



NIEKAS 21: 1.

NIEKAS

THE CONFUSED FANZINE (We have done so much for so long with so little, that we have finished NIEKAS [nothing]).

CONTENTS:

Frontcover (by) Margaret M. Shepard

Colophon and Contents. 1

Sumbejimas (editorial mumblings by Ed Meskys) 2-5

The Wicked Column by Margaret M. Shepard. 6

Sherwood Fiction (or was that Science Frazier?) 7

Rafe. The Observer (our man at Big Mac) 8-9

From the Outside Looking In by Sandy 9

An Interview with Carol Kendall
by Nan Scott. 10 - 19

Recorded musings on Lord of Light
by Roger Zelazny. 20

An Index of Science Fiction and related books
available from "Recordings for the Blind"
Part I by John Bordman. 21 - 27

Review and Comment. 28

Lady (by) A Harper. 29

baiskai (A Letter Column) 30 - 33

Closing Remarks (again by) Ed Meskys. 34

Backcover (by) Sherwood Frazier

ART CREDITS:

David Peltrquin (Spaceman) P. 2

Sherwood Frazier P. 2 & 7.

Annette Harper P. 29.

Todd E. Frazier P. 21

Margaret M. Shepard P. 4, 9, 30, 34.

NIEKAS #21 is edited and published by Sherwood Frazier, Ed Meskys and Margaret Shepard. Copies of this issue and 22 are available at \$1.25 each from Sherwood Frazier. Send subs and material to Sherwood at 351 Elm Street, Lakeport, N H 03246. Send trade fanzines to Margaret at 7 Pleasant Street, Salem, N H 03079. Send review books, records, etc to Ed Meskys, Box 233, Center Harbor, N H 03226. (#21 & 22 are test issues, to see if we can hack the work and there is a reader demand for NIEKAS, so we are not taking new subs beyond 22. Old subs will be retained until further notice.) Next issue should be out for SUNCON.

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Bumbejimas

NIEKAS 21: 2

Bumbejimas: 1

Near as I can figure it, there hasn't been a NIEKAS in 8 years. A lot of water has gone under the bridge in that time, but I am involved with a new group here in central New Hampshire and it is their enthusiasm which got us to try another NIEKAS now. Meet the staff.

I first met Margaret Shepard around May of 1969 when Sandy Parker Shorter brought her over to a weekend long meeting of NESFA at my house (known as the Meshkon). She was a student at Plymouth State College and worked at the Laconia State School and Training Center. A few years later she got a job as Switchboard Operator/receptionist/repro manager etc., at Belknap College where I was then teaching. After Belknap College started closing, she and a Belknap College graduate named MaryEllen Talunas, moved to Southern New Jersey in search of work at a living wage and stayed there for two and a half years. Both wanted to return to New Hampshire and came looking for jobs here as soon as they were a little ahead. (New Hampshire has a VERY low wage scale). Both ended up getting jobs in Massachusetts, and now Margaret has an apartment in Salem, NH (close to the Mass border) and MaryEllen in Boston. Since Margaret's family is from Laconia, she comes up here almost every weekend.

Margaret's younger sister, Sandy Shepard Frazier, tho not an SF fan herself, is married to Sherwood Frazier who is a long time reader. I first met Sherwood when he accompanied Margaret, me and several others to Torcon, and we have become very close friends since.

I have never given up on NIEKAS and had always intended to revive it some day, and Sherwood and I had been talking about it for 2 years now. Then Margaret came back on the scene and said, LET'S DO IT NOW! We have decided to publish two trial issues and then evaluate the results. NIEKAS always expressed the group personality of those who worked on it, and we are now a new group. So expect it to take a while for NIEKAS to develop its new personality. Also, we are making this issue minimal to keep the work down. Little, if any, color work, and limited to about 30 pages. I have enough manuscripts on hand for at least two issues, tho we want to use new material too. We have created some new material of our own and have contacted as many of the old NIEKAS regulars as we could reach, inviting them to participate. We can use material from the readership; articles both serious and humorous, and especially artwork.

NIEKAS will probably go beyond number 22, but we don't want to be bound to it, so are not soliciting long term subs yet. If 22 is the last issue, we will publish a special roundup of LOC'S afterwards. Also, if we don't fit the LOC'S on NIEKAS 21 we will publish a special letter supplement eventually.

People still inquire about back issues of NIEKAS and the Tolkien Journal. Some TJS are available from the Mythopoeic Society in L. A. (PO BOX 4671, Whittier, CA 90607). Sherwood and I are compiling an anthology of the best of NIEKAS and TJ, which will be published by Mirage Press, as Tolkien Hornbook. Just as Mirage's Conan Books have non-Howard material from AMRA, so too will we include non-Tolkien stuff. The book will probably appear in early '78. Also, NIEKAS and TJ might eventually appear and be available in Xerox form from R. R. Bowker Co. of New York.

A WHIRLWIND TOUR OF THE LAST TEN YEARS IN THE LIFE OF EDMOND ROMOS MESKYS!

There will be three basic audiences reading this section

and it is impossible to write for all of them. The primary audience is composed of people who were part of the NIEKAS Family; were vicariously involved in our doings and with whom I have had little or no contact during the last 8 years. The second is composed of those with whom I've retained close contact, and they already know most of what follows. The last group are those new to both NIEKAS and myself, and have no interest in this stuff.

As near as I can figure it, NIEKAS was first distributed at a New Years Eve party given by the Society for Creative Anachronism in 1969. I suppose it looked to all that I had followed the fannish pattern of folding the fanzine after we got the Hugo.

1969 was a peak in my fannish activity. I was on the Noreascon Bidding Committee and was active with the Tolkien Society of America. I had just held a Tolkien conference on the Belknap College campus the preceding fall. That year I received a National Science Foundation Summer Institute in San Diego, and flew out via Midwestercon. The next weekend I took the bus up to LA for Westercon. Two weeks later there was the Moon Landing part at John and Bjo Trimble's. At the end of the Institute I traveled by car to St. Louiscon, and with all this activity I got to know, courted, and eventually married Nancy Miles, of Bar Mills, Maine, who was a student at Belknap College.

That winter and spring we made several local cons and Nan accompanied me on two trips to Physics conferences. Then Belknap College got into financial difficulties and all the faculty had to take pay cuts in an effort for survival. We got involved in other things too, and made fewer and fewer cons. Then, in the spring of '71, while at Boskone, I noticed some difficulty in reading signs and discovered that a cataract was forming on my one eye. In June of '71 I had it removed. All looked well, Nan and I started on NIEKAS 21. Appendicitis, with severe complications, soon came for Nan, and complete blindness for me.

Mileposts after that were; the closing of Belknap College in December 1973, the birth of our son Stanley Romos; on February 18, 1975, Nan's and my separation on July 10, 1976. We are now in the process of getting a no-fault divorce. While I have no definite plans for my personal future, I do want to be completely free to move in any direction so I will also be seeking a church annulment.

In the meantime, my fan activity is picking up again. I have attended the first two World Fantasy Conventions, a Boskone, and a Lunacon.

And now, NIEKAS RIDES AGAIN!

OF BLINDNESS AND FANDOM

As far as I know Bob Rodriguez was the first blind person to participate in Fandom. He has been in and out of the New York fan scene for the last dozen or so years. My fanac had been at an ebb when I lost my sight and for the first few years I made few cons, no club meetings, and got very few fanzines. Now I am getting more active in all three major branches of fandom, club, convention and fanzine. Two years ago at the Boskone I met a pair of blind students from Perkins School who had also participated marginally in NESFA. I have not heard of them getting any more active or attending any more cons. At the 1976 Lunacon and again at the Second World Fantasy Convention I met a girl, Marty, who is a member of a small Stamford, CT group called the Braille Science Fiction Readers Association a group who had presented an award at Discon 2. She herself has marginal sight which improves and worsens drastically with time. Sometimes she has such good sight that she can drive, at other times she needs to use a cane or guide dog to get around. At the Fantasy Convention I also met another blind girl, Pat, who lives in Manhattan and had heard of the convention on an SF program on WBAI radio. I have a feeling that both she and Marty

will continue to be active in fandom.

I have met a number of other blind SF readers, and even enthusiasts, but none seemed ready to get involved in fandom. Among the blind, as the sighted, there seem to be many people who like SF and fantasy very much and enjoy talking about it on a one to one basis, but who are not interested in group activities.

A fair amount of SF is available for the blind in talking books and Braille is available from several agencies. The three primary sources that I know of which have significant lists of SF are the Library of Congress with one or more regional distributing centers in each state, the Jewish Guild for the Blind in New York, and Recordings for the Blind, also in NY.

I also get non SF materials from the Xavier Society for the Blind in New York and Volunteer Services (formerly Science for the Blind) in Philadelphia. Some SF and fantasy is available from other sources and I am trying to track these down at present. Some regional libraries in the L of C system generate their own talking books which are distributed primarily in their own districts. The New Hampshire one just issued Who The Hell is William Loeb? (I am informed that it is hard for out-of-staters to get any on loan.) The Iowa district has a good percentage of Science Fiction cassettes recorded. Other volunteer organizations like Educational Tape Recording for the Blind in Chicago, have a few titles, and there are numerous individual efforts, like all the books that Marsha Jones and Diana Studebaker have taped for me. A blind girl in Laconia has an extensive collection of specially taped SF and I hope to arrange a swap deal with her as the first step to eventually building up a swap network of blind SF readers.

