reynolds, Nourse, Ballard, Sheckley, White, Brown, Herbert, Miller, Bradley and doubtless scores of others - including Gunn, the author of the book being discussed."

'Anyone who thinks sf is a shetl should ghetto load of this!'

'PS. I always thought Lester del Rey was Swedish.'

((You forgot Geis....))

THE LATEST DISASTER IS...

THE PROMETHEUS CRISIS by Thomas N. Scortia & Frank M. Robinson. Doubleday, 1975, \$8.95

Reviewed by Keith Soltys

As they did in an earlier book, THE GLASS INFERNO, which was made into the movie THE TOWERING INFERNO, Scortia and Robinson depict a catastrophe caused by a combination of human error, mechanical defects and the extension of technology past the point where control over events is possible. This time the disaster involves the world's largest nuclear power station, a complex of four 3,000 megawatt reactors.

In the near future the need for non-fossil fuel power sources has become extreme. The manager of the Prometheus complex, Gregory Parks, is forced to bring

the complex into the national power grid before he is certain that all technical problems have been overcome and his workers are fully capable of handling any emergencies that might occur. Parks' worst fears are confirmed when, like a row of falling dominoes, a series of human mistakes and equipment failures lead to the most serious type of nuclear accident—a complete meltdown of all four reactors.

The authors build up suspense with a cinematic technique, cutting from one character to another, showing the effects of the accident on those at the scene and the surrounding area irradiated by the huge cloud of fallout produced by the meltdown. They also intersperse scenes from the Congressional inquiry into the causes of the accident thus adding a grim counterpoint of bureaucratic incompetence and intrigue.

The characters are largely subservient to the events of the story but the increasing suspense keeps that from being too great a fault. The science and technology are convincingly and accurately portrayed.

What gives the book its impact is not so much the hellish horror of the accident but the realization by the central characters that even after a catastrophe that renders much of California uninhabitable nothing has been done or will be done to prevent the same thing from occurring again elsewhere.

Along with the recent disclosures of accidents and incompetence in some sectors of the nuclear power industry this book serves as a cautionary portrayal of some of the grimmer consequences of anything less than perfection in dealing with the nuclear genie.

LETTER FROM ANDREW WEINER

Feb. 18, 1976

'Very good issue (#16) especially Warren on Bester, absolutely dead-on.

'Lupoff and the Jews—he's hardly the first:

"Even more startling, the literature of busy males, of politicians and executives seeking at once relaxation and the reinforcement of their fantasies, is Judaized, too. The long dominance of the Western and the detective story is challenged by that largely Jewish product, science fiction... The basic myths of science fiction reflect the urban outlook, the social conscious-

ness, the utopian concern of the modern, secularized Jew. The traditional Jewish waiting-for-the-Messiah becomes, in lay terms, the commitment-to-the-future, which is the motive force of current science fiction."

—Leslie A. Fiedler,
WAITING FOR THE END
(p.75-6) Penguin, 1964.

'Fiedler on Superman: "The biceps are the biceps of Esau, but the dialogue is the dialogue of Jacob."

'Actually, Superman may not be so much the golden goy, as a Canadian wish-dream. Mordecai Richler points out that Metropolis is actually modeled after Toronto (the DAILY PLANET is the TORONTO STAR) so maybe Superman combines Jewish and Canadian inferiority feelings.'

LETTER FROM HARLAN ELLISON

11 February 76

'Concerning Dave Wixon's excellent review of Arther Cover's AUTUMN ANGELS. Extremely fair, informed, literate and a pleasure to read. One point should be refuted, however, just to keep the record straight and to keep from detracting from the talent Art Cover demonstrated in the book. The image of the crawling bird that Mr. Wixon finds so breathtakingly brilliant ...was Cover's. I neither added nor deleted, changed nor advised. It is pure Cover, it was in the book before I ever saw it, and I deserve absolutely no credit for its memorable creation. My editorial hand shows up in AUTUMN ANGELS only by its absence: I badgered Arthur to rewrite only to toughen up his sequential progressions, to clean up his syntax and to add the "slices of life" sections I thought would add background depth to the picture of the society he presented. All characters and tone, plot and force of narrative were all there before I got into it in any way. As Wixon perceives, Cover is an original, and for anyone to lay credit for his abilities on my doorstep would be to sell me too high, and Cover too low. I venture to say his work will continue to amaze and delight sf/fantasy readers for years to come.'

LETTER FROM PAUL WALKER

March 4, 1976

'Excellent issue. That Malzberg review was the best thing I have ever read by him. Your own reviews were not bad, either. The interview with Pournelle was

very fine. Geis, you are insufferably competent. Let's see what I can comment on.

'Pournelle seems a likeable chap, not one of the more obnoxious variety of conservatives, but he shares some of their misconceptions about progress and the economy. As with most technologists, he conceives of progress solely in terms of things; hence building the future is a matter of building bigger and better buildings. It is the very old Victorian notion of Man against Nature, man in opposition to the elements, the typically human megalomaniacal fantasy of man as the Master of the Universe. But science is not headed in this direction. The lessons of the past twenty or thirty years is that Nature is unbeatable; man does not exist against nature but within it, not in opposition to the elements but in relationship to them. He may modify certain specific natural conditions for a period of time in an infinitesimally small speck of the universe, but beyond a certain, indefinable point his most super modifications are inefficient.

'I am not a doomsayer, not a luddite, not even a pessimist. I agree with Pournelle that we have the technology to deal with our problems and I believe we will deal with them in time, but things are never going to be the same again. The Cult of Things designed to master nature is giving way to the Cult of Relationships designed to (or said to be perceived to) bring man into (an uneasy) harmony with nature.

'Pournelle also, like all conservatives, believes in money like some believe in God. It is an absolute truth, with an absolute value, that must be preserved in its purest state. But to the less credulous it should have been obvious for some time that money is meaningless; an archaic abstraction that is just waiting for a more national currency to whisk it away. It is not a matter of inflation; it is that money has always had an utterly arbitrary value, but as long as there was only a few people in the world who held most of it, it seemed to be efficient. With today's billion and trillion dollar GNPs, the relationship the value of a dollar and the goods and services it will buy has ceased to exist. What will replace it? I have no idea. But to say "three quarters of the world lives in poverty because they haven't enough investment capital to buy the technology of the West" is, I think, wrong. In fact, the Pakistani engineer who feels "helpless because he hasn't got a trillion bucks to sink into development" is the gist of the

problem. It is the old technological thinking of progress in terms of things that cost money. Build the biggest and best things the most money will buy and the nation will prosper, but time and again, as with the Aswan dam, this has been contradicted.

'Finding the money is the least of a nation's problems. A nation's friends, as well as enemies, will compete to give them funds. But finding the right technology is another, sometimes unsolvable problem. Remember that the "technology" of America was land, resources, and millions of immigrants who supplied virtually free labor. But these were Europeans doing in America what they had done or wished to do in Europe. In Asia there is no similar sociological base for capitalistic progress. No "American Dream". The problem is one of social, rather than technical, engineering.

'One last point which is so typical, and appalling, of conservatives. He speaks of a "thousand year accident" that would "perhaps" kill thirty thousand people, then points to the National Safety Council as "gloriously happy because only forty-five thousand people were killed on the highways." I remember when it was something like 70,000, but that is not the point. The point is that people don't think that way. Nobody imagined 30,000 people were going to be killed every year when the first Fords rolled off the assembly line. We can imagine 30,000 people killed in a nuclear accident, but we can also imagine that there is no way to make a plant absolutely secure against radiation leakage. With hundreds of plants going 24 hours a day across the country—if not the world—the possibility of poisoning our atmosphere, and ourselves, is too high to make it safe. No, I don't think we will poison ourselves into extinction, but certainly in a much higher rate of death from cancer.'



MICROCOSMOS

By R. FARADAY NELSON

"I FIND MY OWN COMPANY WEARISOME when I descend into self-pity," writes Robert Silverberg in Chapter Eleven of DYING INSIDE, his science fiction novel about a man who has the power of telepathy but never does much with it. Shortly after reading this line, I heard that Silverberg was giving up writing. I wasn't surprised.

DYING INSIDE sums itself up in that line. It was "wearisome" and it did indeed "descend into self-pity." It was one of the most boring books I've ever read. Why did I read it? Because it had been praised to the skies by battalions of critics. I didn't want to be excommunicated from literate society; I manfully plodded through to the final page where appear the words, "Silence will become my mother tongue." I tried hard to find something in the book to like, but failed.

Here was this book that critics had raved over, that the author had rated in interviews as superior to his other books (And he has been a winner of both the Hugo and Nebula awards), and I could barely bring myself to read it all the way to the end. I did not even think it was a real science-fiction book, but a second-rate mainstream novel with a little science-fiction pasted on to make it sell. Could it be I was a victim of the one unspeakable mental disease, poor taste? If this was the truth, it was a truth I'd rather not face.

Instead I came to the realization that Silverberg was probably successful at doing whatever he was doing, but that it was something I would never do, or try to do, no matter how much I longed for the praise of critics and acceptance of editors. DYING INSIDE became, in a perverse way, a turning point in my writing, a powerful influence. By summing up in a single work all that I hated in science-fiction, it gave me a new sense of direction. I was not certain where I wanted to go, but I at least knew what I wanted to escape from, or rebel against.

I changed my name: I had been writing under the name Ray Nelson, but now I became R. Faraday Nelson, though editors have been reluctant to accept the change. In my files there was a novel I'd once written for Damon Knight when Damon was editor at Berkley Books. (Damon loved it but, unfortunately, Dardis Fisher, his superior, rejected it.) This book, recognizably in the

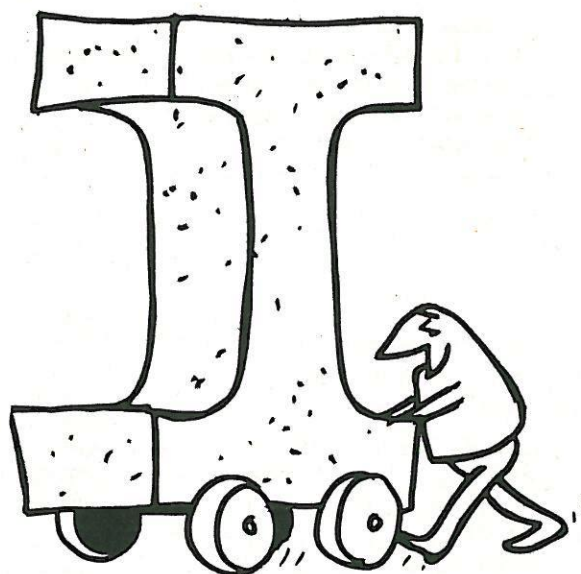
same genre as DYING INSIDE, was consigned to the flames, along with many other unpublished works of Ray Nelson.

As R. Faraday Nelson, I began writing, groping along, learning to write all over again, working out my new style, my new philosophy, as I went. There were a few short stories for Ted White's FANTASTIC, where I was experimenting, and finally along came Roger Elwood, who didn't know the old Ray Nelson, and was willing to take a gamble on "R. Faraday." (Though even he backed off from using my new name on my first book for him, BLAKE'S PROGRESS.)

My new approach or writing philosophy takes the name "Microcosmic." Its aim is not, like DYING INSIDE, to show the world as it is, or worse than it is. Instead I want to show the world as it might be. The great weakness of Silverbergism is that it is a cowardly evasion of the need for making choices. Under the disguise of objectivity, it may say "this is how it is" or even say what it's against, but it never says what it is for. There's a risk in being for something, in advocating something. You might make a fool of yourself!

Well, I believe that part of what my readers are putting down money for is to see me take risks. They don't want me to take photographs and, when asked what the photos mean, to say, "No comment." They want me up there on the high wire without a net, in the hip argot, they want me to "put something down."

They want me to create for them Microcosms, "little worlds" designed as sketches or miniature scale models of societies different from our own. They want me to



help them "try on for size" unfamiliar lifestyles and values. I think that's what science-fiction does, when it does what it should. That's what the real science-fiction is all about.

It's not about stupid puns and shaggy dog stories, such as defaced the pages of the late, unlamented magazine, VERTEX. It's not about Feghoots. It's not about non-science-fiction stories like DYING INSIDE passing themselves off as science-fiction to the gullible critics. Humor has a place in the Little Worlds. Realism has a place in the Little Worlds. But neither of these can properly be the Main Attraction.

The Microcosmic approach carries certain basic assumptions that usually remain implicit, almost subliminal. Let's for a moment, take a clear look at them.

The first assumption is that Man can make choices.

If Man cannot make choices, then it is pointless to consider alternate realities. There are no alternate worlds. There can be no alternate worlds. It is a waste of energy to consider anything beyond things as they are. It is a waste of energy to consider possible futures, since Blind Fate will impose itself upon us no matter what we do.

I cannot accept that.

There are many philosophies current that picture Man as a puppet. Astrology makes Man a puppet of the stars. Marxism makes Man a puppet of History. Other philosophies make Chance our master, or Karma, or Predestination. None of these philosophies is proven scientifically, though all

lay claim to being scientific. They are popular because people like to believe that if the world is a mess, it's not their fault. If they do things they are ashamed of, it's because something "made them." There's no way we can judge for sure if Man is a puppet, but we can see that, no matter what he is a puppet of, the end result is the same.

Boredom!

Boredom is the only appropriate emotion in the world of Man the Puppet, and that is why so many modern novels and stories are so terribly, terribly boring, and why life itself is, for people who accept the ideas underlying such literature, so dull.

In literature as in life, Man the Puppet fails to hold our interest, fails to make us care whether he lives or dies, fails to arouse our sympathy, let alone our admiration. After all, whatever he is, good or bad, is the result of the forces acting upon him, nothing more. Yet Man the Puppet is the Great Cliche of modern fiction; almost every amateur writer's first story is about this poor passive nebbish who sinks slowly from a bad situation into a worse one without a struggle. Often the story ends with the protagonist insane, dead, or committing suicide, or, if he's lucky, merely getting beaten up by some dreadful bully or humiliated by his wife or employer. Such stories are written by the ream but are seldom published, except where someone, like Robert Silverberg, has made a name for himself that some publisher thinks is exploitable enough so it doesn't matter how crummy the story is.

There used to be a subgenre of Weird Fiction about vast cosmic monsters who finally overcome some unfortunate human. I don't mind that. There's no shame in being overcome by a monster, if he's vast and cosmic enough. Actually, it's a kind of honor, because of the implication that nothing short of a vast cosmic monster has got what it takes to overcome us.

But if I was going to be driven to suicide by a nagging wife or a mean boss or "mechanistic society", I think I wouldn't say anything about it. I'd hope nobody would notice.

So, in literature and in life, I believe Man can make choices. I worked for many, many years, sometimes under very adverse conditions, to become a writer. I will not accept a protagonist in one of my stories who is less willing to struggle than I am. Indeed, I should hope my protagonist would at least be a little more determined than I've been. There have

been times when I damn near gave up.

Why should I let my protagonists off easy?

Why should I let them slide languidly into oblivion, or go insane, or kill themselves? I never allowed myself such luxuries!

This, in fact, is my second assumption, which follows from the first. Man can struggle! He may win or he may lose, but he can always struggle!

The foundation stone of the microcosmic style is the choice-making, struggling protagonist. He is there for my reader to identify with or admire. Without him there would be no reason for a reader to enter my microcosm, be it ever so wonderful.

This is simple, basic storywriting theory. You've been told a hundred times about the importance of an active protagonist. But how many times have you been told about the philosophical assumptions behind active and passive protagonists? It's not enough to make your hero heroic; you have to know why you're doing it.

If you like passive characters, there's a place for them. A passive character makes a good "Dr. Watson" for some active "Sherlock Holmes."

We now come to the thing that makes a microcosmic story microcosmic.



That is the assumption that "Things could be different."

Of course, if you are not a puppet, then you could have chosen to do something else in the past, so that your life would now be different. And you can act today to make your future different, to select the future you want.

The same thing is true of society as a whole.

If Cleopatra, at the battle of Actium, had chosen to stand and fight instead of fleeing, she might have defeated Octavian. The Roman Empire would have been the Egyptian Empire instead, and all history would have been different. You would be different.

If Prince Albert on his deathbed had not prevented England from entering the American Civil War on the side of the South, the South might have won, and once again everything would have been different.

Or let's look at the future.

Is civilization doomed? Will we fall victim to nuclear war, or pollution, or overpopulation, or exhaustion of natural resources? Certainly if we act like puppet-people, sooner or later we will, like the passive protagonists of so many "modern" stories, be overcome. But if we understand that the world is the way it is because we made it that way, and that we can, if we wish, make it some other way, then we will think, and imagine, and struggle. Microcosmic science-fiction can provide us with a powerful way of visualizing possible futures, of working out things to strive for, to realize the dangers hidden in contemporary trends before it is too late to do anything effective. (It is never too late to do something.)

My new style is devoted, above all else, to exploring what alternate societies and various futures might actually be like. My job is to make the unthinkable thinkable, to break the spell of "things-as-they-are" with the magic of "things-as-they-might-be." My job is to show, to the best of my ability, what it might actually be like to travel to the stars, to harness alternate sources of energy, to adopt alternate forms of government, alternate religions, alternate philosophies. What would life be like for you and me if this or that or the other thing were changed? That's the kind of question the microcosmic story addresses itself to.

I'm glad I live in California. California is as far as possible from Europe. And it's as far as you can get from New

York in the United States, without actually going to Hawaii. Writers in California, from Joaquin Miller and Jack London to Poul Anderson and Fritz Leiber, have always been singularly free of the weary wisdom of passivity that infects the European and the New Yorker. We've had a passionate love-fear relationship with the wilderness we found out here that absorbed us so much we find the languid sophistication of the Old World trivial, irrelevant.

We don't see life as a gray wall. We don't see life as a little room where three people spend eternity tormenting each other. Our reality is one of doing. We know we can change the world, because we've done it, because we're doing it. The European, the New Yorker, is outside Nature, looking in. He can't hold Nature in his hand and mold it, making a forest where there was no forest before, making new rivers, new mountains. It is the Californian who is a part of Nature. It is the Californian who has sold the concept of ecology to the world.

There are twice as many members of the Science Fiction Writers of America in California as in New York, and last year, when the annual Nebula science-fiction awards were being handed out, none of the winners were at the official banquet in New York. They were all at the unofficial banquet in California. At one time there was a rule that all Nebula banquets must be held in New York; now one might well ask why any of them should be held there. Let's face it. New York is not the sort of place where good science-fiction can be written. Not enough trees, for one thing.

But mainly, in New York it's so hard to believe that mankind has any future at all, let alone an exciting one. There are so many literary critics around eager to applaud those damn passive-protagonist stories, so many "creative writing" classes where the art of the passive-protagonist story is taught. And the life one leads there is so dreary and hopeless that only a pessimistic attitude seems honest. Once I wrote a novel (the one I burned) and the editor, Damon Knight, Don of the Milford Mafia, insisted I change the happy ending to an unhappy one. Unhappy endings are the only kind you can believe in, if you live in or near New York.

When writers come to California from somewhere else, they either change radically, like Aldous Huxley did, or they stop writing, like Bob Silverberg.

As it happens, I know Silverberg personally. He's not my friend, but I can certainly call him my acquaintance. He

speaks to me, when he speaks to me at all, with such condescension that friendship is impossible. I'm too naive for him, I think. I haven't given up all hope.

He's thin, bearded, somewhat aristocratic, with huge sad eyes, quite handsome in the Byronic tradition. He looks at me with those eyes half-closed and pities me.

He was born and educated in New York City, but moved out here to live in Oakland, California. So far, however, his soul has not left the Big Apple. His soul is back in "Fun City", and without it his body is slowly running down.

But if he has given up hope (as any self-respecting New Yorker must), I have not given up hope for him. Recently he granted an interview to EDGE, an amateur journal of science fiction published by the students at Stanford University. He says:

"Lately I've drifted away from writing. I've spent a lot of time in the Sierras, spent a lot of time simply working in my garden, and I'm finding new realms of experience just in planting, pruning and hacking."

Ah ha! California is getting through to him! The green things that have taught California writers so much more than Europe or New York have... they're beginning to seduce Bob. Maybe his soul will finally come west to join him! Maybe the trees and plants and birds will convince him that the whole universe isn't made of gray concrete and glass after all.

If that happens, I venture to prophesy a revolution in his attitude. He'll become an even more fanatic rebel against his past "Silverbergism" than I am. He'll become a true Californian, never again to read the NEW YORK TIMES book reviews. He'll get rid of those slobbish passive protagonists and get down to the serious—but fun—job of creating microcosms.

You'll see!

 'Nutritional disorders may also affect behavior in bizarre ways. Pellagra results from a dietary deficiency in niacin, a compound of the vitamin B complex. The first cases in the United States were found in institutions for the insane. The patients were psychotic, disoriented, and suffering from hallucinations and delirium. Once niacin was added to their diet, their symptoms disappeared.'

—PSYCHOSMATICS by Howard R & Martha E. Lewis

LETTER FROM HARRY WARNER

March 26, 1976

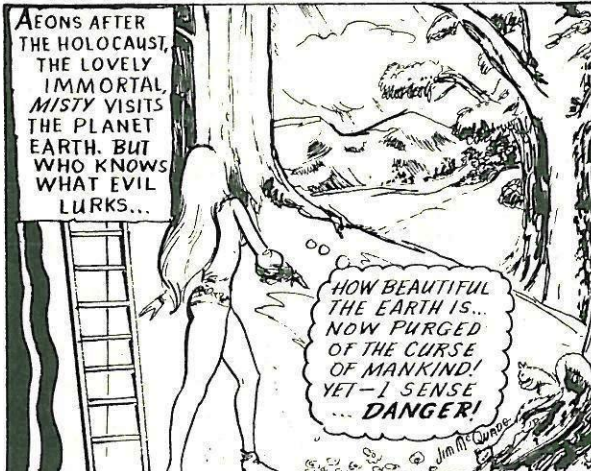
'I read the start of your editorial in SFR 16 at the wrong time, unfortunately. Advent:Publishers pays no advances and I've been trying since November to get the manuscript for the new fan history book back from Ed Wood, without success. Ed didn't want it unless I wrote some additional sections, which I flatly refused to write, I told him to send it back if he didn't want it the way it was, and at the end of March, I still haven't received it. Fortunately, I have a couple of carbon copies and offers of publication from two other firms, so I should be making the deal with someone else pretty soon.

'Franz Rottensteiner had written me in a letter some of the same complaints that Dick Lupoff voices in his review of THE SCIENCE FICTION BOOK. Many of these mistakes occurred in captions written by the publisher's employees, not by Franz, which he had no opportunity to correct in proof. But I disagree with Dick in his overall viewpoint on the book in general. I think it's an excellent summing up of the field in such a limited space. Moreover, his review might at least have had some mention of the superlative reproduction of the many illustrations, like those full-color prozine covers. There's no way anyone is going to write a book of this size about science fiction in general without giving more or less space to certain topics than another person would have given; in fact, this is what my dispute with Ed Wood is about.

'And I don't think that devoting almost half a book about prozine art to Paul is at all excessive. I've been predicting to the point of repletion for at least ten or fifteen years that Paul is going to become an artistic discovery someday in the mundane art world, that he will be given the same postmortem lionization that Van Gogh received. (The two have lots in common as maverick artists, even though it would be hard to think of two artists with more dissimilar styles and life patterns.) I keep wondering how many Paul originals have survived during all these decades when he has been scorned by most people, and how valuable they will become a decade or a century from now.'



THE ALTERED GO



SUDDENLY...



(INNER) SPACE (SOAP) OPERA

TRITON by Samuel R. Delany
Bantan Y2567, \$1.95, 369pp.

Reviewed by Donn Vicha

TRITON is yet another navel novel. Although there remains much to be mined from inner space, Delany, I've heard, has tried the patience of some SF readers, writers, and reviewers for the last time with his navel-gazing stories. I liked DHALGREN, but for the life of me I couldn't give you a very coherent statement why.

Again, Frederik Pohl has allowed Delany's mental masturbation to reflect his "taste, integrity, and discrimination that have made his own works so highly respected..."

Why does Delany do it? And why are we so terribly outraged by his insistence on boring us with pages unending? Unless, for some reasons we hold some incredible hope that 'Chip' will put aside self-agonizing/analyzing and use his great (they must be great if we are so concerned about what he's written) talents to entertain and enthrall.

Well, you'll have to follow another repulsive Delany protagonist to his/her despair in order to keep that hope intact.

First of all, don't bother to read the two appendices that comprise the last 39 pages of the book: you spare yourself that many pages of the kind of crap you had to wade through in the big D, and you won't get that feeling that Samuel R. is talking down to you, hiding himself among erudite observations on SF which seem to have nothing to do with what went on before.

Secondly, if you bought the book but just couldn't stand stupid and pathetic Bron Hellstrom, the central character (who is not a poet, minstrel, or artistic figure of any kind, for a change) and his inability to relate with his reluctant lover (the artistic figure—bad habits are hard to break, I guess), a woman who writes, directs, and produces micro-theater performances, or his inability to communicate very well with the few friends he has: a 74 year old homosexual, a bisexual diplomat involved with what could loosely be called an interplanetary war, and a lesbian head of his department at work...pick it up after the break on page 271. From there, you'll have little problem getting through to the most chilling and realistically written exploration of inner space

that can be found in science fiction if not in mainstream literature.

In the emotional and logical chaos of Bron leading up to a fitful sleep that concludes Delany's story—it doesn't sound like much, but that's the whole point I'm coming to—Delany finally, after (I dare to say) more than a thousand pages of three navel novels, engages the reader. Finally the reader is thrust into the maelstrom of the leading figure's distressing despair. It's excellent writing that succeeds in defeating itself with a vengeance.

I'm going to leave you with that paradox for just a moment and quickly point out some highlights leading up to Bron's (and Delany's) grand Moment of Truth.

First, there is a game called vlet which sounds like a nice change from Anti-Monopoly or poker ala Tarot cards, the mumblers of a bizarre religious sect, the micro-theater productions with a randomly chosen audience of one, and a trip to one hell of a great restaurant (read while I was near starving, it nearly killed me it sounded so wonderful).

Second, Delany summons forth excellent parodies (I think) of technical passages of hard science fiction with long-winded (and equally boring) discussions of metaphysics (Bron's profession) and the mechanics of sex change operations and sexual preference refixations (about six hours and seventeen minutes and Bron becomes a woman).

The highly coincidental nature of the lovers' clashes and their inability to form any kind of synthesis of understanding is an uncomfortable blend of soap opera and DOCTOR ZHIVAGO.

As in ZHIVAGO, Bron is the confused-doctor-of-life who cannot find security within the opposing societal structures—Earth and Mars representing sexual patriarchies and matriarchies, Triton and the

other satellites representing '57 Varieties' of sexual preference/ideologies. Thus, he chooses to elude his neurotic 'masculine' logic for the equally neurotic 'feminine' emotions through a sex change.

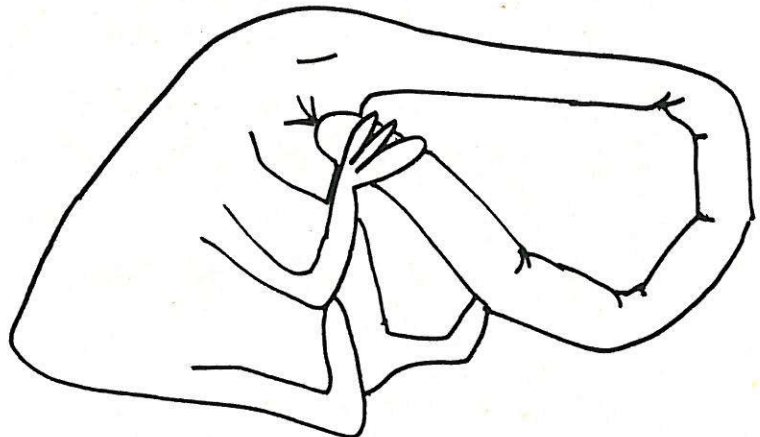
At this point, what has seemed to drag on becomes a suspenseful, psychological flight. It is taut, it involves you with your own experiences of self-alienation, and it has to parallel Delany's own struggle with the ideas he has been writing about for much too long.

Bron is ultimately rejected by her/his lover, then by each of her/his friends until she finds herself lying to Audri, her lesbian boss, and of course, she ends up facing the fact or at least the possibility that he/she has been lying to herself all along.

Now maybe that doesn't sound like much, but believe me, it builds on so many levels it has great power. Most important of all, it makes you care for Bron; carrying it further, you begin to care about what Delany has been agonizing about.

And what does all this have to do with paradox, despair and hopes?

Delany has simply put himself out of the soap opera business. The agonizing has turned on itself, the existential hero is a pathetically self-pitying fool. Delany, as his characters, has remained aloof from the reader and more specifically, from the science fiction reader. The SF reader is an audience in a non-existential sense, his kudos or brick-bats have a medium through which the SF writer receives feedback; neither reader or writer is truly alone... as long as they care about that special relationship. If Delany has attempted to spell out his relationship with SF through Bron's despair, he has failed to seal off his individuality from either the subjectivity of his own 'world' or the objectivity



ty of the world (of SF) in which he writes. It is this failure which rings so true at the end of TRITON that succeeds in bringing the reader to care about Bron, and Delany.

Certainly, Bron is left reeling in her sleepless nightmare, guilty of being human and of having feelings she doesn't understand. And it's entirely possible for her to continue life as an existential vegetable.

Fortunately, the parallel between Delany and his characters ends in the hope that always rises after such despair. Because of the chilling realism of that final passage, Delany reveals himself not as the individual he'd like us to think he is, but as a human who shares with us all an individual understanding of the nature of truth.

We've all gone through some kind of analysis and if we survived it was because we've discovered truths are not to be found in some natural (metaphysical) state—as if that were the nature of truth! There are only the makings of truth that continue to elude those too lazy to complete them.

The conclusion of TRITON is an event, Delany's rite of passage, a bar mitzvah... the end of navel-gazing and the beginning of a new consciousness of a writer who has already been considered a giant in SF.

Looking back at TRITON, the event really never meets one's expectations. One man's catharsis is another man's stifled yawn. So important, yet also so mundane... anticlimactic. But if TRITON is such an anticlimactic work, consider now that Delany is free to be himself and to entertain the few readers he might have. I foresee a grand and wonderful comeback of a truly gifted man. For that alone, TRITON is worth reading.

LETTER FROM KARL T. PFLOCK, Editor, LIBERTARIAN REVIEW

20 February 1976

'Curse you and SFR! This is the second time in two days that I've found myself at the typer knocking out a letter to you when I should be doing pay copy. What ancient and unspeakable rites do you perform over SFR to do this to your readers?'

((The truth is, and I really hesitate to admit this, I made a pact with the Devil about ten years ago. My immortal soul in exchange for ten Hugo awards. Frankly, I'm getting worried: I've already got six Hugo goes...and I'm only beginning middle age.))

'The proximate cause of this epistle is the Pournelle interview in SFR 16. It was one whale (heh-heh) of a piece. As always, I found Jerry enlightening, entertaining, outrageous, thought-provoking. And, as always, he managed to tighten my jaws now and again. (Jerry and I have been exchanging friendly diatribes for some time now. It's most unlikely that we'll change each other's views much, but it's fun—and it does wonders for our minds and spleens (at least it does for mine, though not always in that order.)

'Concerning the jaw-tightening points. I'll take them as they came up in the interview. Jerry (concerning savings/capital investment): "...how did the West do it? We saved the investment funds. I should say flint-hearted capitalists, who lived well themselves, forced a lot of people to live intolerably miserably so the money could be saved." Bunk. The foundations of the English Industrial Revolution were laid in the seventeenth century by a whole slew of small, family enterprises run by people who put off their own current consumption (they hardly lived well, and most of them went broke) to provide the capital needed to launch the iron, coal, building materials, and other basic industries. As for the intolerably miserable conditions of the working classes during the 1820s and '30s (which is the period I think Jerry has in mind), the truth is, they weren't. (See the essays in CAPITALISMS AND THE HISTORIANS, F.A. Hayek, ed.) Consider: If they had been, would country people have abandoned the beneficent care of the conservative gentry to become factory workers?

'Jerry: "I am not...a Libertarian because I believe freedom is a very important value, but not the ONLY value." Implying that freedom is the only libertarian value, which just ain't so. True, freedom (not "anything goes," but the absence of coercive restraint on peaceful, voluntary activity) is THE political value of libertarianism. But Libertarians value freedom because (among other things) it makes possible the peaceful pursuit of all other values.

'Jerry: "Who speaks for the Grand Canyon?...Some things, in my judgement, are too damned important to be left to whim and even to majority sentiment; much less to the market place." Translation: "I believe some things (e.g., the Grand Canyon) are too important—" (by what standard, Jerry?) "—to leave to the whims and sentiments of you dumb clucks. So I will use the power of the State to impose on you my whims and sentiments—for your own good, of course."

25

'Jerry: "The Poor Laws, which provided some relief...for paupers and indigents, were Conservative..." Yep, they sure were. The prime movers behind them were the neo-feudal English landed gentry. (They got more than a little help from the radical-chic Beautiful People of the day.) The gentry feared and hated the Industrial Revolution largely because the booming factories were draining off their "serfs," who deserted the great estates in droves to go to work for those "flinthearted capitalists" who "forced" them to live "intolerably miserably." One of the objectives of the early Poor Laws was to keep 'em down on the farm—for their own good, of course. As for the actual effects of the poor, or welfare, laws, read Herbert Spencer—or any current newspaper.

'Enough; my spleen no longer throbs. Besides, I want to applaud Jerry's remarks about getting out into space and getting rich—not to mention saving Homo sap. (the one endangered species I can really get worked up about) from extinction. He's absolutely right.

'If any SFR readers would like to do more than just nod their heads in agreement, there are two new outfits worthy of their support. The first is the National Space Institute (1911 North Fort Myer Drive, Suite 403, Arlington, VA 20009). NSI is headed by Dr. Wernher von Braun, and it was established to promote public understanding and support for space activities. Members receive an interesting monthly newsletter and other goodies. Annual dues (deductible from federal income tax) are \$15. (college age and older) and \$9. (high school age and younger). Life memberships (also deductible) are \$100.

'The other group is Earth/Space, Inc. (2319 Sierra, Palo Alto, CA 94303)—"dedicated to free space enterprise." Earth/Space publishes a monthly newsletter containing a lot of interesting information (one year, \$5; five years \$20).

'Join or die!'

JERRY POURNELLE REPLIES

1 March 1976

'Regarding Pflock's commentary: I would make one point regarding my whims on the Grand Canyon (and Death Valley): Certainly the State imposes its whims on everyone else, supposedly for the common good. Certainly perceptions of the common good may differ—I can recall when a pretty good segment of the military thought Preventive War to be in the common interest (and some

still think it would have been a good idea back when we could clearly have won). Had we then had no State but merely a collection of private armies and police forces, might one of them have tried it? And would not that have affected the rest of us?

'The trouble with leaving irreversible decisions up to the whims of individuals—or even the whims of a majority—is that sometimes the results have been really horrible for everyone; the innocent suffer with the perpetrators (or only the innocent suffer). True, Governments have not a hell of a good record for making the right choices. Neither do condottieri, unrestrained capitalists, labor leaders, feudal barons, Presidents of various juvenile gangs, officers of the IRA and Orange Defense League, kings and princes, mercenary soldiers, etc.

'If Pflock and his friends really do not see that there is something fundamentally wrong with pure freedom if it includes freedom to starve, then maybe there's no way we can communicate. Of course I prefer that institutions be voluntary, and I suspect that nearly all the functions of the State can be undertaken by voluntary associations—what de Tocqueville called a fourth branch of government in America, private institutions which so well accomplished so much of what only government had been able to do in Europe—but having said that, I fear I cannot conceive of life without a government except in the terms of Thomas Hobbes:

"Life in a state of nature is solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short."

LETTER FROM CHARLES PLATT

February 14, 1976

'Why do you allow someone as stupid and as senile as George Warren to review the work of a good writer like Alfred Bester? Warren has somehow picked up bits and pieces of an "education" enough to be able to (mis)quote Goethe and Sir Donald Tovey—did he get it from Cliff's Notes, perhaps?—but he writes with the prejudices and insensitivity of an illiterate who is suspicious of intelligence and downright hostile to anything with pretensions of being "literary", especially if it violates those good old rules of storytelling—the tight plot and the conventional exposition. His real objection to Bester's recent novel, it seems to me, is that it strikes out in new directions and is experimental; yet paradoxically he takes cheap shots at THE DEMOLISHED MAN and THE STARS MY DESTINATION

for being derivative.

'This would be insulting if it were not so dumb. It takes a small mind to bicker about which facet of a book was borrowed from where, and ignore the larger truth that both of Bester's two classic sf novels were packed with innovation and ideas and were a lot more mature, in their relevance to real life and their ideas about morality, than the books of almost any other writer in sf of that period. That THE STARS MY DESTINATION used THE COUNT OF MONTE CRISTO for its structure is unimportant; and the notion that THE DEMOLISHED MAN borrowed from Joyce's ULYSSES is simply absurd—perhaps Warren meant FINNEGAN'S WAKE? ((That's your apostrophe, Charles.)) That, at least, had some experimental typography in it; but so did countless other books by modern authors—books that may not be mentioned in Cliff's Notes but are familiar to some of us whose interests extend beyond the pages of FAMOUS MONSTERS magazine.

'Maybe Warren would be happier if Bester were now trying to turn out the same old stuff, going through the motions as tiredly and unconvincingly as Clarke or Asimov or Heinlein. Personally I admire Alfred Bester for being the only sf writer of his generation to have the courage, awareness, and initiative to take a new direction rather than stick with a tried-and-tested old-fashioned selling format.

'The most obnoxious accusation in Warren's piece is that Bester stopped writing sf because it didn't pay well enough. For goodness sake, does Warren imagine Bester ever did make a living out of science fiction? Out of two novels (one of which was submitted to countless publishers before it finally sold) and 50 or 75 short stories? The fact is that Bester was writing for comics, radio, TV, and glossy magazines before, during, and after his science fiction "period" because he believed that making money elsewhere would allow him to devote a lot more time and trouble to science fiction—time and trouble that full-time sf authors could not afford to spend, and whose work was less finely crafted and less innovative as a result.

'Warren might be barely competent to review a baseball game, but where literature is concerned he's about as perceptive as Archie Bunker. Sometimes a reactionary reviewer can at least be amusing, if he has wit, intelligence, and style. But Warren is dull in every way and, apparently, not too bright. I hope you won't be publishing anything else of his in future.

GEORGE WARREN REPLIES

March, 1976

'Richard, for the love of God get in touch with Charles Platt and tell him some dyslexic dimbulb has got hold of some of his letterhead and seems intent on wrecking his reputation. I'm sure Mr. Platt does not deserve this.....