More SF is available now than I have time to read, but it is not necessarily the kind I would like to read most. The various programs have strange methods of making their selections of what to tape. Library of Congress issued Dune Messiah several years ago, but has just issued Dune this month, while the Jewish Guild issued Children of Dune a month ago.

I hope to start publishing bibliographies of SF for the blind in this issue of NIEKAS, carrying them over into all future issues, eventually listing just about all SF available from the various sources. John Boardman will be helping me with this project, and is doing the first part... a listing of SF available from Recordings for the Blind.

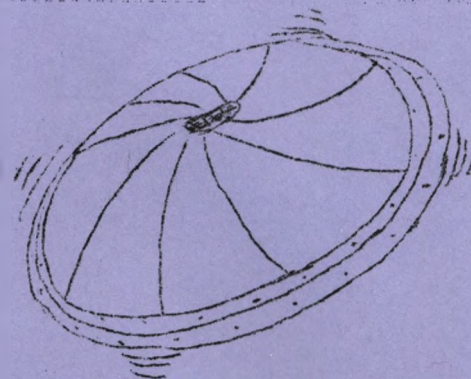
I hope that one function of NIEKAS will be that of a focus for blind SF readers around the country. I will try to get its existence published in the proper places. Unfortunately for now the three of us do not have the facilities or time to produce an issue on cassette though we may be able to at some future date.

OF BLINDNESS-COMMUNICATION AND TECHNOLOGY

Many of my friends have asked the same questions since I have lost my sight. I will try to answer a few of them now.

The two basic media for reading are the talking book and Braille. The talking book comes in disk, open reel and cassette format the open reel is rarely used today. The current standard for disks is 8-1/3 RPM. Library of Congress lends special phonographs that play at this speed and the now obsolete 16-2/3 RPM. Machines can also be purchased from American Printing House for the Blind in Louisville, KY and Science for the Blind Products in Balla Cynwyd, PA. Most records are either 10 inches hard disks or 9 inch flexible disks. Galaxy comes in the first format, where each side plays for 90 minutes, while Natural History comes in the second, 60 minutes to a side.

Cassette books from Recordings for the Blind



Cassette books from Recordings for the Blind come in a half speed 4 track format so that a C60 cassette actually holds 4 hours worth of material. The tracks have a non standard spacing, to minimize crosstalk, and can only be played on a special Library of Congress machine, or one purchasable from American Printing House. L of C used 2 track half speed cassettes, but will switch to 4 track, late next year. This will probably become the standard for all agencies as they acquire the special recording equipment. The special players keep the tape in contact with the head on fast forward and rewind so that a chatter is heard. When textbooks are taped, subsonic beeps are superimposed to indicate change of page and chapter so that a student can scan back and forth looking for special material. This tone indexing is also used to label the start of new articles in cassette magazines from L of C. Also, the machines are equipped with a variable speed control so that they can be operated at any speed from about 75 to 3.0 IPS. As the reader gets used to it he can speed up the cassette he is listening to until he is reading at almost double speed. There is a tremendous Donald Duck effect in the voices but you can get used to it and read at about 300 words per minute.





Braille is far less significant for the blind. Only one blind person in four has any familiarity with it, and only one in eight can use it fluently. I am between in my reading ability, managing about 40 words per minute. I use it primarily for labeling books, records, clothing and food, and for correspondence, tho I read a monthly science magazine and try desperately to keep up with a special weekly New York Times. I generally finish only one Times in three. Braille is also terribly bulky. For instance, one issue of *Galaxy* in Braille is 5 inches thick with a page size just under a square foot. (I do not know why it is, but *Galaxy* is available in both talking books and Braille format but no other SF magazines are available.)

Modern technology is coming to the aid of the blind, too. About 5 years ago, Telesensory Systems Inc. of Palo Alto, California marketed the OPTACON or Optical Tactile CONverter, a machine that lets the user feel the shapes of the letters on the printed page. This opens up typed correspondence, ink print books, newspapers and magazines, etc to the user. The machine is about the size of a small hardcover book, and has a TV camera about the size of a lipstick tube at the end of a 2 foot cable. With your right hand you run the camera over the page where it picks up one letter at a time, and an array of 120 vibrating pins scratch the shape of the letter on your other hand. It takes very intensive training and diligent practice to be able to use the machine. I have now had it for one year and my speed is only 13 words per minute. I hope to eventually 20 and maybe reach 30. Congenitally blind people who use it intermittantly hit 40 words, and those who use it several hours a day, every day have hit 60 words. One woman, the daughter of the inventor, has now passed 100 words per minute. (The Stereotoner is a device much like the OPTACON, but instead of giving a tactile impression, it gives an auditory clue as to the shape of the letter. I have not seen one, but as I understand it, the user gets a number of tones in his ears. The stereo effect tells about the left to right distribution of the ink, while pitch gives an up and down indication of the distribution. I would imagine that it would be very hard to distinguish between an M and a W. On the other hand, with the OPTACON it is very hard to distinguish between an E and an S.)

I try and read my correspondence with the OPTACON and would appreciate it if people who wrote me did the following to make it easier,

If you have a selectric with a selection of typing elements use a clean sans serif face like letter gothic. Type in all capitals, and dog ear the top left of the page to speed up my getting oriented. This machine, when introduced costed at 5K, and is now under 3K, and only about a thousand have been sold.

Three different groups are working on TV/computer systems which will read printed material out loud. The Kurstweil Company near Boston is closest to completion and they will probably market their machine in about 2 years. I understand it is about the size of a desk and will cost about 10K. Because of the peculiarities of English spelling it will not pronounce perfectly. People who have heard the machine say it sounds like Fidel Castro.

Still rather far off are projects to hook a TV camera directly into the brain. This has been done so far only with rasters of 100 dots or less. This is not enough to recognize ink print letters, but according to an article in *Science News* they were able to flash visual images of Braille directly into the brain, and the person could read Braille this way much faster than he could tactually.

Other aids are also under development for mability, math, etc. TSI has -(and several other companies) talking calculators. A group in New Zealand has developed a sonar unit to tell the blind person about his environment (called the Kay Device or Soniguide). I have an early prototype of this and find it useful even tho it does break down fairly often. I understand that newer models are more reliable, but the cost is just under 2 K. There is also a Laser cane, using several infrared laser beams to do much the same thing, at about the same price.

I have never objected to talking about things like this and am not in the least self-conscious about it. If there is anything else you are curious about, please don't hesitate to ask.

OF RABBITS AND PEARS, ...

Recently finished Adams' *Watership Down*, available on cassette from the Jewish Center for the Blind. The author has told an excellent story and created a very believable secondary universe. As most of you know the book is about a group of rabbits which has to flee because its warren is about to be destroyed by a housing tract. It tells of their migration to a new site, the warrens they encounter in their move, and their trials in establishing their new warren and coming to terms with the surrounding warrens. The rabbits have the courage and quiet resourcefulness of Hobbits. Wasn't it Saruman who contemptuously compared Hobbits to scared rabbits? ... or was it Sharkey? Anyhow, I think he spoke with more truth than he intended.

The writer created a very believable world-view by combining extremely accurate knowledge about the behavior of real rabbits with a self consistant motivational pattern and an invented vocabulary that works. Since I heard the book on tape I do not know how the words are spelled, but silflay seems a natural for grazing, passing racca for eliminating, and hurudurum for a car or train. Tolkien of course invented complete languages for the Elves and there is enough of the black speech quoted to deduce some points of grammar in that tongue. I suppose he also invented some details of the logic of Dwarf and ent speech too. Tolkien's languages work because he IS a linguist as the detail work shows. Adams has invented only a few words in Lupine but these seem to have the same versimilitude. But don't look for fans to start writing letters in Lupine. Only a very few words of special significance to rabbits are given.

I was fascinated by the extreme contrasts between the two warrens the pilgrims encountered. In the first, the rabbits were given luxurious food by people, who in turn snared the rabbits for food from time to time. The rabbits tried to pretend the problem did not exist, and had become incapable of asking where a particular rabbit was. He might have been snared and then they would have to admit the precariousness of their situation. They lived as slaves of men. The second warren was managed by a superstrong rabbit who was tired of running from men, foxes, and other predators. He organized his rabbits into a collective that could fight off these enemies, and organized a very elaborate security system. However the security system became so elaborate that it was tyranny, and the subjects (rabbits) began to hate it and wish to get away. His ego demanded that none leave and that any stray rabbit be forced to join.

Parallels could be drawn between both warrens and various human societies. I have a feeling, however, that no direct allegories were intended. This brings to mind the discussion of allegory in Lord of the Rings. The final conclusions reached by many Tolkien fans, taking into account what JRRJ has said in various interviews, that he did not write LotR as an allegory of World War Two or anything else.