'Mercy me, I wasn't deriding Mr. Bester for deriving his plots from that great body of Good Stories that is one of the treasures of the species homo more-or-less sapiens; I was applauding his wisdom, maturity, and judgement in doing so. Nobody alive knows more about story values than Mr. Bester; by extension, nobody alive knows better than Mr. Bester how empty and unsatisfying a book is when the author has left them out, or skimmed on them, or substituted verbal or conceptual condiments for the solid protein of story values. And it's no good substituting Mr. Bester's Bearnaise sauce for the ketchup of a lesser "experimentalist" if you have left out the steak, and I'll bet Mr. Bester is rather more conscious of this than are those who, like our Platt impersonator, would seek to please him by praising his miscues. Mr. Bester, like Mr. Joyce (Bester is on record about his debt to Joyce already, and knows very well that what he and Joyce share has nothing to do with typographical devices borrowed from many sources both before and after TRISTRAM SHANDY), knows very well that you can sell the reader virtually any kind of "experimental" fiddle-de-dee on the surface if there's a good story at the bottom. As there was in ULYSSES, THE DEMOLISHED MAN, THE STARS MY DESTINATION ...

Pray what is Cliff's Notes? Some sort of crib which has escaped my attention while engaging that of our imposter friend? I do share some deficiencies in formal education with, among others, Fletcher Pratt, Frederik Pohl and Ray Bradbury. However, I like the company (especially if the alternative is an education derived, as it apparently was in the case of the man who stole Mr. Platt's letterhead, through a lot of breathless swotting on ponyback). And at any rate my own education is still going on. "Study as though you were going to live forever." —San Ysidro de Sevilla, seventh century A.D.

'The above is a quotation, of course. Quotations have those funny little double squiggles before and after them. Paragraphs do not. In a quotation you must get both the sounds and the sense right. In a paraphrase you must get the sense right, and (paraphrasing Lewis Carroll,

I think) if you get the sense right, the sounds will take care of themselves. Which is as cogent a statement on literary style as ever I heard. At any rate, it might be smart to point out here that the man who quotes exactly has, often as not, the crib at his elbow as he writes, by the crib Cliff's Notes or Bartlett's or whatever. The man who paraphrases has, most likely, read the book.

'Neither the reader nor the reviewer owes it to us to figure out what it is that we are up to when we write. Every time we write for publication we are required to wheedle, sweet-talk, or con the reader into that necessary willing suspension of distaste for our stylistic stumbles through unmapped, if often familiar territory. One more paraphrase: Boswell once... but no, Bozzy is too good not to quote: Johnson "observed that a gentleman of eminence in literature had got into a bad style of poetry of late. 'He puts,' said he, 'a very common thing in a strange dress till he does not know it himself, and thinks other people do not know it.' BOSWELL: 'That is owing to his being so much versant in old English poetry.' JOHNSON: 'What is that to the purpose, sir? If I say a man is drunk, and you tell me it is owing to his taking much drink, the matter is not mended.'"

THE DYNAMIC DUO HAVE PRODUCED....

EPOCH, edited by Roger Elwood and Robert Silverberg. G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1975. (SFBC 2/76 selection) \$10.95, 623pp.

Reviewed by Mike Glycer

Since DANGEROUS VISIONS burst on the scene in 1967 we've come to rely on the short fiction anthology to redefine and highlight the range of possibilities for sf. In it Ellison tried to emancipate the genre from pulpish editorial standards, to signal that, sink or swim, each story could find its own level unencumbered by bluenose prejudice. How writers lived up to that challenge was reflected in successive years' NEW DIMENSIONS, UNIVERSES, Carr's annual Best collections, Ellison's AGAIN, DANGEROUS VISIONS, and various triplets, (e.g. THREE FOR TOMORROW).

Not all readers wanted to give writers such freedom: and Roger Elwood rose from obscurity to cover them with the shadow of his editorial hand. Some claimed his changelings had been planted in market niches that would once have been occupied by anthologies like those named above. He

flooded the original anthology market, in fact Ted White feared Elwood had washed it away.

Therefore gossips proposed to construct the ideal anthologist using Elwood's business abilities and restrained by Silverberg's good taste. But when such a project came into being, the real question was how could Silverberg get the kind of story he likes to buy past Elwood?

Oddly enough, EPOCH did nothing more than produce a literal fusion of the two editors' average product. Elwood's usual, called "one good story, two atrocious stories, and a Malzberg story" is merged with Silverberg's standard "one Nebula winner, two Hugo nominees, and 40,000 average words." I make no claim that each editor was actually responsible for a separate level of quality. And EPOCH is the class of 1975, with four to six surefire awards nominees. On the other hand it has between three and seven stories that should have been unpublishable.

Perhaps coincidentally, EPOCH seems to end the era started by DANGEROUS VISIONS, picking up story types both good and bad that (1) were typical of DV, (2) contemporary with DV, or (3) strongly associated with Ellison-as-editor. I say that not only because the collection has these features, but it is missing Tiptree, Pournelle, Reamy, Joe Haldeman, Gene Wolfe and other writers who've become significant since that time, excepting George R. R. Martin and Michael Bishop.

There is in EPOCH the last of the Known Space stories by Niven (whose "Neutron Star" copped the 1967 short story Hugo); a Clarion story; one of Barry Malzberg's last sf pieces (at least, a fan magazine said he was getting out); an Aldiss story in the vein of 1967's CRYPTOZOIC!; four stories involving psychogenic drugs; nine stories with explicit human sex; one story with graphic xeno/human sex. All the taboos DV smashed (sort of), and the types of major fiction present in the freeze-frame year of 1967. And some of the crap we hated even then. But starting on the high notes...

"ARM," by Larry Niven, last of his Known Space timeline works, takes the opening position in EPOCH. The first and last stories in a Silverberg collection are always special. What's unusual in EPOCH is that they're both sf/detective stories. Last is Jack Vance's "The Dogtown Tourist Agency," a 109-page intro for his new serial character, Vv. Hetzel. Vance fanatics don't rate it with his best, but I like it well enough to feel that it'll be compet-

ing with the 60-page "Arm" come Hugo-time this year.

Brian Aldiss' "The Aperture Moment" can infuriate or enthrall. It surely has too many conceptual layers, too many fascinating gimmicks and controversies, to be dismissed. Aldiss makes ferocious comment on art, and by extension challenges the whole science fiction problem-solving tradition. It's at least as sophisticated as "The Ones Who Walk Away From Omelas" but by being more threatening as well, is a sure bet only for the Nebula.

Michael Bishop, one of sf's newest talents, says he wrote "Blooded on Arachne" as a "sort of Technicolor entertainment with no slowdowns and a suitably imageful and cadenced style. ...The story...is no sort of landmark at all, either in the field or, more modestly, in my own development as a writer, but I think it succeeds precisely in those areas I wanted it to....Enjoy.

Bishop sounds needlessly abashed, having created with great style and verve precisely what sf readers say they can't get enough of. If done a little ruthlessly, it was done well enough to compete with Bishop's other work for awards. And having read "Blooded on Arachne," the reason you might nominate it over another Bishop piece that "ought" to win a prize, was alluded to by Jerry Pournelle. He reminded his audience at LA 2000 that fandom has disproportionate



influence on what gets published. One avenue of its power is the Hugos. Pour-nelle felt that in recent years some Hugos had been awarded to fiction the voters felt had a moral right to win—not to fiction the voters actually enjoyed. He warned that if you don't give the Hugo to what you want to read (rather than what you "ought" to like) sure as hell you'll get less of what you enjoy and a lot more of what won the award.

Four high-powered stories in one book is a good record. EPOCH might have had two more just as good had the authors involved been able to write themselves out of corners their stories put them in.

"Cambridge, 1:58 A.M." displays Gregory Benford's high skill in the hard science story. Drawn from the far frontiers of theoretical cosmology, anchored to problems just out of sight of today's beaches, Benford's story fuses intellectual challenge with a sense of wonder. He comes quite near to writing a classic sf story, in both form and fact. Ironically he misses because he can't carry through to an ending with his premise intact. Therefore the story is left rationalized but not resolved, the quality of striving in the characters left to degenerate into pessimism.

A. K. Attanasio also produced a brilliant failure ("Interface"), but didn't come anywhere near Benford in figuring some way to bail out at the end. It is NOT a story when having developed your problem, you panic and have all the protagonists murdered. This incredible betrayal, this stupid cop-out, destroys a beginning with fine characterization, a superb story idea, and first-rate writing. How any editor, especially Silverberg, let him get away with it is beyond me.

But Attanasio, despite his literary treason, at least found an ending. EPOCH is riddled with fragments, whether actual incomplete stories, or stories ended by throwaways that come nowhere near to resolving the conflicts they initiated. Except for that problem, Malzberg's "Leviticus: In the Ark" (my first encounter with the author's work) utterly disproved his image—here he is witty, sage, and challenging.

Another controversial writer, Joanna Russ, has gotten so much bad press it's hard to read her work objectively. (Women's Lib—dangerous stuff, haven't you heard?) That's an obscene way to cripple a writer, so I made a special effort to look at the story as if I'd never in the world heard of her. "Existence" is an elaborate sarcasm. Its beginning threat-

ens to turn into a diatribe, but writhes about til it becomes a dryly funny myth.

W. Macfarlane, long a favorite writer, answers muster with a fragment of juvenile fiction. "Graduation Day" develops its colonial society in strange new ways with prose as fine as clockwork.

I've never based dislike of an anthologized story simply because it didn't turn out to be sf. However, Ward Moore's "Durance" also isn't a story, but an ambiguous prison episode with a cliché in place of a conclusion.

Clifford Simak's "The Ghost of a Model T" isn't much of a story either, though still a pleasantly written metaphor in Simak's best pastoral style. It'd better be presented in a slick magazine.

Gordon Eklund's "Angel of Truth" is an adventure in solipsistic boredom lacking either conflict or conclusion, barring what one might care to read into it. I've never been one for Rorschach-blot sf. That also explains my disenchantment with Kate Wilhelm's "Planet Story." That takes up one of the archetypal sf plots (an alien Eden that evokes reasonless terror in a scouting party). Wilhelm collects the ambiguity prize and little else in this story where (1) the human protagonist is referred to neither as male nor female but has sex with both man and woman, (2) the source of terror is left undiscovered.

In "Encounter With a Carnivore" Joseph Green found himself with an idea, not a story; human/alien lovers now pitted against each other to the death. After the build-up of conflict, Green does nothing but drive it to a mechanical end.

Since EPOCH is advertised as a statement on sf's "state of the art," the reader might assume three quarters of the genre's writers have forgotten how to tell a story. But can they ever write, and they'll prove it til it makes you sick.

"Nightbeat" by Neal Barrett, Jr., consists of prose like "The wakechimes touched me with the sound of cinnamon. I stretched, turned over, and watched the clockroach play time games against the wall. It marked the spidery minutes in fine script and left crystal dungtracks behind. It was half-past blue, and a lemon moon spilled color into the room..." A very slender idea is gorged with pretentious imagery and nearly bursts. Every time I read something like this I think I'd like to give the writer a swift kick in the pants. It harkens back to the golden days of DANGEROUS VISION's "Go, Go, Go, Said the Bird." How do editors let themselves buy such bilge? 28

Speaking of pretentious crap, John Shirley's "uneasy Chrysalids, Our Memories" can be diagnosed as that dread disease, Mainstream Political Statement Disguised As SF. Not only is the background unimaginative, the essence of the story is destroyed by translation into this genre; the stfnal gimmick is really not so unlikely that such a tale couldn't be peddled in the mainstream. Moreover, each writer in EPOCH contributed a postscript. Shirley's confirmed my suspicion that the ones with the most to say afterwards were the ones who said the least in their fiction: his being a strange combination of ignorant attacks on Walt Disney and cutesy sacrilege.

Despite four widely-spaced gems, there are times when one is tempted to trash the book. Only that rare flicker of genuine storytelling, intervening between midnights of pretension and copout keeps one going.

Among them is George R. R. Martin's "...for a single yesterday." The idea of chronine, a drug that illuminates memory to the point of reliving whole events, is masterfully exploited. Though the story's use of first-person protagonist struck me as the wrong choice, the narrator being no more than a talking head without personal history or character, other characterization is pretty fair.

Another peak was Jack Dann's "Timetipping." The notion of ethnic science fiction always sounded absurd to me, but a few more stories of this caliber and I'll be a convert.

And R. A. Lafferty, "For All the Poor Folks at Picketwire," if missing the spark of true wit, is an interesting bit of fictive scholarship.

In the case of Fisher's "Bloodstream" I can only cite de Camp's handbook, which said that if you get your characters out of a disaster don't end the story by putting them back into one. Just don't do it!

Harry Harrison's "Run From the Fire" nearly does it too, but this craftsman knows how close he can get to the brink and not fall over; he proceeds to tell his story without pretension.

So does Ursula LeGuin in "Mazes" (a Clarion product), and Pohl in his cold-blooded "Growing Up In Edge City."

Alexei and Cory Panshin's "Lady Sunshine and a Magoon of Beatus" was the only story in EPOCH I had difficulty making up my mind about. I searched for clues to see whether it was prejudice or judgement that forced my dislike of it. I found that in 47 pages the Panshins suffered too many

lapses to let me believe this symbological hash concealed anything profound. They indulged in prose cliches I'd hoped died in the mainstream. "She turned...to intercept one of the distant animals that Lady Sunshine had seen, which now approached them. Or was it a man? Or a boy? Or was it a creature part human and part something other than human?" They used the word "somehow" to extricate themselves from a moment in the action when the outcome appeared foredoomed. They used a very old hack device to avoid filling in background at one point: "She did many pointless and destructive things that you would not enjoy reading about." (The background there may be unnecessary, but that manner of resolving the situation wasn't successful even in 1854, when it was repeatedly used in Defontenay's STAR.) They revived one of the New Wave's favorite cliches, "But mankind was sick and horizonless. There was not a man alive who did not know that Earth, the source, the wellspring of man, was dead, ruined by man." In asking whether they were heavy philosophers, or bores, once their prose was thrown into the balance, the scale tipped towards the latter.

End of review.

NEW PROZINE!!! A LETTER FROM GALILEO

February 20, 1976

'I would have opened "Dear Richard" or "Dear Alter" but, for the life of me, I can't figure out which one of you opens the mail.'

((I open the mail. Geis sits back and—*aaaAARp*

((Actually, Alter-Ego tries to grab the mail first but I always Take Control and banish him, not always in the nick of time, as you will note.))

'To business. We at FICTION (copy enclosed) are planning a new science fiction magazine (prozine) titled, GALILEO which we hope to debut at the MidAmericon in Kansas City this September.

'We are looking for authors, new & old, and stories (previously unpublished) for GALILEO.

'While FICTION has been entirely edited and produced by volunteers for nearly 4 years, we feel we have been able to publish a highly professional magazine. As you might agree once you read the enclosed.'

((Yes, FICTION is a polished, typeset, newsprint-with-slick-cover format magazine. The fiction is literary and not my cup of Tokay, but I recognize its sincerity and the quality of accompanying illustrations.))

'I am sure you have a good idea of what is entailed in putting out a magazine manned by volunteers—a lot of hard work, but no money. We have some financial backing for GALILEO, but very little. We volunteers fully expect to be working for free the first year at least. Everything goes into the magazine. We conservatively estimate we will sell 4,000 copies of the first issue of GALILEO. 1,000 are on order from a bookchain, 2000 will go to readers of FICTION and the remainder will be sold at the MidAmericon, through ads, and through nearby book & magazine dealers.

'The magazine is on schedule and will arrive Sept. 1st. We need authors. As I said, we are putting everything into the magazine and will be paying between 1¢ and 3¢ a word for 1st N. Amer. serial rights. It's not a great deal, but as good as some of the existing SF prozines. We'll pay better (I promise) as we get bigger. We are, and have been, asking the top SF authors to help us out with stories at these (cheapskate) low rates to: 1. create a new market for their own work and that of others, and 2. to provide another source of reading entertainment for readers and fans.

'Fortunately, SF is one big (happy?) family and we are getting responses. Ray Bradbury has sent us a poem and another piece, Hal Clement is doing a fact article on nuclear reactors, R. A. Lafferty has sent us a story, so have Ron Goulart, Jacqueline Lichtenberg (Star Trek fame), Kevin O'Donnell, etc., and Gordon R. Dickson, Clifford A. Simak have either promised us a story or said they'll keep us in mind.

'Anyway, you get the idea, most seem happy to see us coming down the pike. I had a chance to speak with Jim Baen (he suggested I write you, though I was going to anyway) and Ben Bova. Jim—the saint—said he'll give us a trade ad and put in a letter noting we are on the way & looking for writers. Ben said he can't trade—Conde Nast won't let him—but said he would be happy to refer writers to us.

'Things look good. Virginia Kidd just sent us an 8,000 word story by an Australian writer—Damien Broderick—which is going to be a bombshell (though I hope not a hollow one). He has to be SF's equivalent of James Joyce or Thomas Pynchon, an incredibly complex prose style. A challenge for us, here, and for SF fandom. It will create a stir, maybe even a full blown riot. Who knows?

'I should have noted earlier, the 1¢ to 3¢ payment rate will depend on the standing of the author who submits the story. It's a bit unfair. A story takes as much from a beginner as a pro. But it's the only way we can do it for a while. Besides, I just don't have enough backing to pay everyone 3¢, or even 2¢ a word. It will come, though, in time.'

—Charles C. Ryan
editor
GALILEO
339 Newbury St.
Boston, MA 02115

((I have an idea you'll soon receive large quantities of manuscripts.))

The scientific assumption that the two hemispheres of the brain have specialized jobs—analytical thinking and verbal work in the left, creativity and spacial relations in the right—is crumbling under the pressure of new research. Biologist Eran Zaidel and psychobiologist Roger Sperry have found that the supposedly mute right hemisphere has the vocabulary of a 14-year-old and the shaky syntactical skill of a five-year-old.

"Newsline", PSYCHOLOGY TODAY
Dec. 1975.



AN INTERVIEW WITH ROBERT ANTON WILSON

Conducted by Neal Wilgus

SFR: I know you're co-author of *ILLUMINATUS!*, have written for *GNOSTICA*, *GREEN EGG* and others and were once assistant editor of *PLAYBOY*—could you fill us in on the details of your life and present activities?

WILSON: Well, to begin with, I never ball-ed Sophia Loren on a bearskin rug. I think that's what gives my writing its unforgettable poignancy and haunting sense of cosmic search. I've got about a thousand articles in print, in everything from scholarly journals to tabloids of the sleaziest nature, some poetry here and there, a few short stories.