On the other hand, certain events and attitudes are common to mankind, and the reader is perfectly free to say this reminds me of the situation in History where... Some writers, however, intend direct parallels and WANT the readers to find them. For instance, the society of the ants in the revised *Sword in the Stone*, or Aslan's death in *The Lion The Witch and the Wardrobe*. I think Adams falls closer to Tolkien than to Lewis and White.

I just finished Adams' *Shardik* a few days ago. A friend had taped it for me and no sooner had she finished than it came out on talking books from L of C. The friend who did tape it has a problem pronouncing unfamiliar names so I will probably be way off in my spelling, and in any conclusions I could possibly draw from the nature of the names themselves.

Watership Down is definitely a fantasy of the talking animals type. *Shardik* is not a fantasy at all, but is a story of a primitive tribe which interacts with a bear that it worships as a god. Nothing supernatural occurs anywhere in the story, unless certain improbable coincidences in the bear's behavior could be laid to divine intervention. At the First World Fantasy Convention, Lester del Rey had said that *Shardik* is not a fantasy, but is in an old, now almost extinct form known as, if I remember his words correctly, a Philosophical Novel. I had not heard of this category before and am still not sure just what he meant.

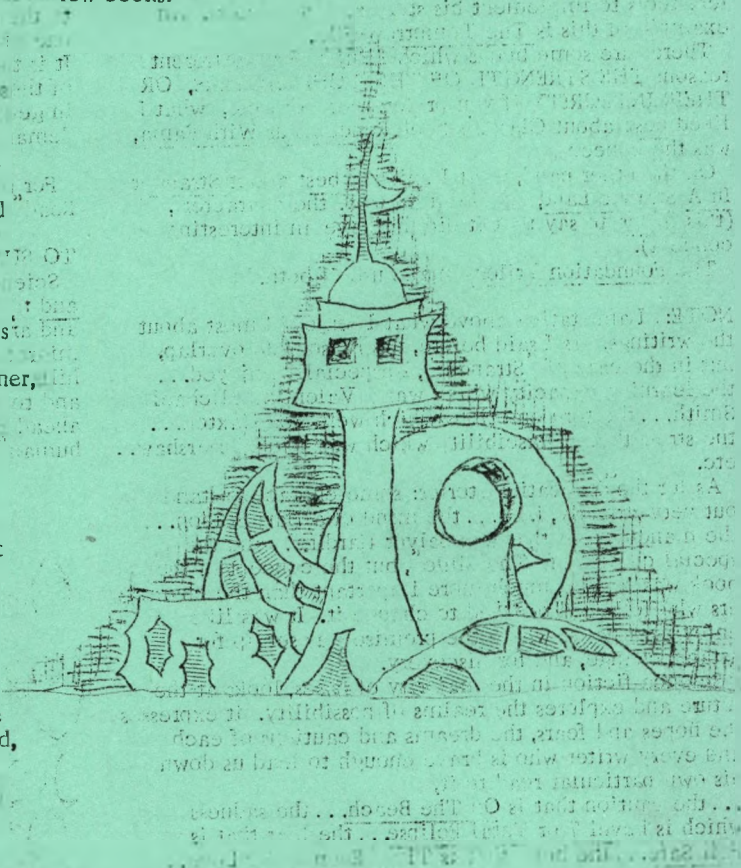
There is a great difference between the styles of Adams' two novels. While the rabbits in *Down* underwent extreme hardship and peril, it was presented in an understated manner, much like the sufferings of the Hobbits in LotR. *Shardik* is drastically different. People treat the bear with horrible cruelty, and treat each other even worse. These are portrayed in grisly detail. The scenes in the slave camp are especially bad. While *Down* could be read by children, I would never give *Shardik* to a child. The hero does have to suffer in order to be reborn into a new life and I am not criticising Adams for showing this suffering. In fact, I see no way the author could have downplayed it and still kept his story believable and moving. I am only commenting on the contrast between this and *Down*.

The slave driver is one of the most evil and hateful characters I have encountered in fiction. He is portrayed with great effectiveness. Sauron, Saruman and Sharkey are empty shells in comparison. The villain gets his in the end, of course, being horribly mauled by the bear. But his suffering is nothing compared to that of his victims over the

many years he had been a state torturer and then a slave dealer. I think of the conversation between Gandalf and Frodo concerning Gollum. Someone may "deserve death" but who is to give it, when we cannot give life to those who deserve it. I suppose my reaction is way out of proportion to the actions and villainy of the slave dealer, but I keep thinking of some of the greatest villains of our history. Stalin and the murder of millions of Ukrainians in the 30's and of central Europeans in the 40's; Hitler and the murder of the Gypsies and Jews; the Zionist, Irqun and Stern Gang murder of innocent Palestinians and UN observers in the 40's; Fidel Castro and the round the clock firing squads after his takeover; Arafat and the murder of various hostages today, and so on... without end.

Incidentally, does anyone out there know whether *Shardik* is set in a real time and place? It seems to be a jungle area, and the hero's tribe has the wheel and the working of iron, but have never heard of using horses. Their only beast of burden is the ox. Camels are mentioned as existing way off, but again not as beasts of burden. Leopards inhabit their realm and there are many other plants and animals mentioned, all of which are unfamiliar to me. The people build cities with elaborate stonework and have a reservoir. At the end of the novel they meet up with a substantially more advanced civilization a great distance to the southeast. While only a few priests could read and write among themselves, many in the other civilization can write and do so for diplomatic correspondence. They introduce horses as objects of trade to the hero's culture. Talking things over with Sherwood and several other friends, we came up with the idea that it is set somewhere on the Indian subcontinent. We omitted the Incas, for they did not have the wheel.

I was very glad to read both books. I found both moving and thought-provoking and really feel I have gained something for having read them... a thing I can say of very few books.



FROM THE WICKED WITCH, OF THE OTHER SALEM...

It is so often stated that Science Fiction and Science Fantasy are an escape from reality to a dream world. I for one do not believe this to be the only reason for their existence. For this reason I have decided to state my own reasons for reading and enjoying Science Fiction and Fantasy.

I can readily concede that some people read them for the purpose of escape, but far and away more people read them for a diversity of other reasons. This is also true of viewing films and television programs.

Science Fantasy, or just plain Fantasy can be an interesting journey, as is J. R. R. Tolkien's Lord of the Rings, but at the same time it can also be a sharp delineation of the concepts of right and wrong, what creates greed, disillusion, valor, steadfastness, etc.

It can also be an exploration of alternates: Alternates such as Glory Road, or John Norman's world of Gor.

Fantasy can be the joy of adventure as is Conan, where the heroes and villains and their actions are bigger than life, but where characters all have their own special brand of integrity within the story line.

I find that I have several categories for enjoyment (which sometimes interact) as far as Science Fiction is concerned. I also have one very excellent reason which I will discuss later on.

As to the categories:
I enjoy the WHAT IF...

The fact that an author can start with a new and different premise and then move it from today to tomorrow, from here to there through extrapolation, at the same time inventing all the socio-economic and sociological tools to implement his story and characters. An example of this is The Tomorrow File.

There are some books which I enjoy for a different reason; THE STRENGTH OF THEIR CHARACTERS, OR THEIR INTEGRITY if you prefer. For example, what I liked best about Clarke's book Rendezvous With Rama, was the concept.

On the other hand, what I enjoyed best about Stranger In A Strange Land by Heinlein were the characters, (this is not to say that it did not have an interesting concept).

The Foundation Trilogy made use of both.

NOTE: I am stating above what I enjoyed most about the writings. As I said before, the reasons do overlap, but in the case of Stranger, I especially enjoyed... the learning capacity which was a Valentine Michael Smith... the torn emotions which were Ben Caxton... the strength and irascibility which was a Jubal Harshaw... etc.

As for the Foundation stories: some characters stand out very strongly, i. e. ... the mind of a Hari Seldon... the maneuvering that was Salyor Hardin... and the special quality of The Mule, but the concept of the book was for me, much more important than the characters who followed or tried to change it. It was like enjoying a game where the premise was set up for attack, change, and for discovery.

Science fiction in the majority of cases, looks at the future and explores the realms of possibility. It expresses the hopes and fears, the dreams and cautions of each and every writer who is brave enough to lead us down his own particular road to it, ... the caution that is On The Beach... the sadness which is Level 7 or Total Eclipse... the fear that is Fail Safe... the hope that is Time Enough For Love...

the dream which was Star Trek.

It also has the power to take us ahead-and while doing so, to explore the reasoning, or flaws in it, of the present. It opens one's scope in relation to the techniques we use: to set our standards i. e. Heinlein's discussion on Juvenile Delinquency in Starship Troopers... to organize societies i. e. the genetic heredity in Total Eclipse and Three To Dorsai's military one... to move ahead in the Universe and explore i. e. Heinlein's future history series and Star Trek.

Science Fiction also teaches that the Reality we know as Science is subject to very strict and well defined laws. But that the future may find us looking at additional laws which will change and add to that which we know as Science. This has been true in the past of Science Fiction-the forshadowing of trips to the moon and the introduction of new tools (waldos) to cite only two examples. It may also prove true in the future... i. e. possible rules for robots, rolling roads, etc.