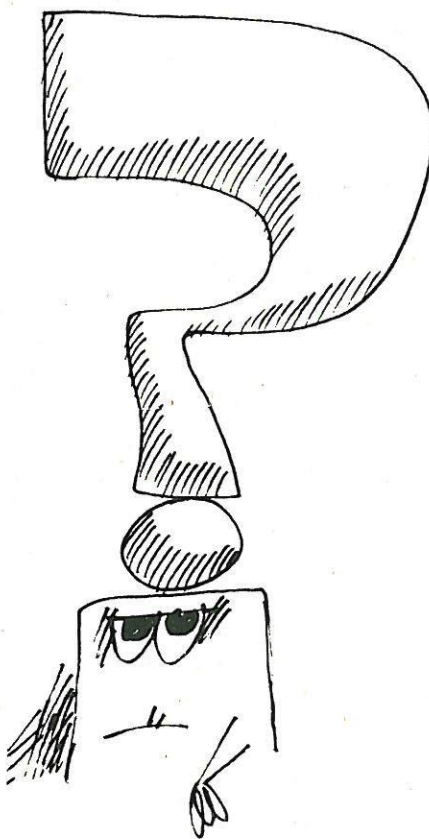
My other books are *SEX AND DRUGS: A JOURNEY BEYOND LIMITS*, *PLAYBOY'S BOOK OF FORBIDDEN WORDS* and *THE BOOK OF THE BREAST*, all non-fiction, and *THE SEX MAGICIANS*, a rather funny porn novel featuring Markoff Chaney from *ILLUMINATUS!*

I was busted for civil rights activities in '62, walked a few yards behind Mailer in the Pentagon protest of '67, got tear-gassed at the Democratic Convention of '68. I've worked as a longshoreman, astrology columnist, reporter, medical orderly, laboratory assistant, engineering aide, encyclopedia salesman and most of the things you find on writers' resumes. And I was an Associate Editor, not an assistant editor, at *PLAYBOY*. The difference is as important as that between a mere Congressman and an anointed Senator or between a zebra and a horse with striped pajamas on.

I have a beautiful red-headed wife, four kids, a dog, and a cat named Conan the Bavarian.

SFR: Robert J. Shea is Senior Editor at *PLAYBOY* and I understand *ILLUMINATUS!* was written in 1970 while you were an editor. Could you tell us something about Shea?

WILSON: *ILLUMINATUS!* was written in 1969-1971, while we were both Associate Editors. Shea had what it takes to stick it out at the Bunny Empire and is now Senior Editor. I quit after five years because I got bored and wanted to do something more amusing. Shea has a beautiful blonde wife, a son, a home in a prosperous suburb and passes as



I REFUSE TO
ADMIT THERE
IS ANY DOUBT

a well-adjusted citizen. I have long suspected that he is actually a time-traveling anthropologist from the 23rd Century doing a report on primitive civilizations. When I try to pump him about that, he becomes very evasive and looks nervous. To the best of my knowledge, he has never ball-ed Sophia Loren on a bearskin rug, either.

SFR: Could you give us some idea of how *ILLUMINATUS!* was written? Who wrote which parts?

WILSON: Most of it was communicated to us telepathically by a canine Intelligence, vast, cool and unsympathetic, from Sirius, the Dog Star. I was aware of being a channel for interstellar sarcasm, but Shea thought he was inventing his part of the transmission. In general, the melodrama is Shea and the satire is me; but some of the satire is definitely him and some of the melodrama is certainly me. "When Atlantis Ruled the Earth" is 99% Shea. The sections about Simon Moon, Robert Putney Drake and Markoff Chaney are 99% me. Everything else is impossible to untangle. The celebrated Blow Job on the beach, for

instance, is almost all Shea, but I think my lyrical additions to the text add to the esthetic beauty and philosophical richness of the sybology and give more existential meaning to George's ultimate ejaculation into Mav's warm, passionate mouth, in a Maileresque sense. Of course, this is only important if you agree with Vonnegut's claim that the function of the modern novel is to describe Blow Jobs exquisitely.

SFR: *ILLUMINATUS!* incorporates much of the Cthulhu Mythos, refers often to H. P. Lovecraft and even includes a short scene in which HPL appears. Is it you or Shea that's the HPL enthusiast?

WILSON: It's me. I went through a period in the early 1960s when I kept having the Lovecraft horrors every time I took peyote. Cthulhu leering at the window. Yog-Sothoth oozing down the chimney. Azathoth invading my neurons with vampiric psychic-horror vibes. It was like a non-stop Creature Features without commercials, every time I gobbled a cacti. A lesser man would have changed his religion, I assure you, but I managed to recapture the Reality Studio and banish them all with violent Cabalistic imprecations. They don't dare show their faces, or lack of faces, in any of my universes anymore.

SFR: Will there be more collaborations with Shea? A sequel to *ILLUMINATUS!*?

WILSON: That depends on our Contact, the Mad Dog from Sirius. Right now, we're working on separate novels. Mine has some of the characters from *ILLUMINATUS!* and much the same psychedelic style. It concerns the aftermath of a sex-change operation and what happens to the amputated penis. To the best of my knowledge, it's the first novel ever written with a penis as the protagonist and I'm hoping for a huge sale, especially in San Francisco.

SFR: The theme of "immanentizing the Eschaton" runs throughout *ILLUMINATUS!* but the phrase is never defined or explained. In the framework of the book this seems to imply that various secret societies are working to bring about the end of the world—is that a valid interpretation?

WILSON: The phrase was coined by a Christian historian, Eric Vogelin, and refers to the Gnostic doctrine that people aren't really as hopeless as Christians think. Eschaton, from the Greek, means the last things, and, in Christian theology, these are Heaven and Hell. Immanentizing the

Eschaton means seeking Heaven within the "immanent" universe, i.e. the only universe we know.

To a thoroughgoing Christian pessimist like Vogelin anybody who tries to be happy or make others happy is dangerously close to Gnostic heresy. I am all for immanentizing the Eschaton in this sense, next Tuesday if possible. Vogelin detects immanentizing tendencies in humanists, liberals, technologists, optimistic philosophies of evolution like Nietzsche's communists, anarchists and most of the post-medieval thought of the Western World, all of which are overtly or covertly aiming at the verboten "heaven on the material plane."

In the novel, we make the point that conservatives are also in danger of immanentizing the Eschaton by continuing a Cold War that can only result in Hell on the material plane—nuclear incineration.

In one sense, ILLUMINATUS! is a reductio ad absurdum of all mammalian politics, Right or Left, by carrying each ideology one logical step further than its exponents care to go. Voltaire used that satirical judo against the Churchmen and I decided it's time to turn it on the Statesmen. The only intelligent way to discuss politics, as Tim Leary says, is on all fours. It all comes down to territorial brawling.

SFR: I understand the Eschaton theme stems from an anti-Gnostic campaign in the NATIONAL REVIEW some time ago. Could you fill us in on the origins of the term?

WILSON: As I say, it was coined by Vogelin. The anti-Gnostic theme was chronic in conservative circles during the early '60s and even got into a TIME editorial once. As an ordained priest of the Gnostic Catholic Church, I find this amusing, since it makes most of the educated classes into unknowing disciples of us Gnostics. As Marx said under similar circumstances, "I once shot an elephant in my pajamas. How he got into my pajamas I'll never know."

SFR: What is your relationship with Timothy Leary?

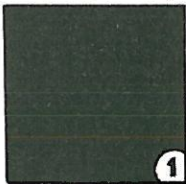
WILSON: Are you sure you're not from GAY TIMES? Dr. Leary and I are just good friends. I mean, really, do you mind, Bess? Honestly! Well, if you must have the truth, I'm playing Zola and Tim is Dreyfuss—or, at least, that's one of my old scripts. I suppose Tim might think he's Johnson and I'm Boswell. Then there's the theory that I'm his C.I.A. "babysitter" and supervised his whole campaign of mind-

rot and betrayal of the New Left. Actually, if you want the facts, which are always funnier and more interesting than the myths, Dr. Leary is the ring-leader and I'm an unindicted co-conspirator in a plot to immanentize the Eschaton by achieving higher intelligence, longevity and extra-terrestrial migration in this generation. In the next generation (for which, due to longevity we'll both still be active) the hope is to achieve immortality and starflight. I told you the truth was more interesting than the myths.

SFR: Why are you suing the Neo-American Church for \$1,000,000? Isn't that just a promotion device to publicize ILLUMINATUS! and the new book you're writing with Leary?

WILSON: The Neo-American Church, who most certainly do not deserve to ball Sophia Loren on or off a bearskin rug, have claim-

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NEXT ISSUE: BIRTH OF
A WHITE DOT! *Todd Klein*

ed that ILLUMINATUS! is actually written by Dr. Leary and that Shea and I are co-conspirators in a legal fraud committed by Tim to evade contractual obligations, whatever that means. (Neither Dr. Leary nor his lawyers nor the Justice Department are aware of any contracts that would prevent Tim from publishing ILLUMINATUS! as his own book, if he had indeed written it.) The Neo-Americans have accused Shea, Dr. Leary and myself of a felony, and they have done so maliciously and untruthfully. In the American legal game, maliciously and untruthfully accusing somebody of a felony is a libel. The persons so damaged in reputation may collect pieces of green paper, blessed by the Federal Reserve and called "money," in proportion to the damage, as estimated by 12 jurors who are hopefully sober at the time. Happily, the two typists who typed the originalms. of ILLUMINATUS! are still at PLAYBOY, many of the editors heard Shea or me read parts of it when it was coming hot out of our typewriters (after business hours, Hef!) and there

are dozens of accessory witnesses. The Neo-Americans have fouled and will have to pay the penalty. It does me no good in publishing circles to have my funniest book attributed to somebody else, or to be accused of a Clifford Irving fraud.

SFR: How serious are you about the rule of fives and the importance of 23?

WILSON: If ILLUMINATUS! doesn't answer that, nothing else will. The documented fact that I have published serious, or at least redantic, articles on Cabala should add to the mystery. The philosophical point of the book is the reader's own answer to the question, "Is the 5-23 relationship a put-on or an important Cabalistic revelation?" Of course, Cabala itself is a complicated joke, but all profound philosophies turn out to be jokes.

SFR: How serious are you about the Illuminati and conspiracies in general?

WILSON: Being serious is not one of my vices. I will venture, however, that the idea that there are no conspiracies has been popularized by historians working for universities and institutes funded by the principle conspirators of our time—the Rockefeller-Morgan banking interests, the Council on Foreign Relations crowd. This is not astonishing or depressing. Conspiracy is standard mammalian politics for reasons to be found in ethology and Von Neumann's and Morgenstern's THEORY OF GAMES AND ECONOMIC BEHAVIOR. Vertebrate competition depends on knowing more than the opposition, monopolizing information along with territory, hoarding signals. Entropy, in a word. Science is based on transmitting the signal accurately, accelerating the process of information transfer. Negentropy. The final war may be between Pavlov's Dog and Schrödinger's Cat.

However, I am profoundly suspicious about all conspiracy theories, including my own, because conspiracy buffs tend to forget the difference between a plausible argument and a real proof. Or between a legal proof, a proof in the behavioral sciences, a proof in physics, a mathematical or logical proof, or a parody of any of the above. My advice to all is Buddha's last words, "Doubt, and find your own light." Or, as Crowley wrote, "I slept with Faith and found her a corpse in the morning. I drank and danced all night with Doubt and found her a virgin in the morning." Doubt suffereth long, but is kind; doubt covereth a multitude of sins; doubt puffeth not itself up into dogma. For now abideth 31

doubt, hope, and charity, these three; and the greatest of these is doubt. With doubt all things are possible. Every other entity in the universe, including Goddess Herself, may be trying to con you. It's all Show Biz. Did you know that Billy Graham is a Bull Dyke in drag?

SFR: Could you tell us something about the authors and ideas that have influenced you? Are you a long-time science-fiction/fantasy fan? A neo-Pagan or occultist?

WILSON: My style derives directly from Ezra Pound, James Joyce, Raymond Chandler, H.L. Menken, William S. Burroughs, Benjamin Tucker and ELEPHANT DOODY COMIX, in approximately that order of importance. Chandler has also influenced my way of telling stories; all my fiction tends to follow the Chandler mythos of the skeptical Knight seeking Truth in a world of false-fronts and manipulated deceptions. (Of course, this is also my biography, or that of any shaman.) The writers who have most influenced my philosophy are Aleister Crowley, Timothy Leary, Alfred Korzybski and Karl R. Popper. Korzybski and Popper (and a few Logical Positivists) are absolutely necessary for epistemological clarity, especially when you get to the growing edge of science, where the hot debates are going on, and even more if you wander into the occult. Sci-fi and fantasy are my favorite forms of fiction; I think the so-called "naturalists" and "social realists" have committed high treason against humanity by selling their gloomy perspective as the "real" reality. A book that lacks the element of heroism is a crime against the young and impressionable, in my opinion. A book full of anger and self-pity is another crime. Needless to say, as a libertarian I don't mean literally that these are crimes to be punished in court. The only final answer to a bad, sad book is to write a good, funny book. (I love debate and hate censorship. Accuracy-of-signal and free flow of information define sanity in my epistemology. I should have included Norbert Weiner among the primary influences on my thinking.)

As for neo-Paganism and the occult: I'm an initiated witch, an ordained minister in four churches (or cults) and have various other "credentials" to impress the gullible. My philosophy remains Transcendental Agnosticism. There are realities and intelligences greater than conditioned normal consciousness recognizes, but it is premature to dogmatize about them at this primitive stage of our evolution. We've hardly begun to crawl off the surface of

the cradle-planet.

The most advanced shamanic techniques—such as Tibetan Tantra or Crowley's system in the West—work by alternating faith and skepticism until you get beyond the ordinary limits of both. With such systems, one learns how arbitrary are the reality-maps that can be coded into laryngeal grunts by hominids or visualized by a mammalian nervous system. We can't even visualize the size of the local galaxy except in special High states. Most people are trapped in one static reality-map imprinted on their neurons when they were naive children, as Dr. Leary keeps reminding us. Alas, most so-called "Adepts" or "Gurus" are similarly trapped in the first post-rapture reality-map imprinted after their initial Illumination, as Leary also realizes. The point of systems like Tan-



tra, Crowleyanity and Leary's Neurologic is to detach from all maps—which gives you the freedom to use any map where it works and drop it where it doesn't work. As Dogen Zenji said, "Time is three eyes and eight elbows."

SFR: Would I be right in saying you probably lean more toward the libertarian form of anarchism than the classical leftist variety?

WILSON: My trajectory is perpendicular to the left-right axis of terrestrial politics. I put some of my deepest idealism into both the Left anarchism of Simon Moon and

the Right anarchism of Hagbard Celine in ILLUMINATUS!, but I am detached from both on another level.

Politics consists of demands, disguised or rationalized by dubious philosophy (ideologies). The disguise is an absurdity and should be removed. Make your demands explicit. My emphasis is on whatever will make extra-terrestrial migration possible in this generation. The bureaucratic State, whether American, Russian or Chinese, has all the clout on this planet for the foreseeable future. The individualist must fulfil his genetic predisposition to be a pioneer, and the only way she can do that today is by moving into space faster than anyone else. I think the maverick Seed is included in the DNA scenario to serve that function in each epoch. I'm leaving Earth for the same reason my ancestors left Europe; freedom is found on the expanding, pioneering perimeter, never inside the centralized State. To quote another Zen koan, "Where is the Tao?" "Move on!"

SFR: You're involved in an organization called the DNA Society which is interested in biological engineering and immortality, the creation and exploitation of higher forms of consciousness. How serious are you about this? How close are we to achieving this on a broad scale?

WILSON: Let me refer the reader to THE PROSPECT OF IMMORTALITY and MAN INTO SUPER-MAN by Ettinger, THE BIOLOGICAL TIME BOMB by Taylor, THE IMMORTALITY FACTOR by Segerberg, TERRA II by Dr. Leary and Wayne Benner, the writings of John Lilly and Buckminster Fuller, and my article "The Future of Sex" in OUI for November 1975.

With that documentation, I assert that the basic longevity breakthrough will occur before 1980. Segal, Bjorstein or Froimovich, among others, may be very close to it already. The basic principles of re-imprinting or meta-programming the nervous system, as discovered by Leary and Lilly, will be accepted and used in daily practice by around 1985. A neurogenetic quantum jump in life-expectancy, intellectual efficiency and emotional equilibrium (or, as Leary calls it, Hedonic Engineering) will be revolutionizing human life before the 21st Century. Some of us will be alive when the Immortality Pill is found between 2050 and 2100.

SFR: Dell's marketing of ILLUMINATUS! as a trilogy rather than a long novel and its hardsell advertising of the books seem designed to make it a "cult" novel like STRANGER IN A STRANGE LAND and DUNE. Do

you think it will succeed?

WILSON: The sane senior execs at Dell had very little faith in such a madcap prank as ILLUMINATUS! for a long time; it took the enthusiasm of five junior editors in succession, each of whom fought for publication, before the Alphas at the top of the herd were persuaded. Then they split it up into 3 volumes (and cut 500 pages of the more spaced-out stuff) because the investment in paper to print it as one volume seemed too great a business risk to them. They only gave it an advertising budget, finally, after it became a success without advertising. As for my private opinion as one of the co-authors of this accursed neo-NECRONOMICON, why, I think it should be promoted as a major historical event, similar to the publication of ULYSSES or the bombing of Hiroshima, and not as a "cult" novel at all. Did you know that Disney was a secret peyote and himson weed cultist and his last words were "Red, white and blue cockroaches dancing in harmony."?

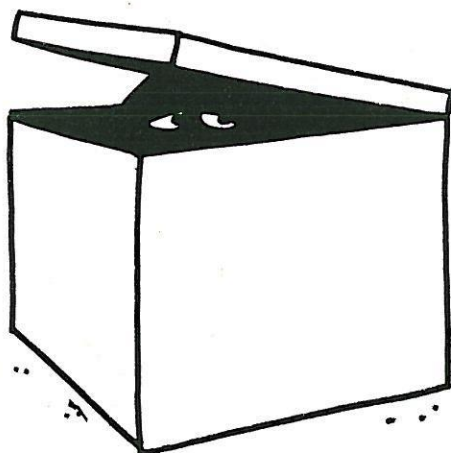
SFR: ILLUMINATUS! has heavy doses of obscenity and sex, requires a pretty broad background knowledge and uses unconventional stream-of-consciousness techniques—do you think these things will be an obstacle for large numbers of readers?

WILSON: There is no such animal as "obscenity," scientifically speaking, until and unless somebody invents an obscenometer which can be pointed at a book and will give you an objective reading of how many smuts or microsmuts of "obscenity" are in it. Meanwhile, "obscenity" is just a word used by people with sex-negative imprints and confuses their private map with the objective territory. Sex seems to be the most festive aspect of mammalian life and should be enjoyed and celebrated to the full.

I started the "Linda Lovelace for President" campaign two years ago, by having a rubber stamp made with that slogan and using it on my envelopes. (I correspond extensively with editors, writers, witches, scientists and other culture-makers.) To my delight, the campaign has already resulted in a movie with that title, LINDA LOVELACE FOR PRESIDENT, and I hope the idea will continue to snowball and become a mammoth write-in vote next November, which would be a perfect Discordian action to commemorate the first anniversary of ILLUMINATUS! In a sane society, cock-sucking would be esthetically judged in terms similar to novel-writing, grand opera, swords-

manship, etc. and Linda would be an honored artist. I mean, that gal can really swallow Peter. But I digress.

I don't think the reader needs to be particularly erudite to appreciate most of the humor in ILLUMINATUS! I've received lots of fan letters from teen-agers, and nobody is particularly erudite at that age (although I thought I was). There are lots of "in" jokes that will only be appreciated by mathematicians, or physicists, or Joyce scholars, or acid-heads, or Cabalists or other special interest groups, but that's just icing on the cake. Some traps are deliberate, of course; as Josiah Warren said, "It is dangerous to understand new things too quickly." I have tried to shield my readers from that danger. Besides, a book should last and not get worn-out. I've been reading FINNEGANS WAKE for 27 years now and I still find loads of new jokes and subtleties every time I get into it.



33

I hope ILLUMINATUS! might last that way for its real aficionados. There's lots of fun, for instance, in store for anybody who starts relating the contents of the ten chapters to the Sephiroth on the Cabalistic Tree of Life after which the chapters are named.

Finally, there is virtually no stream-of-consciousness in ILLUMINATUS! The narrative technique is based on D.W. Griffith's INTOLERANCE, which I think is the greatest movie ever made. Of course, to get Schrödinger's Cat and the new physics in, I had to introduce parallel universes alongside of or on top of the Griffith time-montage. But, as McLuhan pointed out, the newspaper uses similar collage or mosaic effect every day. Only static, archaic notions about what a book "should be" prevent people from just going along with the

ride when similar cinematic-journalistic matrices are applied to the novel. Hitchcock uses the Griffith cross-cut continually, for tease-effect and suspense. People only object when the tease reaches the intensity of a Zen riddle and makes them genuinely uncomfortable about their current reality-map. Well, ILLUMINATUS! reflects post-LSD consciousness, the new (post-Bell's Theorem) physics, the occult revival, etc. and therefore is an utter failure, in its ambitions, if it doesn't make people uncomfortable with static reality-maps. There may be red, white and blue cockroaches in the universe next door.

SFR: Who really did kill JFK?

WILSON: In the universe created by Earl Warren, Lee Harvey Oswald did it, acting alone. In the universe created by Mark Lane, it was done by a cabal of right-wing millionaires and former CIA agents. In my current universe, that's just one of the many mysteries remaining to be solved. I might add—"without fear of contradiction," as Hitler used to say—that, whereas current IQ tests only measure one dimension of intelligence, future psychology will measure n-dimensional intelligence, according to how many universes a person can occupy simultaneously.

SFR: Is it true that your initials, RAW, are an Illuminati joke revealing you are really Ra, the Egyptian Sun God?

WILSON: No. Actually, I'm Kharis the Mummy, and who took my tanka leaves?

SFR: What did happen to Joe Malik's dogs in ILLUMINATUS!?

WILSON: I'm surprised that a person of your intelligence hasn't seen through that little koan. Anybody trained in classic detective-story thinking can solve that mystery quite quickly, by simply reviewing the evidence in an orderly fashion and then making the logical deductions. Actually, the first step is to ask, did anybody ever see the dogs, or were they only inferred? If the answer doesn't appear from sifting the data through that question, re-read page 33 of Volume III very slowly. I might add that other "loose ends" complained of by certain distinguished critics (nameless assholes, actually) are, like the disappearing dogs, easily penetrated by a reader of lively and skeptical intelligence. But where are my tanka leaves?

SFR: Here's a hard one. If George Dorn

was a student at Columbia at the time of the 1968 student strike, how could he possibly be as young as 23 in the novel, which is obviously set in the late 1970s?

WILSON: The novel is set in a very specific year of the 1970s, which can also be deduced from the dialogue on pages 118 of Volume II. If you don't have any tanka leaves, do you have some Columbian Gold?

SFR: I realize the Squirrel is not inferior to most of the characters in ILLUMINATUS!, but I'm still wondering what purpose he served. Did he serve any?

WILSON: One of the first things you learn in this business is that you just follow orders and you don't ask questions. They told me we needed a squirrel, and I put the squirrel in. Once you start asking why, you lose your effectiveness immediately and then you're no good to anybody, not even yourself. It's your balls in a sling then, friend. I shit you not. "Termination with maximum prejudice"—as the boys around Alexandria and at CFR headquarters in New York. The overlords, on Sirius, don't like it when any of us in Earth Control get out of line, believe me.

Actually, I think it has something to do with giving a DNA-eye view of history. It makes more sense in the original, before 500 pages were sent down the Memory Hole by the Reality Monitors at Dell, but even in the truncated published version, we have representatives of all the major races, nations and tribes of WoMankind; the gorillas and dolphins, representing Higher Intelligence; the squirrel, representing mammal-kind at even more primitive level than the human characters; FUCKUP representing non-biological intelligence; Leviathan, standing in for unicellular life Writ Large, as it were; the American eagle, for the domination of the air; the squinks (Swift-Kick Inc.), as designers of the local galaxy; etc. Together with the linear jumps across time-zones and the non-linear warps of space-time itself, this should create a perspective transcending normal human chauvinism, oxygen chauvinism, Type G star chauvinism, and other parochialities imposed on "realistic" novels by the taboo against asking serious philosophical questions in so-called "serious" fiction. In other words, the squirrel and the other infra- and sub- and supra- and trans- human characters are there to dramatize Ouspensky's injunction "Think in other categories."

modern super-rich so-called Bilderbergers but there was no mention of this idea in ILLUMINATUS! How come?

WILSON: That idea is in ILLUMINATUS! several times, but the word "Bilderbergers" somehow didn't get included. Probably a thought-ray from Bilderberger Hq. managed to knock out that particular synaptic connection in our brains. The Sphere of Chaos which controls the Elders of Zion, the Rothschild banks, the Federal Reserve, etc., in the diagram on p. 97 of Vol. I, is a portrait of the "Bilderberger" wing of the Conspiracy without the "Bilderberger" label. Curiously, the single most intelligent and least nutty of all the conspiracy books I've read (and I've literally read thousands by now) is THE NAKED CAPITALIST, by W. C. Skousen. Skousen describes the Rothschild-Rockefeller-CFR network in brilliant detail, but he doesn't use the word "Illuminati" and only mentions the "Bilderberger" conferences in passing. I presume that these omissions must have some sinister meaning. Quite possibly, Skousen, along with Shea and me, is influenced by psionic Ascended Masters who prevent us from seeing, or revealing, too much.

SFR: What is your reaction to the reviews of ILLUMINATUS!?

WILSON: They've all been most kind and gratifying, but I get the distinct feeling that none of them have really understood the book. Of course, I enjoy being told how witty and imaginative we were, but thus far only Dr. Leary and an occult journal called GREEN EGG have noticed that the satire is only the surface. Something else is going on under and above and alongside of the joking. Like Bernard Shaw, I have to look askance at my own skill in disarming my audience by making them laugh, and I almost wish I had provided a Shavian preface warning everybody that the final joke only becomes obvious to those who decipher the appendices called "The Tactics of Magick" and "Operation Mindfuck." Or, as Shaw said, the funniest part of this comedy is that I really am a menace. Heh-heh-heh. (Murky laugh.)



SFR: Thank you, Mr. Wilson.

ILLUMINATUS!

Part I: The Eye in the Pyramid
Dell 4688, \$1.50

Part II: The Golden Apple
Dell 4691, \$1.50

Part III: Leviathan
Dell 4742, \$1.50

THE NAKED COLLECTIVIST/STATIST

'We used to have a safe, humane and fair way of getting...disturbed...persons into treatment.

'There has come to be a pervasive monomania in certain circles that a person has the right to do with his body as he feels fit, including suicide. How do such persons come to the conclusion that they have this right, that they are in fact the owners of their bodies? They had nothing to do with producing their body, either its generation or its characteristics.

'They didn't buy it. They fail to recognize that they have but squatter's rights; they are stewards of their body for the benefit of the body politic.

'Failure to take care of it places a greater burden on others. At the most mundane level such persons must often be supported by Welfare and Social Security when through treatment they could be contributing to the common welfare. There are few fantasies so omnipotent as that which maintains that one has the right to murder one's own body.'

—Dr. Paul H. Blachly,
Psychiatrist, UNIV. of OREGON
OREGONIAN "Forum", March 3, 1976

LETTER FROM FORRY ACKERMAN

2 Apr 76

'I'm seeking info leading to Artist Paul's widow or daughter, Victor Rousseau's daughter, John/Dorothy deCourcy, Jack Lewis, L. Taylor Hanson, Hendrik Dahl Juve, Edna Tichenor, Rog Phillips' widow, SPMeek, JRAYco, Mari Wolf, Mindret Lord, Jack Lewis, and Winona McClintock.

'Forry Ackerman
2495 Glendower Av.,
Hollywood, CA 90027.'

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

—Richard Cornuelle

SFR: Thinkers of the John Birch persuasion have linked the Illuminati to the

PETER MANDLER

--A Reply to Barry Malzberg

3 March 1976

'I appreciate the opportunity to reply to Barry Malzberg's criticism of my review in SFR 15, though I must admit that I am unsure as to exactly what I am supposed to reply. He refers to the review of BEST SCIENCE FICTION OF THE YEAR #4, Edited by Terry Carr, as "incompetent" and "inept" without deigning to suggest why he found it so. What he does specify is his opinion that I have neither read the stories involved nor understood them. I find this slightly insulting and totally unappreciative of the difficulties in reviewing anthologies.

'The problem is that, unless one confines oneself to two or three particular items, detailed investigation of each story will yield a review nearly as long as the subject itself. Since a) I found almost the entire volume interesting and well-written, making it impossible to select one or two samples, and b) your journal makes no pretensions to literary criticism but prefers "recommendations" (or condemnations), I chose to summarize the book briefly and recommend it. You have repeatedly stated that the purpose of SFR is to cut down the unmanageable bulk of published sf and act as a guideline to what could be read and what could be safely ignored—one reviewer's opinion. On that basis, I rushed through a description of the book and tried to briefly explain its merit. The sole story I panned—and only mildly, since better men than I have praised it—received only slightly lengthier treatment in the "twenty inept words" Malzberg deplores.

'Not having a copy of the review or of the story in front of me, let me briefly repeat my objections to "Tempu-nauts." The supporting characters lacked a third dimension, parroted stereotypical dialogue which read more like a script laid before them, and, as stereotypes, failed to come across as satire. The leading characters failed to drag me into their predicament, thus lacked "involvement" as well as character; they seemed puppets in a story out of control. The predicament itself, an old one without much sign of revitalization, was described drably, without color, and was denied satisfying resolution or even irresolution (this is elaboration on the few comments I made in the review).

Apart from that...I can see why some people might "like" the story.

'I wrote the review to add a dissenting voice to the multitudes who nominated the story for awards. If Malzberg "liked" the story, that's his business. I "disliked" it. What does this prove? As Ted White says, I will not argue matters of taste.'

((Let me intrude a moment. By and large, it seems to me that characterization can be demonstrated to be either good or bad or indifferent, and a story can also be shown to be in or out of control. These are not matters of personal taste and only partly of interpretation.))

'The pitfall of any review is that



it does not necessarily reflect a majority opinion. (Incidentally, I make no pretensions to literary criticism myself; apparently Malzberg does. In that case we are aiming at different ends and are unlikely to agree on means.)

'Anyway, I don't think the review was an "insult" to Phil Dick, who could hardly be termed a "struggling professional" and whose career will in no way be damaged by my comments, however ineptly phrased.

+

'To move onto a more general plane—I read SFR largely for the reviews, which perform a valuable service. While I violently disagree with George Warren's (gorgeously expressed) judgements on THE COMPUTER CONNECTION, who else

will tell me that BLAKE'S PROGRESS is the only one of the last zillion Laser books worth reading and make me believe it? Or that of the umpteen illustrated histories, most are worthless? (To me, they are just attractive coffee-table books.) And even Barry Malzberg can pluck my heartstrings with a piece of literary criticism (on ALTERNATE WORLDS) that simultaneously convinces and elicits sympathy. This was an unconscionably good issue.

'My only objection to your editorial policy is to an attitude, practically an assumption, shared by Richard Lupoff when he says that the essential spirit of sf was or is optimism. Even assuming that this was the case for the Gernsback era, perhaps is the case in your minds, why insist that it be the case now? I share your preference for upbeat endings, but that is no reason to deny the validity of the downbeat science fiction story. It is certainly no excuse for out-of-hand condemnation. Of course, such condemnations merely reflect your attitude; what bothers me is the hint of arrogance in suggestions that writers should not write that way and readers should not enjoy that writing. That I-can-only-call-it-paranoia is reflected in "Then I read the final page and understood. The authors Do It to the readers." This reader was glad they Did It—"it" occasionally comes as a relief.'

((Perhaps tragedy has to be better written than straight commercial happy-ending formula fiction.

((I, too, enjoy a variety of sf. Yet I do believe that sf is inherently an optimistic genre, if only because it deals with our future; it assumes there is a future. The current literary tide is to paint the future dark, but I think that is a rebellion against the happy-ending formulas of commercial fiction, an aspect of the Literary influence, and the inherent pessimism of young writers. (Isn't it curious that young writers usually go in for doom and despair fiction, while older writers become more serene and optimistic? You'd think it would be the other way around.)

((As to tragedy...or "tragedy"... let me quote a paragraph from a recent letter from George Warren:

"Your comments in SFR 16 on page 23, middle column, 2nd and 3rd grafs in particular were right on the button...except that it is not tragedy you are talking about. If the piece ends on a total downer it is not tragedy, it is just a downer. A

downer ending avoids katharsis, whose literally purgative effect (like, as I say, the effect of REM-sleep dreams) is to get the downer out of your system by resolving it. Not necessarily by happy endings, perhaps: HAMLET ends with Prince Hamlet dead...but then of course he's resolved all his problems on the way to death, and (perhaps equally important to him) has left behind a single just man to tell his story to succeeding generations and cleanse the court of the curse it has borne. The effect of this is far from a downer (and if you've seen any productions of the play which end in dejection they were simply done wrong). The first time I saw it done right I got a good cry out of it (as Mr. W. S. obviously wished me to) and went home feeling liberated and healthy."

((In tragedy death must be justified. the reader or viewer should be made to feel Okay—that's worth it! A ticklish, delicate effect to achieve, I think.))

'Finally, to Michael Coney, whose essay on prejudice in sf was eloquent and superficially well-reasoned, although burdened with a misevaluation. Admittedly prejudice, stereotypes, even genocide all have their place in fiction as much as downbeat plotting, ideally. What Joanna Russ et al. are trying to get across is that at this point, at a delicate moment in intersexual relationships, to ostensibly support sexism in fiction is to confirm a reader's sexism in fact, whether consciously or not. It is a disservice to the movement and it is a disservice to society to lend aid and comfort to the enemy. If Coney considers himself "liberated" he should encourage liberation, or at least cease from discouraging it. I would similarly object to blatantly anti-semitic fiction at the height of the Second World War and I hope that Coney would as well. Fiction has a strange effect on those of wavering conviction.'

((You will have to excuse me if I am not too coherent at the moment—this being evening and I have just had a half glass of 1% Tokay with my meal—but a call to a writer to inhibit himself, to halter his talents, to self-censorship in the name (for Christ's sake!) of the public interest—sends me to the armory for to take up the lance and the sword and the buckler and the shield....

((Your comment that 'Fiction has a

strange effect on those of wavering conviction' reeks of elitism. You, of course, are not subject to this strange effect. Only others—of weaker mentality. Your residence in Oxford, sir, has gone to your head. Listen, if fiction calling for the consumption of the salted eyeballs of female black Jewish homosexual children were published and sold, I would support it. The people are sovereign, not their elected servants (despite what Nixon and other power-hungry statist and collectivists say), and the freedom of the people individually is the greatest good and must have the highest priority.

((Government is only tolerable when it functions to keep the peace and maintain a stable currency. When it exceeds those two mandates (or abandons them!) it must be cut down and put back in its place.

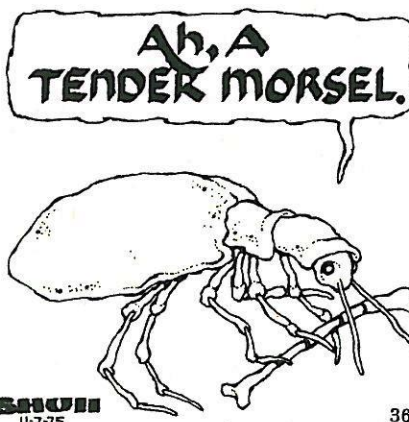
((Government (politicians) seeks always to grow and to seduce its citizens. The citizenry which allows itself to be seduced soon finds itself enslaved to its seducer. ("For the love of God, sir, another food stamp!")

((See what a bit of wine does to my brain, Peter? Go, and sin no more. Contemplate the British unions which fiddle while their economy burns. Aye, it's something for nothing, lads, and the devil take the consequences.))

'One additional note—a few issues back I think you mentioned that AMAZING and FANTASTIC had lost their British distributor, and my experience seems to confirm that. Yet today I noticed two copies of the February FANTASTIC on a local newsstand. Could it be that Ultimate is on its way back up?'

'SF is a ghetto? Writing itself is a ghetto. Come to think of it; life is a ghetto!'

—Simon R. Green



ADVANCE AND BE RECOGNISED

MARUNE: ALASTOR 933 by Jack Vance
Ballantine 24518, \$1.50
SHOWBOAT WORLD by Jack Vance
Pyramid V3698, \$1.25
THE GRAY PRINCE by Jack Vance
Avon 26799, \$1.25

Reviewed by Lynne Holdom

Jack Vance is a great favorite of mine. I suspect that he could make the telephone listings amusing to read. In any case one doesn't read a Vance novel for the plot alone but for the wildly baroque backgrounds and the strangely exotic cultures he creates. In contrast his plots are often quite mundane.

In 1975 Jack Vance wrote three novels which show him in three different moods—romantic, humorous, relevant. However even in these common moods, Vance is like no one else.

MARUNE: ALASTOR stems from a Romantic tradition typified by THE MAN IN THE IRON MASK and THE PRISONER OF ZENDA. It is the tale of an amnesiac who must learn who he is, where he comes from, and why his memory was erased. He finally learns that he is Efraim, a Rhune of Marune and heir to a Kaiarkdom. He returns to overcome all obstacles—he gets the Kaiarkdom, the fair maiden and his revenge. The only thing missing is the "and they lived happily ever after." The Rhune culture is certainly as bizarre as one as Vance has ever created and the only fault of the novel is that it doesn't end so much as stop.

SHOWBOAT WORLD, on the other hand, is strongly reminiscent of HUCKLEBERRY FINN in its timeless riverine atmosphere of BIG PLANET. Certainly Apollon Zamp and Garth Ashgale have got to be reincarnations of Huck's friends the Duke and the Dauphin.

Here the plot is very simple—both Zamp and Ashgale want to win the right to compete in the Grand Festival at Mormune: both lose their riverboats under suspicious circumstances. Finally Zamp gets the backing of another showman on the condition that he perform only classics which Zamp knows don't sell; but he finally agrees to show MACBETH after making a few "small changes" that would have old Will whirling in his grave back on old Earth. Then there is the Mysterious Damsel in Distress who is constantly frustrating Zamp's attempts to be a Dirty Old Man.

All in all the book is great fun to read as the showmen cope with the crazy

cultures at each stop along the river—all the misfits on Earth migrated to the Big Planet—and even the Grand Festival is not quite what it appears to be on the surface

With THE GRAY PRINCE we enter a situation that at first glance seems to be evocative of an Africa colony where white men have settled. The planet Koryphon has been occupied and developed by Outker Land Barons for two hundred years. The Uldras regard the Outkers as usurpers even though their physical comfort and standard of living have improved as a result of this settlement. The leader of the Uldras, Jorjol, is the gray prince of the title and was a homeless, abandoned waif raised by a Land Baron family. Still he is trying to get the Mull to declare that the Land Barons occupy their land illegally and wishes to have Schaine Madduc, his foster sister, become his wife. Unfortunately for Jorjol the situation is much more complicated than he realizes (everything always is in a Vance novel) and one Outker Land Baron, Gerd Jamasz, is quite capable of protecting his own interests and winning the heroine's hand. He also seems to be the only living Koryphonite with a sense of irony. It is a tribute to Vance that the ending is not quite what you expect.