But more than all this, SCIENCE FICTION MAKES ME THINK! This is the most important reason of all.

At the present moment in time I can think of no better example of this than Paingod. Harlan Ellison's feelings and those of his characters ring true. As for the Ellison person I can only say the following:

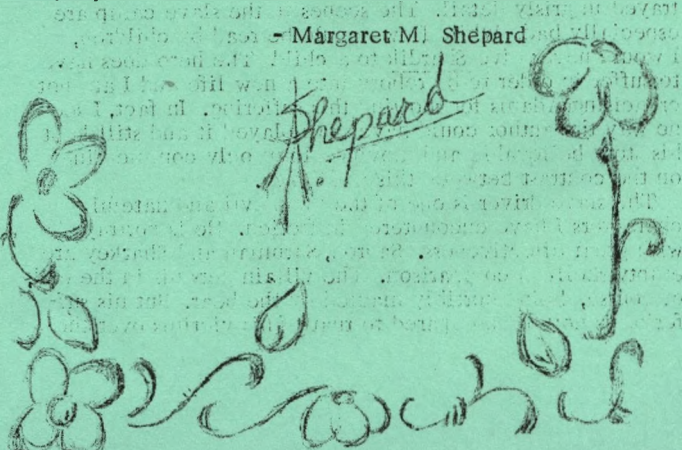
There are men in each generation who, through working for the best within themselves, motivate others by their very existence. He is one of these. There are those who have the ability to cut through the everyday crust of "pleasantries" and standard existence of food and movement to the core of existence which is action and purpose. He is one of these. Arrogance? No. For the self-esteem is real. It is the pride in who and what he is and can become. One of those who is not afraid to stand and say to mankind in general and in particular, when you deal with me, I demand that you think.

For this reason alone I add him to my own list of Must Read authors.

TO SUMMARIZE:

Science Fiction should remind us that we must look ahead and to both sides without forgetting who and what we were and are. It should help us to remember when we start to migrate to the stars, that our beginnings were on the green hills of earth. It reminds us also to be all that we can be and to find out that all of us have the capacity to look ahead through the hopes and fears and to be More than human.

Margaret M. Shepard
Shepard



Sherwood Frazier Science Fiction



With this, the first installment of my column, I would like to introduce myself to the "fans". I'm rather new to fandom and newer yet to zine publishing, so this will be an experience for all of us.

I have been reading Si-Fi and Fantasy for about 18 years, but only became involved in fandom about 4 years ago. My first con was Tercon II in 1973, but since then I have attended two world cons and many regional cons. The last con I was able to attend was Lunacon '76. My main interest in fandom was spurred by Ed Meskys. Had it not been for him, I would never have become as involved as I am.

I first met Ed in 1972 through my sister-in-law, Margaret Shepard, who was working at Belknap College in Center Harbor at the time.

We did not get together until about a year later when we all went to Tercon II. Since then, Ed and I have become close friends. Living only 20 miles apart has made us each other's closest contacts to fandom for several years.

Ed's blindness has cut him off from a lot of publications that can only be had in printed form. To keep him abreast of technology, I read several science publications to him, along with screening the old issues of Niekas for the "Tolkien Harnbook", to be published by Mirage Press.

Over the past couple of years, Ed and I have tried very hard to start a Si-Fi club in central New Hampshire. It has been to no avail, we have a lot of interest but very few joiners. Now that Margaret has returned to the area, we have the interest and the people to publish a fanzine; if not starting a club.

At this time I would like to take some time to express my views of science fiction and technology.

Having been born in 1946, I grew up with the technology that resulted from World War II. As I grew up, technology was an everyday fact of life. When I was 10 or 11 years old, my father, a fan of Burroughs, introduced me to fantasy; then to science fiction. Through his books I became very interested in all forms of what might have been termed "alien literature".

During the 1960's I became very involved in the space program. This, coupled with the fact that I was in the Navy and saw first-hand examples of technological advances, prompted me to delve deeper into the realms of si-fi.

The more I read, the more it became apparent that technology played a very important part in the writing of science fiction.

I have found that the reverse is also true, both physically and mentally. Let me explain what I mean by both physically and mentally.

From the ideas of Jules Verne we have progressed to the physical realities which include a moon landing and the L-5 Society's plans to build space stations.

The mental side is the change in the attitudes of our society and the general public's acceptance of the ideas which were "fiction" and are now becoming fact. This acceptance has helped technology to advance.

With the election of a new president who has a background in the sciences and not the law, we have the chance to test the public's acceptance of technology. I feel we should all begin to push the use of space technology to our benefit. We have the manpower and the money in this country to produce at will any number of space stations.

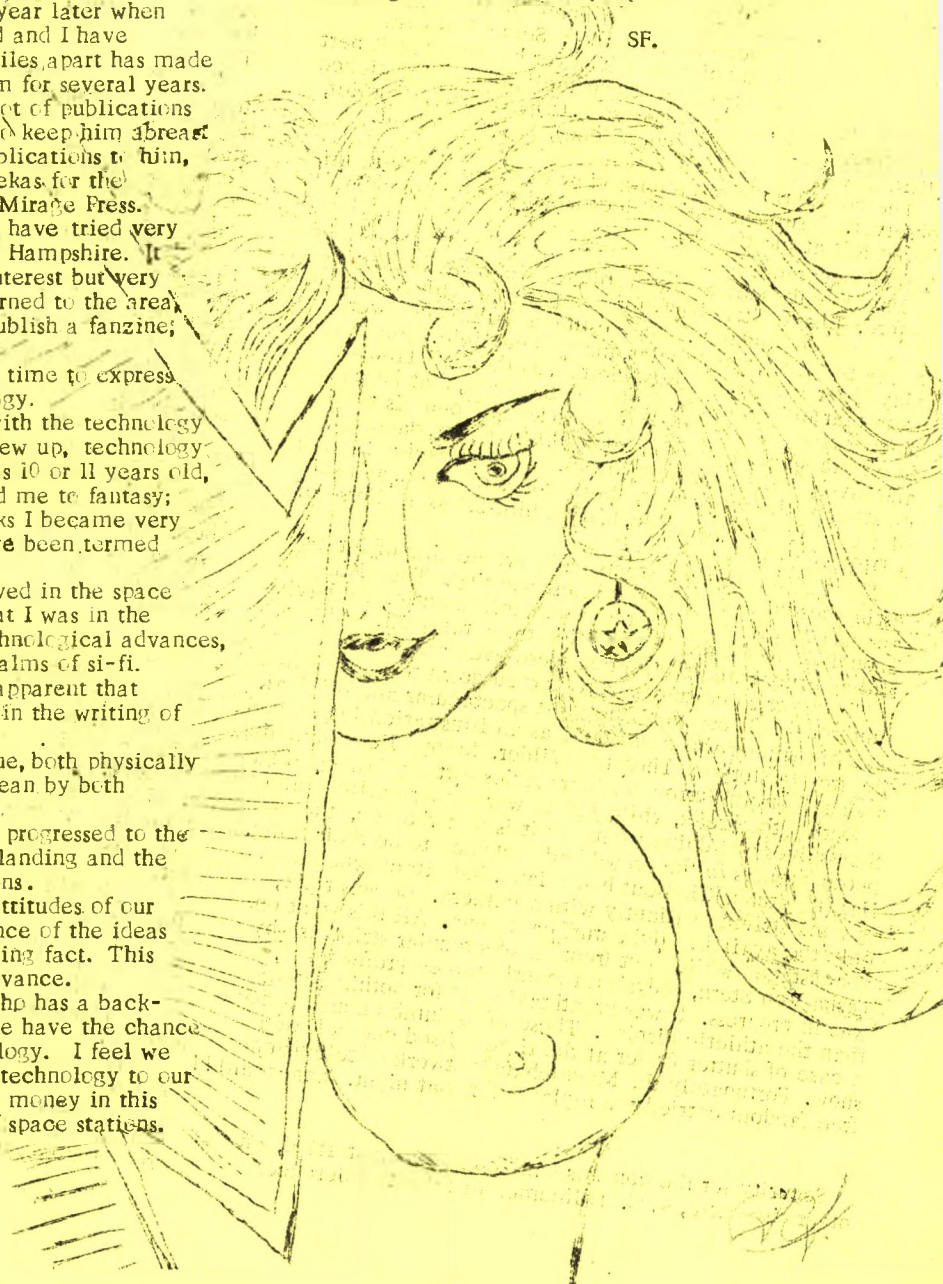
We have the need to go into space for the simple want of more energy. Without this energy, we as a country will no longer have the power, nor the economy to resist political dissention.

A country of this size can not afford to be disjointed over any number of political, economic and social problems.

This is why I feel we need to unite behind a common goal, and what better goal to have than to push our frontiers out from the earth? At the same time we can catch up on the energy crisis, and perhaps cure some of our economical problems that face us.

Many great empires have fallen because of political dissention and unrest due to the fact that there were no common goals to unite the people.

SF.