All in all Vance has had a good year. Without his works I would have found it a quite barren one. I envy those who have yet to discover his writing.

LETTER FROM FRED ROUX

25 February 1976

"Noise Level" by John Brunner (SFR #16) was perhaps of interest to other writers of SF who have had their own battles with publishers and agents, but speaking as a fan/teacher of SF I would much rather see Brunner devote some time to discussing his own work. It might please John to know that he rates very highly with college students in SF courses. In fact, he is respected as much or more than Niven, Le Guin, Clarke, Heinlein, Herbert, Zelazny and Aldiss. Getting college students to read anything these days is a chore (for some reason they prefer drinking beer and getting laid), therefore it is especially gratifying to watch them turn on to STAND ON ZANZIBAR and THE SHEEP LOOK UP. His careful interweaving of all plot elements, major and minor, as well as his innovative structural and narrative techniques stimulate a great deal of discussion. Keep it coming, John.

'Also, I couldn't agree more with Lynne Holdom's list of SF's worst of 1975. However, I feel that Delany's DHALGREN deserves a spot all by itself. Never has a novel been a greater disappointment—pure, unadulterated shit—and only \$1.95 at that. Fred Pohl should be forced to do public penance for allowing his name to be associated with such dreck. Since my classes account for the sales of between 2500-2800 SF books a year, I feel I have a right to bitch when I've been conned.'

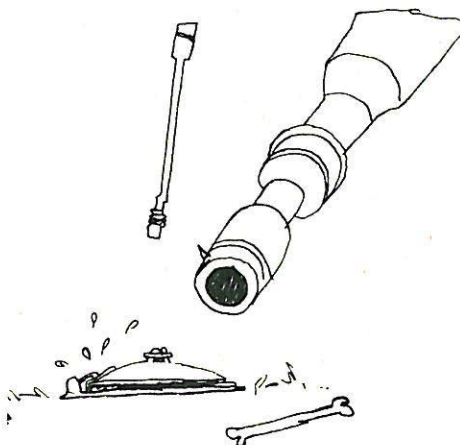
LETTER FROM DARRELL SCHWEITZER

Feb. 20, 1976

'The wonders of SFR 16 are manifold. Your prozine notes are very brave or very reckless or something because in talking about the Bishop and Martin/Waldrop efforts you freely admit something which many (most?) readers would consider a lapse of critical taste. Thanks. Now we understand each other. I'll keep it in mind when I read your reviews in the future.

'What I mean is your saying you'd rather have a happy ending, be skillfully lied to, than have a logical, truthful "downer" of a finish. Yeah, I've always felt that if nothing means anything, if there ain't no God, and there's no purpose for anything we do, then truth isn't always the answer. If painful knowledge accomplishes nothing, then maybe it's better to go through life, and especially to die in some way deluded. Without Purpose, the only thing we want is comfort, right?'

((My attitude is partly personal and partly professional, partly Writer and partly Reader.



"I READ WHAT YOU SAID, GEIS."

((I've felt, since my teens, that God is an emotional/social necessity for Man (whether in the form of a traditional God or in the slightly disguised form of Leader and/or State), that Justice is a chimera, that Morality and Laws are absolute necessities to keep us halfway tamed (and protect them as has from those as ain't), and that death is the end. (However, there is deep down a tiny hope that I'll be pleasantly surprised after my own death.)

((However, we're very few of us capable of conducting our lives on the basis of unflinching Reality. We have to pretend in Justice and Retribution and the work ethic and that there is Meaning to life. It's probably built into us; our ego demands these aspects of life.

((I see myself and other people as living what is essentially a schizoid existence: we know life is a shuck, a farce and a no-win situation. Yet we seem inherently, instinctively, to act as if these truths aren't true. We live lies...and are happy with them, basically. Is a puzzlement. From this dichotomy springs our varied religions, philosophies, cultures....

((As for me, I am a mass of conflicting needs and drives...as we all are, as the basic schizophrenia surfaces in a dozen ways.

((I veer toward the hedonistic lifestyle, I switch to Work... I seek a balance, a combination of work and leisure that satisfies, and as time passes, as I grow older, my perspective subtly changes. Talent and ego make demands on me, the costs of existence make demands... and my body (aches, pains, malfunctions) tells me of my coming Doom.

((As a Reader (hedonist) I want and like certain fictions in fiction. As a Writer I understand the needs of writers and talent and ego...

((Well, back to your letter.))

'But when you apply this to literature—maybe because literature is a made up thing, removed from our lives by the printed page and the will to read or close the book when we want—a lot of people (me for instance) are dissatisfied with easy, comforting lies like happily endings that don't belong.'

((If a happy ending doesn't belong, it's because the author isn't good enough or it simply doesn't fit. There are satisfying tragedies and "downer" stories, but I suspect they require a very high order of writing talent and skill. But, again, the ability to make a "happy ending" appear convincing and

inevitable is actually rare. So...))

'For instance, as I write somebody downstairs is watching EASY RIDER, which I saw once & don't care to see again. Earlier this evening I watched WHO'S AFRAID OF VIRGINIA WOOLF? for the second time (having also read the play). The difference between these two is, I think, truth. The active mind demands truth in literature (where it is safe?) which is why I prefer WOOLF to RIDER any day, putting aside for the moment the fact that Richard Burton is an actor and Dennis Hopper a mumbling amateur, or that WOOLF soars above the other film in such areas as direction, script, pacing, wit, etc., etc. My big objection is that EASY RIDER, like the science fiction story with the cheap happy ending, merely reaffirms the audience's cherished beliefs, tells them that yes, they're right, and everybody else in the big cruel world is wrong. It doesn't make them question the very foundations of their beliefs. No, it throws up more illusion and lulls the audience so they'll stop questioning. The story which assumes rather than examines, which comes to a nice ending without a good reason for optimism, is inherently dishonest.'

((Isn't it simply badly written on all levels? Are you saying that ANY story with a happy ending (even with lotsa truth and examination buried in it along the way) is inherently dishonest?))

'The Pournelle "interview" is very, very good, far better than mine. I used quotes there, because this thing really isn't an interview at all, but a series of short essays written to order around your questions. ... It's quite different from one of my interviews in which the author talks off the top of his head without any preparation (often without more notice than a meeting in a hotel corridor and a "Hey Mr. X, wanna do an interview?") So hats off to Jerry Pournelle who writes fascinating short essays.

'I'm beginning to believe on the basis of interviewing some 20 writers, and talking to a lot more, that there are two kinds of writers, conscious ones and unconscious ones. (I got the terminology from Gordie Dickson.) The guy who is able to talk about everything ahead of time & who benefits from bouncing ideas off others (Dickson describes how the Chiloe Cycle formed by him talking for a couple hours to Richard McKenna) is a conscious writer. He is doing

his writing as a deliberate process, and he is the one who uses outlines, diagrams, plot synopses, and all that. I didn't think to ask deCamp about this (that being my second interview) but from the SF HANDBOOK I'd say he's a conscious writer.

'To make a very rough generalisation, in our field at least, the conscious writers are the ones who tend toward "idea" stories, hard science & the like, the ones who read an article in a scientific magazine & right away make a story out of it.

'The unconscious writer is the opposite. His stories come more from deep inside him, and are not deliberately planned, although they may be carefully worked out mentally before being put on paper. I've sold stories to unquestionably professional buyers (VOID, Edelstein, ANDROMEDA) so I can throw myself into this. I'm an unconscious writer. Absolutely, utterly. I have great difficulty writing genuine science fiction because altho I can come up with the ideas, they don't link with my subconscious & form stories. Only time I ever did it successfully (sold the result, that is) I deliberately treated all the science as magic, & was writing about such things as time & the desire to transcend death. Anyway, much of this is probably my inexperience, but it seems that on the whole unconscious writers have less control over what they write. They make terrible hacks. They may not be any good, but they lack the ability to grind out fiction like yardgoods. It must have some inner, personal attraction or it doesn't come at all.

'From my interviews, I've found that (again generalising) most SF writers are conscious writers. The unconscious writers cluster at the "literary" end of the spectrum, and they also tend to be younger. I've never found somebody whose writing methods match my own, but George R. R. Martin (see interview) comes very close. The only difference between us is procedural. I do drafts, rather than stopping to correct a sentence on the spot.

'I would also guess that many writers shift from the unconscious category into the conscious as they get older. I can find only one over-fifty unconscious writer, & I never interviewed him: Lord Dunsany.

((What about R. A. Lafferty?))

'I'm taking my info from his memoirs,

but it seems that all his life Dunsany wrote everything in a white heat of inspiration (or in the case of longer works, chapter by chapter, one per sitting) & never revised a word (his command of form must have been amazing). He made no notes or outlines, or at least doesn't mention them, and seems to have written this way all his life. His last book was published in 1954, when he was 76.'

((I'm apparently mostly a conscious writer—with notes and outlines subject to inspirational change during the actual writing.))

PRETENSIONS, SPACE OPERA, AND NON-FUNCTIONAL WORD PATTERNS

NEW WORLDS #6, edited by Charles Platt & Hilary Bailey. Avon/Equinox, 1975, 233 pp. \$2.95.

Reviewed by Darrell Schweitzer

NEW WORLDS has probably gone through more incarnations than any other SF magazine. It was founded just after World War II by SF fans turned publisher, and for three widely spaced issues it was a conventional science fiction pulp, although somewhat less garish than its American counterparts since the Bug Eyed Monster and Brass Brassiere tradition never caught on in England.

By 1949 the magazine was digest sized and on a more steady footing. Throughout the fifties and into the sixties it was basically very good second rate, a notch below the leaders in the field. It served to develop many writers who later made it very big, such as J.G. Ballard, John Brunner, Brian Aldiss, and Michael Moorcock.

In 1964 it became a monthly paperback book, a very interesting experiment in the area of getting SF magazines off the newsstand and into the paperback store. This lasted for three years, and the contents got livelier. This was the period of Tom Disch's "Squirrel Cage", Zelazny's "Keys to December", Moorcock's "Behold the Man" (short version), and the last of Ballard's science fiction. In fandom people were just beginning to make noises about something called a "new wave."

Then in 1967, with the aid of an Arts Council grant, the magazine became a very impressive looking slick, and the fiction was the best ever, including Disch's CAMP CONCENTRATION, the stories

from Aldiss's BAREFOOT IN THE HEAD, an excerpt from Brunner's STAND ON ZANZIBAR and, on a somewhat lower level, Spinrad's BUG JACK BARRON. NEW WORLDS was, I think, in every way, the best science fiction magazine ever published between the fall of 1967 and the spring of 1968, for the space of about six issues.

Then things started to go downhill very fast.

The most common mistake of the more shrill propagandists on both sides of the "new wave" argument was the assumption that there was a co-ordinated movement afoot rather than just a lot of people going off in individual directions.

Harlan Ellison's New Thing was never Michael Moorcock's New Thing. Ellison was always calling for gut-level emotion and more human involvement in science fiction, while Moorcock, if the fiction in NEW WORLDS was any indication, wanted increasingly less.

The NEW WORLDS writers stripped away all the basics from their work, things like characterization, plot, themes, and idea. In the end the magazine was printing not fiction at all but blocks of prose devoid of any humanity, completely cold and lacking any intersection with human experience. They could have just as well been written by computers, and at least one of them was. (A piece of computer writing, "by" J.G. Ballard, was printed as "fiction" in issue #187, Feb. '69.) These items did not seem to be short stories, poems, essays, or any other form of verbal communication. For want of a better term I have dubbed such creations "non-functional word patterns" and I would cite as examples of these the "condensed novels" of J.G. Ballard and most of the output of James Sallis.

Needless to say the readership for this kind of thing is very limited, and NEW WORLDS' circulation dropped to almost nothing.

Right before the very end there was a shift back in the other direction, toward fiction, and even toward science fiction. There was an excerpt from M. John Harrison's THE COMMITTED MEN in the last generally circulated issue.

One more, sent only to subscribers, was a "good taste issue", deliberately neo-Victorian, with a piece of sentimental goop by Disch as feature fiction. It was a good joke.

After a brief hiatus in the great publishing house in the sky, the magazine was revived as a paperback again, first a quarterly, then an annual. This present volume is the most recent of these to be published in the U.S. and it is the equivalent of #7 in the Sphere Books/Corgi series. Its contents strike me as remnants of the earlier phases of the magazine's development. About half the entries are not science fiction and read like leftovers from the stint as a "little" literary magazine. Others vaguely resemble the "new wave" stuff.

Certainly the fiction is more readable. There was only one piece, "The Jewel Thief" by Ronald Anthony Cross, which did not allow itself to be read (and the problem was boredom, not obscurity), although quite a few did not allow themselves to be remembered. The ravages of the non-functional word pattern can still be felt, and many of the "stories" are no more than drab descriptions of domestic things, and lacking any appeal to the emotions or the intellect, the reader forgets them within a few minutes after reading.

Jean Charlotte's "Red Sky at Night" is about a girl who kills and dismembers her father, and it's very antiseptic, populated by stick figures who feel no pain, terror, hatred, or other emotions which would certainly be present in a similar situation among human beings.

Along similar lines in James Sallis' "The Insect Men of Boston." Sallis is an odd writer because while others have occasionally slipped non-sf into sf publications, he's the only one to make a career of it. Most of the things he produces fall into the non-functional word pattern category. He has either discarded all the advances made in narrative technique since Neolithic times, or else he never knew about them. "Insect Men," however, represents something of an improvement. It is one of those domestic descriptions I mentioned earlier. Sallis is slowly beginning to realize that sentences can be laid in a meaningful order to form paragraphs, and the paragraphs in sequence can be used to convey thought. He has yet to do anything with his new tools, but someday he might stumble into the realm of the short story, and perhaps even into science fiction. But I'm not holding my breath over it. He shows remarkably little promise.

There is some science fiction in the book, and Charles Platt's introduction

makes preposterous claims for it. He would have us believe that B. J. Bayley "never fails to produce fresh concepts" and has "inventiveness unsurpassed by any other author writing science fiction today." None of this is verified by Bayley's "Maladjustment" this issue, which presents, as if it were a brand new idea, the concept of a man adapted by aliens to their own environment. He does nothing with it, save have his character explain his situation in a series of questions and answers. The piece is as crude as anything published by Gernsback, and it wouldn't have been out of place as VERTEX filler or an amateur effort in a fanzine, but unsurpassed in inventiveness or anything else it must certainly be not.

I wonder—could it be that NEW WORLDS has regressed to the level of the pre-John Campbell pulps? There are certainly signs of it, even if Platt does berate other SF for being rooted in the 1950's.

Eleanor Arnason's "The Warlord of Saturn's Moons" has its literary beginnings not in the 1950's, but the 1930's. It's rather well done, I must admit, but it's about an escapist lady who writes space opera to get away from the nasty world. The story is born her thoughts as she writes and what she writes, mostly the latter. It is to Ms. Arnason's credit that she tries to explore the sort of mentality that produces these things, but it is not creditable when she falls into stereotypes. The space opera and sword and sorcery writers I've met are not emotional cripples at all, just people who don't put anything serious in their fiction. With this sort of material, the total package of NEW WORLDS becomes ludicrous.



In addition to Platt's introduction there is also a very pretentious book review section by John Clute and M. John Harrison. Both of whom get my nomination for Most Irresponsible Critic in the field.

Their routine, as demonstrated issue after issue, is to take a batch of second rate traditional SF novels and write patronisingly about them as if all of science fiction had never gotten beyond such a level. The implication is that no one outside of the NEW WORLDS clique is capable of writing anything worthy of adult attention. Everything else is cuddly bedtime stories, so we are told.

To be fair, there are a few things in NEW WORLDS #6 that are worth reading. Michael Moorcock's "Pale Roses" is an enormously readable, occasionally very funny satire on romantic fiction set in the distant future, in which young Werther de Goethe (age 500) is sorrowful because he craves guilt in a world where there is no such thing. ("Morals? Wasn't that some sort of wall decoration?") At last he finds his Sin in the corruption of the beautiful and innocent Catherine Lily Marguerite Natasha Delores Beatrice Machineship-Seven Flambeau Gratitude. Deliciously overburdened by his crime, he jumps off a cliff, only to be revived by his fellow hedonistic immortals, who set up the whole thing out of a sense of fun. The story is one of the best things Moorcock has done, and it might be worth the price of admission, were it not easily available in his recent Harper & Row book, LEGENDS FROM THE END OF TIME.

"The World That Follows" by M. John Harrison is an excerpt from his also easily available Doubleday novel, THE CENTAURI DEVICE. Harrison may someday become a fine writer, and he's definitely a man to watch. He will probably turn out to be the first writer discovered by NEW WORLDS during its "new wave" period (first story in #184, 1968) to amount to anything. Right now his stories are beautifully written, glittery, and puddle deep. His last novel, THE PASTEL CITY, read like an Edgar Rice Burroughs novel written by a 19th Century romantic, and in his new one his attempts to be Decadent with a capital D give his fiction (a space opera) a quaint, Yellow Nineties quality. It even has spaceships named LES FLEURS DU MAL, TRILBY, and ATLANTA AT CALYDON.

"The Man Who Made a Baby" by Harvey

Jacobs was rejected from Jack Dann's WANDERING STARS allegedly for being too shocking. Nothing of the sort. In Dann's book it would have been conspicuously below par, even if it does stand out in NEW WORLDS. The plot: a Jew in a 19th Century Russian village circumcises babies for a living. But he can't have a child of his own the normal way, so he takes all the foreskins and makes one. The kid, Schtip, has an odd youth, and when he grows up he joins the army. He stands at attention very well, especially when the Czarina is present. Meanwhile, a flying saucer filled with horny amazons has landed in the village, and all the men are being sexually devoured. Schtip is sent in; he boards the saucer; it takes off and explodes; and the world is saved. Great, huh? No, actually it's not as funny as it sounds, and has a giggling schoolboy quality to it. It's worth one reading but no more.

"Black Rose and White Rose" by Rachel Pollack is a real surprise, an otherworldly fantasy legend with lesbian elements in the romance. (Girl meets girl.) It is quite well written, occasionally captivating, and worthy of reprinting.

"The Ghosts of Luna" by Ian Watson is a minor little piece, but the only story in the book at all in touch with the present, despite all Platt's more-with-it-than-thou claims. Ghosts of the Apollo astronauts appear on the Moon when a Japanese visits there around the turn of the next century. Watson briefly explores the image and legend of the U.S. space effort. His conclusion is that the Moon itself was disappointed because the exploration wasn't romantic enough.

I might also mention in passing Bruce Boston's "Break" which seems to be a rewrite of the jailbreak sequence in Bester's THE STARS MY DESTINATION. The only difference is that the Big Brute's companion is an effeminate man (of course they're having homosexual relations) and after they have escaped through the underground river the Hulk vanishes. The narrator looks at his face in a pool and discovers that they've merged, without any explanation. Boston might become an interesting writer someday. He has better control of his prose than most of the little-known NEW WORLDS contributors.

So in the end, what are we to make of all this? I think NEW WORLDS is living in its own past, out of touch with what is currently going on in science fiction.