THE OBSERVER

The renaissance of "Niekas" opens a new avenue of expression for a "gafiator" fan to express his feelings upon returning to the fold of New England Fandom. What better way to accomplish total re-immersion than by attending the 34th Annual World Science Fiction Convention, to pay homage to one's absolutely favorite author - Robert A. Heinlein? His latest magnum opus, *Time Enough for Love*, offers the appropriate surroundings for the "Big Con" - Kansas City, MO. During his speech to the assembly of "The People" in the civic auditorium in the Convention Center near the Meuhlebach, he pointed out that the "highest" point in Kansas City in the days of his youth, was the brick tower one could see by stepping out the back door of the Meuhlebach and looking North. The structure is now dominated by sky scrapers, all in excess of 30 stories high. One gets the distinct impression that the older ways in Kansas City live in the cracks.

Much of R. A. H.'s talk was "canned" in the sense that some aspects had been heard before. Some fans even "boo'd" him at one point. Let it never be said that Robert Heinlein does not engender strong feelings in his audience or readers. Also, he's an honest... (a) politician, (b) thief, (c) author, (d) shaman... (check one), he stays bought. (Paid Advertisement)

The convention presented a view of fandom new to this observer. Results are mixed feelings (depending on who's being felt at the time).

The Masquerade:

Having only seen a few costume events at world cons before, I have little basis for comparison. This results in a "Neo's" impressions. The costumes for this con were, to say the least, spectacular, many incredible. Some were played for laughs. Filthy Pierre, as the Cap Trooper from Starship Troopers, proved once again, that he can neither sing nor play the piano, (Roger Young is turning in his grave--I checked). Like athlete's foot, dandruff, and hives, Filthy is ubiquitous. Another aspirant came on stage with orange hair, nordic robes of green, and skin of a very precarious shade, billing himself as a "Norse of a Different Color".

The California contestants had a whole line of interesting costumes they were almost wearing. The King and Queen of Cups deserves honorable mention for having enough on to let the imagination run - rampant, rabid, rife and rutty; and the suntans were even all over.

The 70 or so costumes were carved down to 15 for a final runthrough. These were the most spectacular and original. The big winner was a gal done as an illustration in pen and ink from a story by Thornton Wilder. Many aliens including a "Thark" from Burrough's Mars series left my jaw sagging.

During the break, while judges were "murmalling" among themselves and doing whatever it is that they do, the photographers in the crowd had a chance to do their thing. Hal (ne Stubbs) Clement had a laughing attack when he saw me striving valiantly with a camera. He was right, only the available light stuff came out. All this went on "backstage" while "out front" a spectacular striptease by Pasia Von Stern, ecadysiast recently turned professional, was in progress. It was breathtaking, if for nothing other than the athletic display. Those of us dumb enough to have a case of shutter finger at the time missed one hell of a show. Fortunately the Meuhlebach network of television-free fandom carried the replay later that night. aaaa-a-ah!!!

Security for the con was handled by a few startled, but otherwise calm, K. C. policemen of infinite tolerance.

The internal arrangements were handled by a group who called themselves the Dorsai (I assume after the Dorsai stories by Gordon Dixon). This particular group is at their best, para-military; and at the worst, destructionist. The sight of two dozen green uniforms did a lot to set up an atmosphere in the convention area. For those who care, two dozen constitutes a "swarm". By the way, everyone is a general (all chiefs, no indians). Their main areas of activity were for the Art Show, the Masquerade and the Guest of Honor - Robert Heinlein. The Art Show had one documented case of one almost-lost NOREASCON PROCEEDINGS, and a misplaced camera; which, thanks to all the gods themselves, was returned by an honest citizen of the galactic realm. Fortunately for all concerned, only a few potentially violent confrontations between fans and Dorsai occurred. Thanks to the comic all for the latent, mile wide, streak of anarchy running up the back bone of the majority of fans.

The Art Show was big, bustling and bizarre.

The artist of honor, George Barr, had what amounted to a one-man-show with lots of former book covers for sale. The chief gnome was Bjo Trimble - a deceptively smooth center of calm amidst chaos. The show included a wonderful series of cast bronze dragons, one of whom attacked this author.

Besides seeing new exciting work, one also sees the items that could not be sold at other smaller conventions, with substantially reduced minimum bids. A new and coming artist, to the jaded tastes of this enthusiast is fan, recently turned pro, one "Phalen", from Indianapolis. He is achieving rather incredible effects with acrylic on velvet, especially his star backgrounds and starscapes, by introducing white acrylic onto the surface with a hypodermic needle. WOW!!!

The high point of the "dead dog" party was a trip to Stephenson's Apple Farm Restaurant, south of Independence, MO (yes, people actually live in Missouri, but I had to be shown). After five days of the "Pioneer Grill" in the bottom of the Dixon Inn (the finest shoe leather under the western sun), we stopped off with one of those meals that will forever remain in memory. It was mid-western cooking with a vengeance - but oh so fine!!

Ben Bova and the high hats formed one independent party, and the rest of us "just plain filk" formed another. The item of choice was a marshmallow salad (not too bad to eat either), which appeared on the menu. For a number of years it has been a tradition that at each con, when possible, Ben Bova will be inundated with marshmallows. The mystery remains enshrined in Filklure. A mushroom salad was ordered and sent to the appropriate table by a waiter, and the messenger was ordered to observe and report. The vital information came back; Mr. Bova had a reaction that can best be described as anaphylactic shock. Subsequent rhubarbing resulted in the knowledge that the recipe was to be found in a cookbook on sale at the cash register for a modest fee. Ben said he'd sign each copy of the recipe we purchased. Nine copies of it were produced in short order and, as we go to press, Mr. Bova is still complaining of writer's cramp.

The capstone of the convention was produced on the last day by the "permanent" plastic bracelets issued by Mid-America to its inmates for quick identification. One of our party was gently accosted by an elderly matron from another group which had just arrived. She hoped

that all the people had achieved some good, and felt better about returning either to a normal life, or to the hospital from which we were all obviously on furlough,

FANDOM LIVES-

RAFE FOLCH PI

I am the wife of an avid science fiction and fantasy reader named Sherwood. I am exposed to a vast and varied amount of literature; among which are selections of J. R. R. Tolkien, Isaac Asimov, Robert Heinlein, Edward Gorey, Harlan Ellison and many many more. Around my house are all kinds of science fiction magazines. There are records, tapes and books; all the genre of science fiction.

I am also the mother of a six year old son, named Aaron. His dad is now in the process of reading to him 'The Hobbit', so that Aaron might learn of the world of Tolkien.

Aaron gets a charge out of Edmund Gorey, which I am not always sure is for the best. He also really likes 'Star Trek' and 'Space 1999'. (Easy now folks-- remember now, he's only six.)

I've attended a world con, and I met a lot of people there and enjoyed myself thoroughly, even an embarrassing moment of coming face to face with a legend and having my sniffling husband say,

"See honey, I told you he's not a god. I could have killed my wonderful husband who was having great fun. The legend, whose name is Isaac Asimov, pinched my cheek and said something to the effect that he was very human. ---I sure wish I didn't say things like, 'That couldn't be Isaac Asimov you were talking to, because he's a god'. DUMB!!

I've been a convention widow, several times. I've lost my husband to club meetings, discussions with friends, and a

Super weird sense of humor which seems to be a symptom of a true si-fi nut.

I've learned a lot and enjoyed much. So now, I will again ask, what constitutes a science fiction fan? My main reading interest is European Historical Novels. However, even if I can't qualify as a card-carrying si-fi member, might I say that the world of science fiction has captured my imagination, taken me to places I've never been, enlightened and entertained me. All the way from an earth of the future, to the stars and their life harboring planets; I enjoy science fiction. So I wonder if it's possible to say that I am an amateur si-fi fan who stands mostly on the outside and looks in; and learns.

FROM THE OUTSIDE LOOKING IN

What constitutes a Science Fiction Fan?

NIEKAS 21:10

Kendall Interview 1

18 November 1976

Dear Ed:

I am delighted to hear that Niekas is alive and well, and you are certainly welcome to use the 1969 interview with Carol Kendall. Surprisingly little of it is out of date since interruptions and complications in her life have kept her from finishing the book she was working on seven years ago! I am enclosing on a separate sheet a new introductory note that will bring her career and biographical material up to the present.

We're doing fairly well, although Bill has been getting progressively thinner and run down for over a year; we've just learned that he has been walking around with pneumonia for a long time, maybe months. Now that he's been properly diagnosed at last, perhaps he'll start to get better!

Tony is nearly 7 - in first grade all day; reads well, swims, rides horseback; we've read him The Hobbit 4 times, The Lord of the Rings once so far, the Lloyd Alexander cycle twice. His appetite for fantasy and adventure is insatiable. Eleanor just turned 5; she'll start kindergarten next year. She's a great beauty, a fabulous swimmer, spoiled, willful, affectionate, definitely a realist rather than fantasy-minded. Our cats are 16 & 11 now; Darcy, the old Siamese, is blind now, but he seems happy and otherwise healthy.

I'm working 3 mornings a week as a teaching assistant to Jim Gunn, the science-fiction author, who is on the KU English faculty--grading papers, conferring with the large number of students in an oversized S - F course, etc. Lots of fun, this job; great to read good S-F and get paid for it!