It is no longer a leader in the field, but well to the rear in its development. The blurb writer calls this a "taboo-breaking annual collection of speculative fiction" but it's all very tame stuff, and even the stories with sex in them wouldn't have been out of place in ORBIT or F&SF, except for considerations of quality. There's still a feeble attempt to wring a little more notoriety out of the banning of NEW WORLDS in 1968 (the issue in question, #180, contained a section from BUG JACK BARRON with two of the graphic sex scenes used as padding, and non-functional word patterns by Langdon Jones and Carol Emshwiller), but again, what shocked us then is rather ordinary now. As for serious speculation, there isn't any. All we have are satires and tired rehashes. Some of the fiction is quaintly old-fashioned and amusing, but most of it is merely sterile. NEW WORLDS has, I think, become the elephant's graveyard of the "new wave" of the 1960's. It lacks head, heart, balls, and soul, and like any other literary dinosaur caught at a dead end, it should simply be put to rest.

LETTER FROM PETER WESTON

3 April 1976

'Can you use the enclosed review? ((THE SPACE MACHINE by Christopher Priest. Yes, and it will appear in SFR 18)) It was commissioned by SF MONTHLY but that journal has just folded with the April issue, so the review is unwanted. (SFM will probably have a successor; SF DIGEST, a quarterly magazine more akin to the normal type of magazine. We're all waiting for definite word from the publisher but English fandom is by and large in mourning; we were all happily selling articles and stories to SFM for all we were worth!)

'I have just received one advance copy of ANDROMEDA-1. It looks pretty good and obviously I'm proud of it. I will send you a copy as soon as I get some more. Issue 2 has gone in and will be out in the Autumn (at last) with your epic!'

((Yes, I can hear the screams now...))

'PS: The 1979 Worldcon site is Brighton; we're calling it 'Seacon 79' and a second Progress Report will be out soon. I'm Chairman. We already have about 600 pre-supporting members now.'

LIFE IS NOTHING BUT LINGERING DEATH

LETTER FROM BYRON PREISS

12 April, 1976

'I am writing to SFR with regard to a discussion of my series, WEIRD HEROES, in "The Gimlet Eye" column in your 16th issue.

'It does my heart good to see a full column devoted to fantasy graphics and Gustafson has an eye for that which he speaks about in "Gimlet." There is a comment within the discussion of WH, however, that spurs me to write.

'In the piece, Gustafson says, "I haven't read it (WEIRD HEROES) and I may not ...I purchased it because it is a "standard" paperback with interior illustrations, and lots of 'em." He then goes on to say, "Although most of illos are not of a very high caliber (with the exceptions of these by Jones and Nino) they are what I have hoped to see for years; books with more than just a cover illustration..."

'I think Jon is missing a very, very important point when he dismisses the work of the other artists in the book as being "not of a high caliber". Technically or personally, yes, he can say that to him, the work is not of a high caliber. BUT AS THE WRITER OF A COLUMN ON FANTASY ART, HE SHOULD NOT DO THIS WITHOUT READING THE STORIES.

'In fantasy graphics, it is usually important that the artist do more than draw nice pictures. He or she must TELL A STORY—and do so in a way that amplifies or blends with the prose involved. Tom Sutton's work on Phil Farmer's "Greatheart Silver" in WH is not a stunning example of anatomical proportions, BUT it is a beautiful meshing of styles—Tom's exaggerated comedy with Phil's off-the-wall adventure. It functions because the two complement each other. The same with underground cartoonist Sheridan's work. Its scratchy quality suits Goodwin's counter-culture hero. Alone, as illustrations, they have certain flaws, but as story illustrations they function effectively.

'Jon is no doubt aware of this, but an off-hand dismissal of the rest of the art in the book prompts me to get on the soap box for some very talented graphic storytellers.

'Thanks for SFR. It is one of the most enjoyable things to come out of the field—and it has a sense of humor to boot.'

((Jon Gustafson's art review column will return next issue. Jon and Freff will alternate issues.))

ANGEL FEAR: A Sort-of Review Column of SF Art

By FREFF

ONE/Trouble With Triton

There are, in this otherwise interesting world, things that make me want to scream....

Backtrack to December, 1974, and my first encounter with the Bantam pb of Delany's DHALGREN. A curious moment; the book had an air uncommon to our field. It wallowed in self-confidence. Such a cover! Strong, tasteful graphics surrounding a painting that burned into the casual browser's eyes with its harsh reds and muted yellows, and the final touch, the sine qua non of the late 1974 paperback bestseller—metallic title lettering. Copper.

Whatever DHALGREN may or may not have been as a book (the controversy still rages) the package almost guaranteed good sales. Life followed art's lead, the book sold very well, and the art director picked up some design awards. It is no surprise that NOVA was reissued shortly afterward in the same format.

And now we have Delany's newest, TRITON, which pulls a few minor variations on the set pattern. The tone is cool and calm. The cover painting shows a green research station on the green surface of Triton, with a blue-and-purple Neptune and green Neriad drifting in the dark sky. The title is once more metallic (blue, this time, and fairly conservative; cutouts and flocking are this year's style) and the effect at first glance is pleasing.

Still, I feel like screaming. Why is my subconscious knotting its invisible fists?

More background will explain that succinctly. Cover concepts at Bantam are worked up into rough form in committee, and there is the only say the editor has. Then the art director takes over completely, exercising his right to choose an artist to take the simple idea (shown two paragraphs ago) and clothe it in camera-ready reality. This time the magic wand touched one M. Hooks, whom



you've never heard of, though he is a well-known illustrator. His work has appeared on many book jackets, in READER'S DIGEST, in advertisements...

But he doesn't know SF. And he doesn't know the limits of his imagination. And in this field, which has its peculiar and subtly different demands on writer, artist, and reader, it shows.

In the TRITON cover, in ascending order of annoyance, we find these errors. One, there is a flat—and I mean flat—disc in the upper left of the painting, purporting to be Neriad. But no part of it is in shadow. No roundness of form is painted in. It might as well be part of another picture entirely, since it seems intent on defying the illusion-producing rules that govern the rest of the composition. Two, Neptune itself. Here Hooks uses a very popular, and very fast, technique. He scrubs in his watercolor and gouache (opaque watercolors) with short, sharp strokes. The game is to create just enough texture so that the picture is subtly alive instead of flat (but then why was Neriad—? Oh well.) It can work well. Here it is a stone pain. Hooks obliterates the disc of Neptune by painting its shadowside and the background the same way, turning the planet into a ghost of what it could be. (I will only mention in passing that he has shown gas giant Neptune with craters

and an icecap. Maybe it really does look that way: astronomers?) What angers me most, however, is error number three, that lovely "research station." Give it more than a passing glance and it resolves itself into oil cans, ink bottles, many chess pieces, a bottle of PH Martin's Watercolors, one of Neosynephrene, a shaving mirror, a magnifying viewer, a dart, a rifle cartridge, and various and sundry other items, including what seems to be a tube of toothpaste seen end-on.

It is a habit of mine, while reading a novel, to mull over what I am reading. Usually I stare at the cover while this is going on, but if I try that here I am ripped from Delany's world to high school still-life assignments in an instant. It hurts.

Scream.

I talked to Hooks over the phone; he is a reasonable man, one who knows his techniques, if not their proper applications. Yes, he'd looked up everything he could find about Neptune, but all the photos were pretty blurry, so he'd winged it. And no, he hadn't thought to disguise his research station so that it wouldn't be instantly recognizable as an array of mundane objects. "It looked pretty good the way it was, didn't it? Why change it?"

Why change it?

So it would be a science fiction painting, of course.

But M. Hooks is not an artist that would understand that, because like so many otherwise talented people he lacks the twist of imagination the field needs. All technique and no content, in a land where content is at least fifty percent of success, if not more.

And with that as a springboard, we leave cover art temporarily and dive through the surreal ("sure is real," say Firesign) world.

TWO/"Jesus, Kelly—vultures!"

Once upon a time there had to have been a conversation at NASA that went, I suspect, something like this:

"Got a great idea, Scott. Let's get a bunch of artists together and show them our operation. The VAB, a launch or two, you know. And then we get somebody to release the work they do as a book. What a chance for publicity!"

"Gee, Scott, that sounds great! I'll get on it right away...err...what's an artist?"

Thus caught in a true dilemma, I

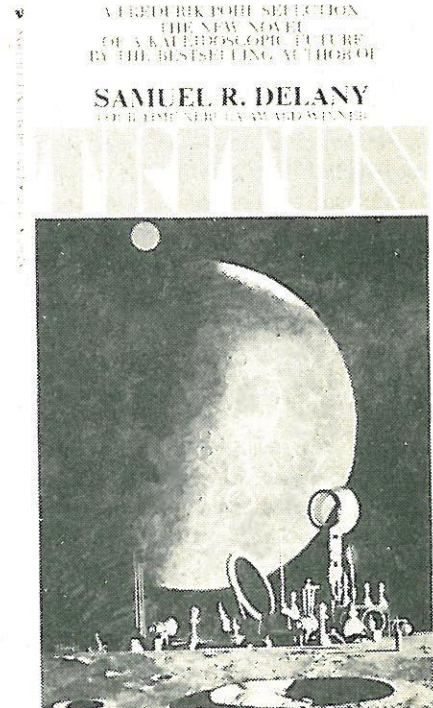
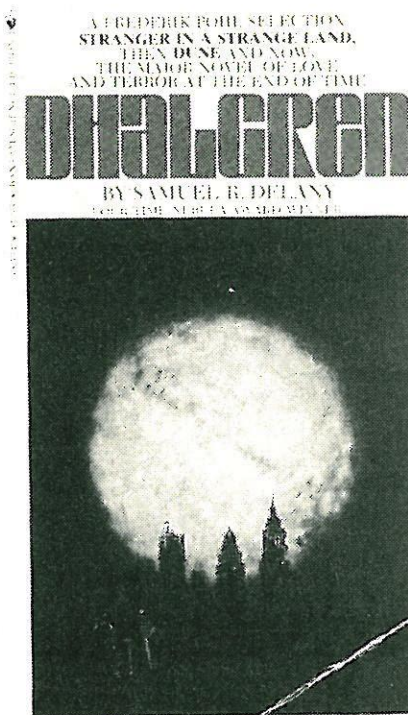
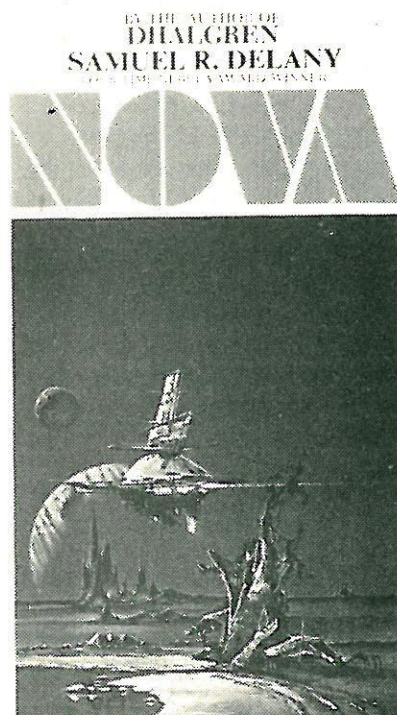
imagine them subcontracting the job of selection to somebody on the staff of the Hirschorn Museum. It is, after all, only a block away, which will certainly save cabfare.

This newly-recruited worthy, a hook-nosed modernist, then had a vision. Getting a top publisher and nice sales meant getting big-name artists, he reasoned.

The concrete result that inspired this little fantasy is a book called EYEWITNESS TO SPACE, published as a coffee-table-type book by Harry Abrams, Inc. It is a heavy, heavy volume.

Most of what's in it is dreck. (Though there are exceptions, notably the material contributed by Robert McCall and Paul Calle, who were already known for their space art.) The reason for this is that the artists involved just didn't know what they were seeing, either because things weren't sufficiently explained or because whatever in them creates doesn't resonate to the chords NASA plays. It is the same lack M. Hooks showed on TRITON. It plagues our field.

Enter Ron Miller, wearing the mantle of serendipity. Ron's work has appeared on several Sfmagazine covers, and he is one of the few in the field who handles astronomicals and human beings with



equal ease. He also happens to work as planetarium artist for the new National Air and Space Museum, and makes use of his post to do what educating he can. I'll cover some of the effects of that education in the next section.

What he did that has relevance here is that he changed the composition of the next NASA artist's tour, held last summer during the Apollo-Soyuz launch. Among the tech illustrators and the random fine artists there were also people like Kelly Freas, Ron himself, Sandra Miesel, Jim Cunningham, Vincent Difate, and (since Rick Sternbach had been forced to cancel, leaving a hole in the roster) me.

We were escorted through the Secret Wonders. There was the Viking Lander Clean Room, largest of its kind in the world, where we were dusted off and suited up in the white plastic outfits, and allowed to wander about, leaving eye-tracks. There was the Viking launch pad, and then before lunch the various Lunar Mission simulators. All SF artists would benefit, I think, from getting to lie in the couches of the Apollo Command Module and letting their hungers creep a little closer to the surface. But far and away the greatest moment of the tour was being taken to the roof of the VAB at sunset. It is huge, so huge that until you look over the edge you can't think of it as a roof. The rain puddles were really shallow lakes. And there were, of course, the vultures.

Really. Hundreds make their home up there. They like to float on the up-drafts.

Later that night, watching the jewel that all launch towers become when the spotlights are turned on, the differences in the artists assembled for the tour were very obvious. The mundanes—yes, let's use the charged word—were talking and slapping at mosquitoes. But Kelly Freas drew while the people near him took turns holding a flashlight (sometimes he held it in his teeth.) Sandra Miesel was spinning out ideas for her unique astronomical embroideries. I was taking pictures and staunchly keeping my own jaw off the ground while helping Jim Cunningham pick up his; he was in shock from too much deja vu.

The Kennedy Space Center should be the SF World's esthetic Mecca, you see. It's the one place on the planet I have seen where Nature and Technology conspire to create balanced new beauties that neither alone could manage. It can

be felt all around, like a seeming consciousness, as the spotlights cast shadows on clouds that bank in just the right places, or as vultures drift on the wind, or the sun gives an abstract replay of a launch as it lifts over the horizon at dawn. To be there, and to open yourself to it, is to stand at the living clockwork center of a fine old universe.

We felt it, they didn't seem to. (At least, they didn't show it on the surface.)

The best SF artwork captures it. But they never quite manage, for all they reveal to us wonders hidden elsewhere. There is an "outsider" mentality entirely separate from whether or not an artist works in the field we talk about so much.

End of philosophical digression. Back to SF art, and to how some of "us" are finally getting recognized by "them," and how some of "them" share a spirit with us, and should be searched after by anybody who really cares about capturing SF in pictures.

THREE/ NASM

The National Air and Space Museum opens in July, and (at least partially because of Ron Miller) a lot of SF people made it in. Ron's work will be part of the planetarium show, and his astronomicals will also be seen in an audio-visual exhibit in the LIFE IN THE UNIVERSE hall. Right next to those will be Bonnie Dalzell's paintings of specially-designed extraterrestrials, some of them taken from sources like Larry Niven's Bandersnatch. In the same hall is an exquisite model of an alien space probe analogous to our Pioneer 10. It was done by westcoast eclectic genius/artist/sculptor Don Simpson. Jeff Jones painted a whole set of "famous astronomer" portraits that would make any serious painter drool, no matter what field he or she came from. Bob McCall worked for months on a multi-story scaffold to create an eighty-foot tall mural in the main entranceway.

Other artists have contributed work to the gallery. The list is a fairly long one.

And then there are things which I can't help but call art, for all that no responsible artists can be easily pointed out. Call it purely conceptual

art then, that a real Skylab space station will be open for the public to go through, or that the Wright Brothers' first plane hangs serenely over the Apollo 11 command module. But most wondrous of all, one of the museum's three moon rocks will be embedded in lucite in such a manner that part of it is exposed.

You, too, can touch the moon....

In three months it will be worn smooth with the plastic. Want to bet?

FOUR/ Several Unequivocally Enthusiastic Suggestions

I have no shame, no humility, and if this be ballyhoo, so be it.

Suggestion number one, JIM CUMMINGHAM, whose dropped jaw I mentioned before. He's a prime example of the outsider who isn't. His work has only recently been seen in SF artshows, and then only in the midwest (with Discon as a wild exception.) He has yet to be published on a book or magazine cover in the field. He doesn't paint cute aliens or Bergey women or clankshudder machineries. But in Indianapolis, where Jim lives, he sells his work at prices which equal or excell the top pay in the field, and the city has even commissioned him to paint a few walls.

Those who know Jim's paintings are almost scared at the thought.

He paints astronomicals—sort of. They are abstract, to be sure, but you can't mistake what they mean. By taking multiple glazes of pure blues and greens, adding occasional reds and whites as his sensibilities require, Cunningham bends line and form and space in a way that is the pure essence of SF art without the "finned spaceship" trappings.

For a full article about him and his experiments with technology and art (plus some inferior reproductions of his work, lacking most of the green) write to IN-CITY MAGAZINE, 6302 Guilford Av., Suite One, Indianapolis, IN 46220, and ask for their December issue.

Suggestion number two, SID MEAD. A technical illustrator par excellence, Sid is also the man who won the NASM commission to design a starship. Mmmm. His feelings for machinery is startling, and the results he manages with gouache quite unique. For a free book of his paintings (not to mention a set of post-

ers) send a request to INNOVATIONS, US Steel Corporations, P.O. Box 56, Pittsburgh, PA 15230. All you have to do is ignore the text, which is straight from promotion and doesn't have anything to do with the artwork anyway. You might also find the subject matter of the work less than gut-exciting, since it is mostly futuristic transportation of Mead's design, but check out the backgrounds and details, like the lizard-on-a-leash, or the animals I have come to think of as Shetland Poodles and Cobra Collies. Neat stuff.

Suggestion number three, ROGER DEAN; if you know current record cover art you know this man from his designs for YES, OSIBISA, BADGER, GREENSLADE, and many others. Everything in Dean's work looks like it was grown where it is—be it rocks, tree, or buildings—and hasn't quite finished evolving. Wasp-winged elephants trumpet at green lizards. A dragon calmly sips water at the base of a parched tree. Planets shatter. Five-armed priests ply their scriptures and consultations...as calligrapher and designer Dean, a 31 year-old Englishman, has few peers, and most of those only in matters technical. Nobody has his imagination but himself, although he has a growing legion of young imitators. (I've copped a theme or two meself.)

And did I mention he was also an architectural designer?

The name of the first book of this man's work is VIEWS. It costs \$10. plus shipping from Big O Posters, Box 6168, Charlottesville, VA 22906, although a careful check of your local record and bookstores will probably find it for you—it's been selling tremendously. Deservedly so, since it brings together not only excellent reproductions of his record covers but a hell of a lot of other drawings, plus a load of background material on techniques, intentions, preparations, theories...and conclusions. Plus the odd, delightful tidbit. Who can help but appreciate a man whose house plans include, in the midst of fanciful seashell curves and cavernous rooms, a notation requiring "badgers in the basement?"

End of breathless recommendations. These three are all fairly well-known, though not as SF artists. Which, by damn, they are.

FIVE/Mea Culpa

A confession; I am young. Twenty-two years old in October. Back in early '69, as a churlish youth fresh from junior high school, I wrote an angry letter to GALAXY demanding (oh, the pain of the memory!) that they stop using the crummy artists they were using and try me out instead.

Quite properly, Judy-Lynn del Rey, then Managing Editor, sent me back a short letter that left bloodstains all over my bedroom floor. I have never quite recovered; and I hope that the remembered pain keeps me a bit more conscientious. Art criticism (which this column has not been this time, not really, but certainly will be next time around) is mainly a land of fools, who not only rush in etc. but do it backward and buck naked. I will not likely be an exception. Shout at me. I listen.