Best from all the Scotts to you and Stanley.

As ever,

Nan Scott

INTRODUCTION TO KENDALL INTERVIEW

The following interview with Carol Kendall was tape recorded for Niekas in the autumn of 1969, and more than a few biographical details need to be brought up to date. Since the rainy afternoon that Siggy talked into my tape recorder about fantasy in general and "the volcano book" in particular, she has become a widow and a grandmother and has travelled around the world. The blond hair is grey now, but she is as energetic as ever, currently working on her own translations of Chinese folktales and preparing a volume of Chinese folktales in collaboration with Yao-wen Li. In England last summer, she was involved in preparations for the broadcasting of her second Minnipin book, The Whisper of Glochen, on Anglia T.V., to be narrated by Paul Honeyman with illustrations by John Worsley.

The "volcano book" is presently being rewritten to clear up patches of "confusion". Its writing was repeatedly interrupted, first by the Kendalls' move from Ohio to Kansas, and then in rapid succession by Siggy's auto accident, Professor Kendall's death, Siggy's unavailability in completing work of her husband's and settling of the estate, and then a trip around the world with her younger daughter Gillian, now a Stanford junior.

KENDALL INTERVIEW by Nan C. Scott

Probably best-known to Niekas readers for her two children's fantasies, The Gammage Cup and The Whisper of Glocken, Carol "Siggy" Kendall (the nickname comes from her maiden name of Seeger) is a compact and energetic blonde, something of the same mixture of the dreamy and the practical found in Muggles of The Gammage Cup. It is more than coincidence that Siggy too has a flame-colored cape and an orange ("persimmon really") front door on the new house she and her husband Paul, a noted biographer and Shakespeare professor at the University of Kansas, moved into this summer. Muggles is, she admits, a self-portrait in many ways, not least in their mutual desire to have everything out where it can be seen, not put away in drawers, though in Siggy's case this means peg-boards on the kitchen walls, not piles all over the floor!

Until two years ago she and her husband wrote their books and raised their two daughters in Athens, Ohio, where Professor Kendall was on the English faculty at Ohio University. Siggy met him when she was herself still a college student there and he, her young survey of literature instructor. Now their elder daughter Carol (variously "Curley" or "Corky") is back at O.U. with her husband, who is doing graduate work in English; the two have returned from a stint with the Peace Corps in Kenya. A high-school aged daughter, Gillian, still lives at home, winning writing awards herself and playing leads in summer-camp musicals. Two Old English Sheepdog pups, Heather and Daffodil, complete the family circle behind the persimmon front door and probably do their bit to help slow down Siggy's progress on her newest book, her third children's fantasy and her seventh book altogether. (She has also published two adult mysteries, The Black Seven and The Baby-Snatcher, and two realistic children's books, The Other Side of the Tunnel and The Big Splash.)

On a rainy fall afternoon Siggy met with me over a cup of tea to discuss her new book and her feelings about fantasy in general. A transcript of our tape-recorded conversation follows.

SCOTT: What about the book that is in progress now, the "volcano book," did you say it was?

KENDALL: Yes.

SCOTT: Is it a fantasy?

KENDALL: It is a fantasy, and--it started as something entirely different. I felt that any series of books gets into a rut, which is the reason that in The Whisper of Glocken I started with a new set of characters in an other village, although they're allied to the others. So then I wanted to get quite away from that for a while. I'd seen a volcano or two, and I was fascinated by them. The thing started actually with seeing mudpots in Yellowstone. I found those completely fascinating, and discovered that I could have sat beside them and watched them for hours. Of course, the first thing I thought about with mudpots was that you could read them--I mean, these bubbles would mean something. Or you were so fascinated by them and hypnotized that I could conceivably see someone sitting there thinking he's getting messages through them. So the mudpots came first actually, and then we went traveling here and there after that and everything I saw sort of went with the mudpots, like volcanos--Mount Etna--and rune-stones in Sweden, and all these things began to come together. They all seemed to be part of one thing.

At first I thought, well, it'll be another Minnipin book set in one of the villages along the Watercress, but I did want to get away from that valley for a while. So I thought: I don't have to have Minnipins; I can have other people.

So I just made my own setting, and of course again I put these people far away from anybody else. They don't know that anybody else exists. It's just they, and there they are, in this very tiny place, high over the sea so that they can't even get down to the sea and be fishermen or anything like that. They live on the side of a volcano; in fact, they think they live on the body of some sort of sky-god who has fallen. They have a whole history of how he fell through a crack in the sky from dancing too much on the sky-boards--that sort of thing-- and how the world as they know it was created from him and they are actually living on this volcano's body.

SCOTT: Are they a more primitive kind of people than the Minnipins by quite a bit?

KENDALL: Yes, they're not as well-developed; they're not as far along. At any rate, I started with them as quite separate people, but what do you know? It turns out that they are going to be Minnipins after all. They are from the same place that the Minnipins originally came from...

SCOTT: Before the Great Drought? Before they crossed the mountains to..

KENDALL: Yes, before they got to Gold Mountain, in fact; the earliest history of Gammage people, that lot, is of Gold Mountain. They don't know anything before that. Well, this goes before they ever got to Gold Mountain or at least are on their way there but who have got away from the volcano, which erupts every two hundred or four hundred years. The Gammage people came from the first of those who had escaped from a former eruption of the volcano. These people came afterwards, but they don't know until the very end--and the reader is not supposed to know--that they are really part of the Minnipins. But this is where they originally came from.

SCOTT: That answers one question I was going to ask, and that was whether there was going to be any more Minnipin books.

KENDALL: Well, I expect so; I don't really know. You know, if I don't ever get this one finished, of course, we can't go on! But now, I've passed the halfway point, and presumably I will get finished with this before the next thing happens. We've bought the house now and are supposedly settled in, and Gilly won't be getting married for a few years, I trust. So maybe I'll be able to get on with it, but I've just been interrupted so much--I've been working on this for what? three years? four years?

SCOTT: When you first came here, when Paul was visiting you were working on it they, weren't you?

KENDALL: Yes, yes, and I had been sort of working on it before that, but I hadn't got it into its form, I mean into its placing, its setting. And I hadn't got the people.

SCOTT: I remember at that time you said no, that it wasn't going to be a Minnipin book.

KENDALL: That's right. And then I changed--well, it wasn't that I changed, but it's just that that's the way it happened.

SCOTT: It just evolved?

KENDALL: Mmm hmmm, I didn't know it was going to happen until I started thinking about it and thinking about where they were going to land; and then I thought well, it's going to be sort of inconclusive if they just get away from the place and get to a new place, and so where are they then? You know, what do we have to look forward to? But if when they get there, there is something familiar, how nice. I mean familiar beyond the fact that they recognize the people they finally come upon as some of their own kind who have gone before and come down through the generations. I mean, there are certain things that are the same--in the building of the houses, and the way they live, or the things they know about. I wanted to extend that a bit and just know exactly where they're going from there. And I

suddenly thought, my goodness, this is the Minnipins just in an earlier form, more primitive, I expect.

SCOTT: It was nice for it to come about that way, quite accidentally.

KENDALL: Yes, it was great fun, as though it was there all the time but I just didn't know it.

SCOTT: Because it's an either-or thing, isn't it, with series, what you said before about how they can become rather stuck in a rut...

KENDALL: Just a bit static.

SCOTT: Which gets to be a problem, and yet when you've got a readymade audience there, eager for more adventures of Minnipins, or Hobbits, or Borrowers, or whatever, there must be not only a temptation to please that audience but at the same time, knowing that there is an eager enthusiasm for it out there, you really want to continue in a way, and it would be awfully easy to fall into more of the same thing. When you think you're starting something quite different, and the Minnipins turn up in it somehow, this is much nicer.

KENDALL: Yes. The great trouble, I think, is that if you get into a series thing, you get lazy. You don't mean to be lazy, but you see these people as one sort of people, and it's a little difficult to develop them much beyond that. And it's no longer new. You've had the wonderful time of creating the place they live in and what it's all like and so on. Well, then when you start again with the same people the same general setting, you're stuck with what you've already done, and you can't do too much about changing the thing. So then that cuts off half your fun right away, because while you can create the village as it is, still it's going to have to be...

SCOTT: A Minnipin village.

KENDALL: Yes, in line with what could be, given the...

SCOTT: Thatched roofs, green doors, watercress beds...

KENDALL: But it is sort of fun to do this and to have it happen that it does become a Minnipin book after all. Great fun.

SCOTT: Yes, I think that would be quite satisfying.

KENDALL: But right at the moment I've got four characters on a place called the Spewing, which is just where the volcano has previously spewed out these great black tumbled rocks that we've all seen--lava beds--and I'm trying to get two of the people up to where the other two are, and I'm just having a horrible time somehow. Sometimes it's just the hardest thing in the world to move people from one place to the other. It's easy if you come to the end of a chapter, and when you pick up the new chapter, they're there. But sometimes you've got to show how they do it. And you've got awfully tired--I mean, you've already got some of the characters climbing up these awful scraping rocks and getting all bruised and battered, and then to have to set two more off on the same climb--(laughs) It takes a little doing: I've got to find my way around it, and literally for about a week now...