About two years ago I got my first illustration assignment from Jim Baen, at IF. He liked it enough to give me another, and then another, and when I finally really blew it I'd amassed enough brownie points that he didn't shake his head and dismiss me forever. As a result I suspect I am, by a margin of a couple years, the youngest illustrator in current science fiction who can lay claim to professional status.

That much dignity is this column's limit. I love criticism given clearly. I hate it when it gets snide.

I'm on the edge, neither outsider nor fully proven, and from that viewpoint things are very interesting indeed. Next installment is mainly pet hatreds, and a little more about the Mysterious Affair of the Misplaced Responsibility (cross reference: "I've Got Those Art-Director Blues.") I've interviewed Kelly Freas, the most successful man in the field, surely, and plan more things along that line.

(And now that this is finally over, 'tis back to work. Ta!)



LETTER FROM DAVID GERROLD

March 25, 1976

'A few days ago I discovered the following quote in a book review: "Fame is the sum of the misunderstanding that gathers around a new name." (Rilke) It expresses quite well how I feel about fandom this week.

'In the past year or so, almost every action I have done that was intended as a positive one has been misinterpreted. Every time I have spoken out in an effort to increase understanding, I have instead only increased fragmentation. The result has been ill feelings and a lot of pain that has interfered with my peace of mind and my writing. None of it was intended.

'Whether the fault is mine or fandom's is immaterial—it's probably mutual; but the plain fact of the matter is that I simply no longer feel welcome in fandom. If fandom truly is a family (which I am beginning to doubt) I do not feel a part of it.

'So I have decided to sever all connection with fandom, at least for a while. I will fulfill my commitments to those conventions I have promised, but I will make no commitments other than the usual paid appearances. I will try to remain in touch with those I would like to regard as friends, but I will no longer be accessible to those whose actions seem immature and insensitive. Past efforts have proven futile and there are more important and rewarding avenues for my emotional energy.

'I suppose this will be greeted with pleasure and/or derision in some quarters. No matter; I am not doing it for fandom's sake, but for my own. I will probably enjoy my life a lot more without the hassles that some elements of fandom have brought me. I regret losing the joys; most of it has been fun, but the price has been too high.

'With all best wishes to those who understand.'

You only sap your strength when you become preoccupied with the drawbacks of the person you deal with. He'll continue to be what he is. Let him be that; it doesn't have to affect you... Freedom from exploitation is perhaps the easiest freedom to get. All you have to do is to stop participating in any relationship—of any kind—that doesn't suit you.

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

THE ALTER-EGO VIEWPOINT A Dialogue



Okay, Alter, you've had nearly three months to read a lot of science fiction and now it's payoff time.

"Don't bother me now, Geis. I'm resting. Shut the door on the way out. Turn off the light."

No, you've got to earn your keep. Since I did away with The Archives you've had it easy. Up, up! Review! Pass opinions!

"I'll pass you down the Hole if you don't leave me alone. Nag, nag, nag, nag!"

Alter, look at this mess of books and magazines on the floor. Here...this one... IMPERIAL EARTH by Arthur C. Clarke (Harcourt, Brace & Jovanovich, \$7.95)...you stopped reading on page 88. Why?

"Boredom, Geis. Pure ennui. Clarke writes a kind of sterile, calm, documentary fiction, as if he has a million bucks in the bank—which he probably has—and there is a lack of tension.... Here he's got a dynasty of male clones dominating Titan of 2276 A.D., and the youngest clone of this ruling family, Duncan Makenzie on the way to visit imperial mother Earth, as the Titan envoy, and it's blahsville.

"He had that giant alien spaceship to explore in RENDEZVOUS WITH RAMA and that situation carried him. Here, he ambles along with long asides and long background and... faugh! I could care less about the minor psychological and physical problems of a superior, superrich kid."

Well...what about this one? ECOTOPIA by Ernest Callenbach, from Banyan Tree Books, \$2.75 (available from Bookpeople, 2940 Seventh St., Berkeley, CA 94710.) My Ghod, you got peanut butter on the cover! What a slob you are!

"I didn't have time to get but a few pages into this one, but that bit convinced me it's a fine piece of science fiction. At least, the premise is fascinating. See, it's structured as the notes and diary of an international affairs reporter for the TIMES-POST of (I think) Washington, DC as

he journeys through the independent, self-isolated country of Ecotopia—that is the former U.S. states of Oregon, Washington, and the northern half of California. In 1980 these peoples seceded from the Union in the Time of Troubles. They cut themselves off from "civilization" and reporter William Weston is the first "outsider" allowed in since then. The time is now 1999."

And you say this is a fine piece of writing?

"Yes, dammit. It's really credible. The Ecotopian life-style is both idealistic and practical. This may be the most dangerous book to come along in years."

But you haven't but skimmed and 'sniffed' it, Alter.

"I will read it whole one of these days. Maybe I'm a bit afraid of it. It might pollute my precious libertarian/capitalistic bodily fluids...or something."

Huh! I also note that you finished STAR MOTHER by Sydney J. Van Scyoc. (Put-nams, \$6.95) What's this one about?

"About 186 pages of combined do-gooder sf and your average Gothic novel. Worth reading, but it won't set a fire under your sense of wonder. Good, solid, alien planet and problems-of-human-colonists detail, worked out nicely. I couldn't get excited about or much interested in interstellar peace corps cadet Jahna or the master of Pengalen, name of Becklord."

But the changing power structures, the ecology of the radioactive planet...

"I said I liked the spadework! Get on with this inquisition!"

Alter, I hold in my thumb and forefinger THE IMPLSION EFFECT by Gary Paulsen, published by Major Books (3048, \$1.25). You finished this one?

"Yeah, Geis, and I thought it damned well written in a commercial formula style and with the smell of authenticity of detail and action that grabs the reader. I'll grant you the story of a scratch crew of scientists—malcontents and losers all—building a secret spy-satellite tracking and listening-in station on a small, deserted Pacific island for a mysterious business group who want to steal secrets for vast profit—" *Gasp* *Inhale* "—is not very science fiction, and the murders—one by one—of the crew is hardly original, but I admire the tough, smart realism. Gary Paulsen writes too well to settle for what Major is paying for a novel, for long."

What does it matter, Alter? You've 45

looked through MANKIND AT THE TURNINGPOINT—The Second Report To The Club Of Rome (Signet J6852, \$1.95) and seen all the graphs and schedules and charts. Think mankind has a chance?

"Oh, sure, mankind will survive, and will have all kinds of future civilisations, but they'll have to do without a heavy-metal, high-energy technology as we have today. All the computer models point inexorably to a crisis in about twenty-thirty years. A population crunch, a resources crunch, and energy crunch. Probably a financial/debt crunch before then."

So what should we do?

"Enjoy life while you can, Geis. Fuck worrying about the future. We're both too old to live to see it, probably. In the short run the expedient solution is chosen, and in the long run we are all dead. Why worry? Let those under 30 worry if they want."

That's totally irresponsible!

"And totally realistic. Besides, atomic fusion might come along. Or anti-gravity. Who knows? Have faith, baby, and spend your money...before it loses any more value."

Hmmmph! I suppose you have evil things to say about Roger Elwood's new magazine, ODYSSEY.

"Heh. You know, this is a curious \$1. package. Good to excellent fiction; especially "The Prisoner of New York Island" by Frederik Pohl, "Beneath the Hills of Azlaroc" by Fred Saberhagen, and Jerry Pournelle's "Bind Your Sons to Exile." And good fan features by Robert Bloch and Charlie Brown, a keen book review column by Bob Silverberg, plus a general column by Theodore Sturgeon... An Interview with Zenna Henderson.

"But no editorial persona visible or felt, and the ads are all from pulpville. There is a hangup in the layouts, too, where they had to "fill" excess pages with repeats of illos. Also noted: a run-of-the-mill Kelly Freas cover.

"ODYSSEY hit Portland with a resounding thud; two weeks after about fifteen copies were put on the magazine rack at my local supermarket, they were pulled. At least we got one copy, eh, Geis?"

Yes. ODYSSEY #1 (Spring, 1976) gives the impression of a hasty, third class production. The material is better than the magazine's appearance suggests.

"I'm supposed to give the opinions here, Geis. You're supposed to set me up and feed me leading questions. Stay in your place!"

Err, sorry. I forgot. I don't suppose

you forgot what you think of Colin Wilson's new (Random House, \$7.95) novel, *THE SPACE VAMPIRES*, did you?

"Wilson's idea of what goes on in a spaceship in deep space is laughable. But once he gets back to Earth with those three strange humanoid aliens he is more at home and more believable...but not by too much. He tries to rationalize the vampire mythology, but it boils down to Incredible and a too-familiar plot ploy at the end. Not a first-rate novel, but it has its moments."

Alter, in response to Richard Lupoff's pleas for recognition and reviews you read his new *THE TRIUNE MAN* (Putnams, \$6.95) didn't you?

"Yeah. In a nutshell, so far, Dick Lupoff seems a better reviewer than novelist—with the exception of *NEW ALABAMA BLUES*, which is a superior piece of work. I found *THE TRIUNE MAN* interesting for its mastery of the comic strip trade and techniques, but unbelievable in its simplistic multi-schizoid psychology and alien superscience plot complications...magic science.

"This is for hardcore sf addicts and uncritical readers who are familiar with longtime sf conventions. I still don't understand how one of the personnas managed to save the Universe from its fiery fate. I think Dick attempted too much in the areas of symbolism and extreme superscience and the complications of multiple personalities in one body."

Lupoff will pluck your tendrils, Alter, and stuff them up—

"Go suck an egg, Geis. What's next on the pile?"

Two Stephen Fabian art books from two small-press publishers. You've looked over *THE BEST OF STEPHEN FABIAN*, published by Loompanics Unlimited, Box 264, Mason, MI 48854, priced at \$12.50. This is a limited (1500 copies) edition.

And you've eyeballed the other Fabian offering: *FANTASTIC NUDES—A Portfolio By Stephen Fabian*, published by Gerry & Helen de la Ree, 7 Cedarwood Lane, Saddle River, NJ 07458. \$8. per portfolio. Limited edition of 750.

What say you?

"I say the Loompanics book is overpriced but provides a wide range of Steve's styles and skills (for a close example, observe his cover on SFR 14 and the cover on this issue, SFR 17), including quite a few previously unpublished full-pagers. All 50 are printed by offset, are in black & white, are 8½ x 11 on heavy white stock.

"The *FANTASTIC NUDES* are larger, 11 x 14

on an even better glossy, textured white stock and unbound—10 black & white plates—ready for framing. And *snarf* *drool* all are in fantasy settings. Well worth the \$8."

That opinion was predictable. What about this second item sent by the de la Rees—*A HANNES BOK SKETCHBOOK*, edited by Gerry de la Ree and Gene Nigra, \$8. —are you a Bok fan?

"Sure, I grew up admiring his work in the sf and fantasy magazines, and on and in the few books published. This book is 80 pages plus covers, heavy white stock, excellently printed. It provides a panorama of Bok's style and techniques from 1930 on. He had a rather solid, blocky style, in the main, and from these many sketches it seems to me he wasn't all that great an artist, at least in the early years. In fact, Geis, if he were alive today and unheralded, and sent you some work, you'd probably think him a talented amateur and not take but a few of his sketches for SFR."

Is no one sacred to you, Alter?

"Nope. Not even old-time fan name of Willis Conover, who's first issue (after 40 years) of the *SCIENCE FANTASY CORRESPONDENT*, expensive and quality-printed, arrived recently. It is \$10. per copy, three issues for \$25. from Carrollton Clark, 9122 Rosslyn, Arlington, VA 22209.

"This is 64 pages plus covers, on heavy, pale-tan paper, with a rich variety of materials by professionals...such as Robert Aickman, Brian W. Aldiss, Arthur C. Clarke, Robert E. Howard, David H. Keller, Henry Kuttner, H. P. Lovecraft, Jack Williamson... Hey, some of these are dead men! This first issue is nostalgia oriented, has a sharp pro-space exploration article by Clarke, a long semi-fantasy by Aickman... A very elegant publication. I enjoyed it, Geis, but to my mind it is a prestige item, published (and priced) for a relative few."

Okay, Alter, you may go back to sleep for a while. Sorry I disturbed you.

"Like hell you are."

DOUG MCCLURE: (to old woman he thinks is William Shatner in drag) I'll meet you up in your room in thirty minutes.
WILLIAM SHATNER: Ah, Cash....
DOUG MCCLURE: (realizing his mistake) Uh, sorry, ma'am. I thought you were somebody else.

OLD WOMAN: Does this mean you won't be coming up to my room?

—BARBARY COAST
(Thanks to Buzz Dixon)

***** 46

ALIEN CONCLUSIONS



As usual I will lead off "Alien Conclusions" with a rundown of the reader response to #16.

The interview with Jerry Pournelle was considered very fine indeed, and the credit is due Jerry. I but asked the obvious questions.

Also well received was Bary Malzberg's mini-essay and review of James Gunn's *ALTERNATE WORLDS: The Illustrated History of Science Fiction*. I thought Jim Shull's illustration exceedingly apt for the piece—even though he sent it along with no previous knowledge of Barry's review.

I should mention that Jim's cover won some praise but was ignored by most.

The back cover, by Tim Kirk, was a reprint of an 8½ x 11 poster Mike and Susan Glicksohn sent out with their Hugo-Winning fanzine, *ENERGUMEN*, several years ago. They urged that it be reprinted to help the ecology movement. I kept it in mind, and when the need/opportunity arose....

And speaking of Tim Kirk, where has he got to? The last letter I sent him at his Shawnee, KS address, in mid-January, came back marked "Addressee Unknown."

Not much response to John Brunner's column, "Noise Level", last issue: the readers would prefer to read John's thoughts on his own work or others' SF, not his troubles with editors and publishers.

My own notes and comments were liked, as usual, as much for my views as for the involuntary thinking they provoke. And a few people actually went out and bought Nelson's *BLAKE'S PROGRESS* on the strength of my review. The book has a good chance to make the Hugo ballot.

I was happy to read such comments as Lupoff is an excellent reviewer—authoritative, balanced, well-written judgements about his opening review column, "The Literary Masochist." Rich isn't in this issue due, I trust, to work/lack of time. I

will check with him and hope he will send a column for #18.

George Warren's essay-review about writing and review of Bester's *THE COMPUTER CONNECTION* earned mixed feelings: most of those who commented agreed that this book was not up to his two earlier classics, but parted company with George on other matters.

Again, Jon Gustafson's "The Gimlet Eye" was praised wholeheartedly (with a few caveats by affected parties). The art review column was a good idea, long needed.

Michael Coney's "Whatever Happened to Fay Wray?" brought a smattering of reaction, some in agreement on his WimLib and other views, and some opposed. One reader summed it up by saying he didn't much care about Coney's private views—he liked his books.

NEXT ISSUE IS ALREADY PACKED WITH GOODIES: A delightful Grant Canfield cover; a long, very good interview with Lester del Rey by Darrell Schweitzer; an interview with "Alan Burt Akers" (in quotes, because Akers is a pseudonym for...?); an article about SF and writing it by Barry Malzberg—"A Short One For The Boys In The Backroom"; major reviews by George R. R. Martin, Robert Anton Wilson and a lot of the regulars...

Expected are Jon Gustafson's art review column and George Warren's bound-to-be-controversial column. Hoped-for is Richard Lupoff's review column. And I'll have my usual pages....

"Yeah, Geis? What about me?"

You, Alter? Oh, if there's room—

"If there's room! The readers love me. They beg for more of me in this rag! You should give me at least six pages—"

Too much lined up, Alter. You'll be lucky if you get—

"You do it deliberately, Geis! You deliberately buy zillions of book reviews and other crap so you can have an excuse—"

Crap!?

"—to crowd me out! You're jealous of me, Geis! You're afraid—"

THAT'S ENOUGH! Go to your dungeon!

"&#%*!#&#!!"

Where was I? Oh. As a matter of fact, I do have a lot of reviews stacked up. It will be a crowded issue.

CTHULHU CALLS is running another poetry contest. First prize \$75., second \$50, third place \$25. plus publication in the Jan. '77 issue. For best original, unpub-

lished sf poems dealing with either (a) man's first contact with an extraterrestrial lifeform, or (b) black holes. Material submitted must be suitable for junior high school as well as adult readers. A brief autobiographical sketch should accompany submissions. An S.A.S.E. must accompany manuscripts for return. Closing date: Sept. 30, 1976. To: Peter Dillingham, 2272 South Bannock, Denver, CO 80223.

RON ROGERS has a contrary opinion about art inside paperbacks. Sayeth he: "Who gives a great big fyunch (click) about illos? I am basically neutral on the subject, though I have been known to comment on those "GD pictures that keep getting in the way of the flow." Usually I can take 'em or leave 'em and I will admit I sometimes say "That's a nice drawing." (I am speaking of interior illos entirely.) I expect the drawings in the prozines, but when I'm paying \$1.50 and \$1.95 for teeny paperbacks in the first place, I sure don't want no space-wasting pictures in there. If what's in the print doesn't make its own pictures in my head, it shouldn't be in that print. Prices are high enough, and though artists have to earn their livelihood, I buy books to read them and if I want to look at pretty pictures I'll go to a museum."

GEIR-ARNE OLSEN, of Norway, says there is a tendency to 'tired-grandpa-mentality' in SFR. Hrumph! Young impertinent whippersnapper! He is into the ART of creating and he resents the readers who demand fast-moving adventure fiction, and the publishers who have very high literary standards (in Norway)... 'There's the consumers on one hand and the literary elite on the other, and the artist is someplace between.' He doesn't want to be tool—"because if you write what the public de-

mands, then your fiction isn't yours anymore, it's a product to consume, and I tell you, it hurts."

There's much more to his letter, but you see where he's coming from.

He likes the idealistic freedom of the pure artist and hates the discipline of the marketplace. He'll have to learn to compromise, or write as he wishes and self-publish, which has been done. But there again, the marketplace....

DON KELLER has different values for fiction...as opposed to me, apparently. He wrote: 'I strongly disagree with your statement about what you want to get out of fiction. Perhaps it's just a difference in our ages, but I have read enough 'pretty lies' in my short life to last the rest of it, and would vastly prefer to have the truth told to me, no matter how painful, no matter how much I may hate the teller of that truth for it. Robert Silverberg's *DYING INSIDE* almost literally bludgeoned my mind to numbness because of the power of the truth it told, about me and my kind: it hit so close to the bone that I could not relate objectively to it at all until I read it again. I would much rather read something like that than a book that tells me, "Well, things may be bad now, but they'll turn out all right in the end. I'd like to find out that was true, but I can't really believe in it. However much I disagree with M. John Harrison, I, like he, do not want a 'literature of comfort.' What do I want? If backed to the wall, I would say: intensity of experience. And pulp-action plotting and happy endings (unless very skillfully done) don't do it for me; in fact, they enervate the experience.'

'I don't know, though; this may change as I get older. Most of the people I know seem to enjoy escapist reading more and more as they get older.'

Good points, well-made. When we're young, in general, we lust, we hunger, for truth about ourselves and the world. After a while we know the truth about ourselves and the world and our appetite for having it rubbed in diminishes. We prefer distraction or, in still older age, escape from it.

At the moment I like truth told, in fiction, up till the very end—when a convincing lie is nice to read (even though I know it is a lie...I admire the skill and the verisimilitude). As a species we also have a need for order and justice (which are in real terms frauds). That is the human condition. Life itself is a sour joke, given self-awareness. Had enough?



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the Wall, Roger Zelazny", an interview.

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