SCOTT: You've been stuck on the rocks?

KENDALL: I'm stuck on those rocks!

KENDALL: I'm stuck on those rocks! I'll get them there eventually, or I'll think of some way to do it that won't be boring.

SCOTT: Did you, between The Gammage Cup and The Whisper of Glocken, feel any pressure from the publishers to turn out another Minnipin book, after Gammage Cup had been a runner-up for the Newbery?

KENDALL: Yes, well, it was just taken for granted that I would do another Minnipin book, and so I went along with that. I didn't want to, but I felt that I must.

SCOTT: I feel the second book was quite successful, but at the same time probably..

KENDALL: It loses impact, because it's not really new. And I think there's nothing more exciting than picking up a book by an author that you've never read before--you've never read the author, you've never read the book, it's a completely new world, it's exciting..And then it's true, yes, it's great fun to go on with it, but then after the first one, some of the impact is just lost. You can never get it, and this is what I don't like about it. On the other hand, I do feel that I know these people, and I do enjoy writing about them. But unless I find some thing or people--characters that I'm really terribly, terribly interested in that I can put in that setting, I won't start another in the valley.

SCOTT: And unless you could find new themes that would credibly grow out of the "givens" you've already established?

KENDALL: That's right, yes. And just where I'm going with this volcano book, I'm not quite shure. It's mostly about superstition, but there's more to it than that. But I haven't really felt exactly what it is, what my main point is. There's always the danger of superstition leading to religion, and I want to stay away from that. One of the things about it, I suppose,--what keeps popping up--is that some people have to believe in something. Everybody has to believe in something, and sometimes people believe in the wrong thing, or things that are wrong for them...

SCOTT: Something that's limiting and constricting? Growth-preventing?

KENDALL: Yes, and of course a lot also depends on where you are and what the circumstances are as to what you believe in. If you live on the side of a volcano, you believe in the volcano! And when the volcano speaks, you listen. This is not true though for people who don't live on the side of a volcano; I mean, their thing that talks to them is something quite different. But you see, it all gets terribly close to religion. The volcano is--I never use the word "god", but the volcano is obviously their god. They think of it as their parent; they think they all came out of the volcano, of course, and this is their parent. Therefore, it is like a god, and the parent does things that they don't understand. I never say "parent" either.

SCOTT: Obviously this kind of nature-myth and religion are very closely entwined.

KENDALL: Mmmhmm. But as I say, it's rather ticklish. I'm winding my way around. I never want anybody to say well, this book is about religion, because it's not.

SCOTT: No, but all the things you've mentioned take on a kind of mythic and somewhat quasi-religious significance, don't they? Reading mudholes, or reading runes? Or telling the weather from the entrails of sacred birds, or whatever? All of these readings of signs into or from natural phenomena....

KENDALL: And another thing about these people is--the volcano's been quiet for a long, long time; and the old Mudlar, who reads the mudpots and tells what Belcher (Belcher is the name of the volcano) has to say, is not paid much attention to. In fact, it's a bit like today in a way; we have churches, and people go to churches, but an awful lot of people are going off on their own with a different feeling about religion entirely. In the same way these people are no longer taking the Mudlar very seriously in his readings of the mudpots. And when he says, "Throw three goats over the cliff to stop the storms," they throw three panikens of milk over as a sort of symbol: well, it'll please the elders in the village who really believe in Mudlar and Mudlar's words, but, you know, we're not going to throw three goats over! And so they have ways of

getting around the Mudlar's pronouncements, and they're sort of slipping away from their old beliefs. And then they're beginning to realize that one person's truth is not another person's truth in rather simple ways. That is, a floor-stone gets a crack in it, and somebody tells somebody else that Belcher did it, when actually it wasn't Belcher--it was just that the first somebody dropped a hot griddle on the stone and cracked it, and it wasn't Belcher doing an earthquake at all that makes the crack. But people will believe the Belcher story because this is the way the gossip spreads. It's all very tenuous, because so much of it depends--and necessarily, I think--on very small incidents, all of them adding up to--I trust!--some real theme or thought about superstition, what you believe in, why people believe in things they do, and why this is all right sometimes and other times not. (laughs) Very unsatisfactory, I'm afraid.

SCOTT: Do you find fantasy is a favorite way of yours to--a favorite mode to write in and one that's particularly useful in conveying "big" themes?

KENDALL: Yes, this is the thing. Because you can write about almost anything in fantasy, and it can become interesting. You know, if you write a realistic book about the mayor and the town council and people--older people, if you're a child--who go off to meetings and they're arguing about, well, school taxes, all of these things, and paving roads and so on, that's dull. It's dull to me mostly, unless it's my road that's being paved.

SCOTT: But give it a magic dimension...

KENDALL: That's it. You could even do the paving of a road in fantasy, but it suddenly becomes much more fun. It means something to you, and the things that they're settling in the town council..., these have great meaning.

SCOTT: Mingy's sick fund in The Gammage Cup...

KENDALL: Yes, that's right...

SCOTT: The use of town monies for good causes wouldn't in a realistic novel be a very appealing subject.

KENDALL: That's right. It's just too down-to-earth and rather dull.

SCOTT: Yes, the magic in The Gammage Cup is a good deal of fun, and yet it's pretty much of an overlay on realistic themes and realistic characterizations, isn't it? It's more decorative than functional in that particular novel really, isn't it?

KENDALL: Right. Well, this kind of fantasy I like. I want to really believe in these people and believe what they are. I don't want to have any feeling that these people could not exist. They must really be able to exist.

SCOTT: Well, I think all really good fantasy has got to have this dimension of credibility. Tolkien, I think in "On Fairy-Stories", says that it shouldn't be a willing suspension of disbelief but simply that while we are in the Secondary World we should be able to believe in it, period.

KENDALL: Yes, and believe in it thoroughly. This does not mean that when you go outside you're going to be looking for something three feet high or one foot high or whatever, but that you believe that they can exist somewhere.

SCOTT: And that there's nothing in there contradictory that will spoil the belief or jar it, that the detail is both thorough and consistent.

KENDALL: Yes, everything must spring from the way these people have developed: where they live, what they are. They can't act out of character or out of their own circumstances. They must follow along.

SCOTT: Once the givens have been established...

KENDALL: Yes, And that just seems to be the most important thing about fantasy: You draw your circle and then fill it in, but you don't go outside the circle and you don't suddenly think, oh, I do want to put something or other in this novel, and if it doesn't fit, oh, well...

SCOTT: If it doesn't fit, you've got simply a broken toy there if you do put it in. I think this is the trouble with Baum's books though I know a lot of Niekas readers are very fond of them. Hi is careless about detail and about consistency in the OZ books so that things are constantly being shattered.

KENDALL: Yes, he's really just spinning a good tale, he's having a lot of fun, but he's not setting out to draw a real world.

SCOTT: No, except you can't even really believe in it while you're in it.

KENDALL: That's right. You can have a lot of fun--because some of the characters are, as I remember, a great deal of fun. I loved that one--what was it? The Tiger of Oz, I think which I seem to have acquired somewhere in my childhood--in which the Prime Minister had--what did he have?--he had a candle for a thumb, and a pen for a forefinger, and an eraser for another one, something like that, each finger. This I found absolutely fascinating because I never could figure out what good it was going to do him anyway and how he was going to manage to light the candle and write at the same time. Lots of fun, but nobody would ever take it seriously because we know it's all just having a good time.

SCOTT: Whereas at its best fantasy has got to have this amount of inventiveness but also more credibility.

KENDALL: Yes, I think you just need complete reality in an unreal world--and then everybody thinks it's real.

SCOTT: And then, of course, some of these unreal worlds are much closer to our own world than others. Well, take Charlotte's Web, where you simply have our world, really an expanded Primary World rather than a Secondary World. Everything is true to our world except for one or two things: the animals can talk, Fern can understand them, Charlotte can write in the web. And even that is sort of hedged in the one chapter in which the doctor talks to Fern's mother. He suggests that perhaps it might really be this way in our world and that we simply are not listening enough.

KENDALL: Mmm hmmm. Of course, if that book hadn't been written by E. B. White but by somebody who just wasn't very good, we could not ever believe in it. I mean, so many of these books about talking animals and so on are absolutely junk.. We don't believe for a minute.

SCOTT: Excruciating! I think what makes it work so well is that the animals remain true to their species except for the ability to talk:

Wilbur enjoys lying in his manure pile, Charlotte sucks the blood of flies quite unapologetically, Templeton is a rat in every sense of the word. And they never do talk to people, though Fern has the ability, for a short while before she grows up out of that stage in the life-cycle, to understand them.

KENDALL: But then, you know, we do understand our animals. We know what they want--when they want to come in, they may bark or meow or whatever. We know perfectly well what they're saying, so this is not to be disbelieved. You just take a little step farther and say that you hear words--But I think that E. B. White had just exactly the right idea; I mean, I'm sure that Gilly at one time felt that she could hear what the animals were saying. Really, she just had a feeling for what they wanted but she could extend it enough so that she knew what they meant by their wheeks or their barks. Now she never really came around

and said, "They're saying so and so..."

SCOTT: That's sort of partly answered another question I had too--about the flexibility of fantasy as a form for things you want to say--and that was whether you'd always wanted to write for children; and I was thinking of C. S. Lewis's comment that he never really thought of what would appeal to children but he simply had an idea for things he wanted to write for different books, and in some cases a children's story seemed the best form in which to put forth the particular things he had to express at that time. And I wondered, since you've written both for adults and for children, which you prefer doing? Whether you had always wanted to write for children? Whether to any extent it grew out of telling stories to your own girls when they were younger?

KENDALL: No, I'm not very good at telling stories, just on the spur of the moment. It's a business of writing them first--which I just find easier. I don't know. This whole thing started with my writing about children as the chief characters in adult books.

SCOTT: How did that happen? And how did that work? How successful was that in terms of audience? Obviously it was successful in that it was enjoyable to read The Black Seven, but I wonder how many adults will enjoy as much a mystery whose chief character is a child rather than an adult? I suppose some twelve to fourteen-year-old boys might enjoy it, but it might be too terrifying for most children to read. That incredible Twigg family!

KENDALL: The people who liked it liked it very, very much, and it had some excellent reviews. Of course, it was new, it was something different, and at that time we'd not got into the suspense fiction so that the detective was all. And if you could find a detective who was different, and at that time we'd not got into the suspense, from the usual and then have a good time with him, then people loved it. There were lots of writers just looking for a new detective to hang a mystery on. So I would say that it was a successful thing to do--to have a child, especially a child like Drawers, be a detective.

SCOTT: I wondered how many adults would empathize with a child enough and want to identify with a chief child character, if that would have been a problem in breadth of appeal.

KENDALL: No, I think that people really loved it because, I suppose, a lot of them saw their own childhood in these terms, perhaps meaning that they were slightly wicked. I think Drawers answered a lot of things for a lot of people in a way, because he did things that kids love to be able to do and usually aren't. And it's just sort of everybody's childhood. I think if you read about children, whether in children's books or any sort of literature, you immediately go back to your own childhood, you associate that. And since everybody was once a child, there is an association. Of course, Drawers was more grown-up than most, and I expect if he were in the neighborhood, we'd be appalled; we'd say, "Ch, that kid! Take him away."

SCOTT: You did two books with Drawers? The Black Seven and The Baby-Snatcher?

KENDALL: Yes, and then I felt that I'd said everything about him that could be said.

SCOTT: Is either of these in print now, or in paper?

KENDALL: No, they're gone, they're dated. But they were good to get started writing. I had fun, and I enjoyed doing all the children's parts, and I loathed doing the parts with just adults.

SCOTT: Even with the Twigg family? I should have thought...

KENDALL: Well, that was sort of fun, but they weren't really developed characters, they were caricatures.

SCOTT: Personified vices, the different ones! That comes rather close to an interest in fantasy showing through right there, doesn't it? Because they're a kind of Charles Addams-y family of various monstrous traits.

KENDALL: Oh, yes, and they're all drawn in very black and white...

SCOTT: Yes, absolute grotesques.

KENDALL: But that's because I think I'm just more interested in children, in their development. Adults--I'm interested, outside of writing, in adults and their foibles, very much interested; but in writing, it's just more fun for me to write about children. So I doubt very much if I'll ever do anything else. I don't think I have anything just terribly interesting to say about adults in general. I mean, they're either formed or they're not formed; they're either what they are, or if they're still on the way to being something, I think they probably haven't developed enough or never will in the ways that I'm interested. I like basic things, you know, things like honesty, and trust, and faith, and all of that sort of thing. I like the wide pattern of people rather than their little troubles. I like to read about people's troubles and tribulations, but I don't feel that I have anything very interesting to say about people's problems when they're grown up.

SCOTT: And yet, some of the themes you've used in children's fiction would be applicable to adults as well, depending on how they were treated.

KENDALL: Well, that's it. It's just more fun to see it from a child's viewpoint, or looking at children or simple people.

SCOTT: Well, in The Gammage Cup your characters aren't really children though you've created a world that children will delight in. They're all of virtually marriageable age, and the themes of inner-and-other-directedness.....

KENDALL: But they're very simple, and their problems are fairly simple. All I can say is that I just enjoy working particularly with fantasy in which the problems are basic, or the themes are basic and simple, and we don't have the overlay of civilization to deal with--and traffic tickets and all the things that go on....

SCOTT: The minutiae that would clog up looking at the big themes clearly...

KENDALL: ~~Mem Hmmm~~, and I just think you can deal better with the big themes. I can deal better with them, I should say.

SCOTT: I think in general they're more readily handled in fantasy because you can work with them in a symbolic kind of dimension more readily, it seems to me, than in realistic fiction. There's less danger of becoming didactic when you're dealing with them at a symbolic kind of remove, and you don't bog down in details. There are lots of details, of course, in a good fantasy, but they're very different from the details of our own daily lives; so that the theme has more breadth and more applicability to more than just one time and place. It's not just the particular malaise of man in the 1970's in our lonely urban centers and so forth, but a more for-all-time kind of thing, I would think.

KENDALL: It just seems to me to be awfully difficult to write about 1971, and people living, doing this and that. As I say, I find it very interesting to observe and to read about--no, I don't read about it terribly much really. I stay away from the ordinary novel; I don't really enjoy the country club

sort of thing, for instance; I just find it rather dull, and I feel that when you've read one you've read them all. I tend to enjoy reading science-fiction, and I enjoy reading Japanese novels--again they seem to be sort of fantasy because the way people look at things is so different from our way. SCOTT: You mean modern Japanese novels now, like Kawabata, as opposed to, say, Lady Murasaki or something quite early? Another thing I'm very fond of is the Lucia books--do you know E. F. Benson's Lucia books? I discovered them a long time ago, and they're just now started coming out in paper. Lucia is an Englishwoman with pretensions. She lives in a little village, and she sets the cultural tone of the village. There are about six or seven of these books--I think the first one is called Queen Lucia--and they're full of all the things that go on in the countryside in England, lawn tennis and so on...

SCOTT: It's interesting that you wrote mysteries when you were writing realistic fiction because the mystery is such a structured and formalized kind of thing with its own rules that it's in some ways closer to fantasy than other realistic fiction.

KENDALL: I think that was partly it. I suppose I felt that without knowing it, but the real reason was I just wanted to write so badly but I didn't feel that I was competent to write A Novel, you know, about People and their Problems; but the mystery gave me a framework, and I liked the framework. Maybe that's why I like fantasy because it always has a framework too.

SCOTT: And both fantasy and mystery are concerned with telling a story; you've got to be a good storyteller and keep the reader's attention in either one. More so, I suppose, in a mystery, than in a fantasy, which can keep the reader's attention by inventiveness of detail if you're sufficiently original, even without quite as much plotting skill. But you've got to be able to tell a good story in both.

KENDALL: Yes, you've got to keep your reader interested!

SCOTT: You said you wrote one realistic children's book?

KENDALL: Two of them actually: The Other Side of the Tunnel was realistic, and The Big Splash.

SCOTT: What were these like? Was The Other Side of the Tunnel a children's mystery? Was that before The Gammage Cup? A sort of transition between your adult mysteries and starting to write children's books?

KENDALL: The Other Side of the Tunnel was the first children's book, then The Gammage Cup, then The Big Splash, because I felt I didn't want to stick too much to fantasy, that it was time I lived in the real world. But in a way that was a sort of enclosure too. I used the same set of characters as in The Other Side of the Tunnel.

SCOTT: So that in all six of your books then, you've done three sets of two, each one with a sequel but never going further with a series.

KENDALL: Yes, I felt I had a little more to say but not anymore than the little more.

***SCOTT: At this point as I was asking Mrs. Kendall what she thought the source of appeal for adults in her fantasies was, the tape ran out. While the date for the completion of the new "volcano book" is still uncertain, I did learn that Penguin has issued a Puffin paperback edition of The Gammage Cup in England under the title, The Minnipins, and that a Japanese edition is also just off the press.

END

MUSINGS on LORD OF LIGHT

NIEKA 21: 20

Zelazny Musings I.

When one is desirous of writing a story involving elements of myth, folklore, legend, one is faced with several possible choices as to how to proceed. A faithful retelling of the original -- as in Andre Norton's juvenile, **HORN OF THE HORN** -- may recommend itself. When I employ such elements, however -- such as in ... **AND CALL ME CONRAD** (Greek), **CREATURES OF LIGHT AND DARKNESS** (Egyptian) or **LORD OF LIGHT** (Hindu) -- my intention is to abstract out from a body of tradition those elements which most interest or amuse me, hint at a lot of the rest which are not actually pertinent to my telling and to make up a few items out of whole cloth which just "feel" appropriate.

When, on the final morning of a Disclave a couple years back, I cut myself while shaving and lapsed into a long pre-sentient chain of free-associations which somehow ended up at transmigration, I found myself with the sudden (and not too profound -- but then, it was early in the morning) realization that not much had been done in U.S. sf and fantasy with respect to Hindu culture. Ben Jason and I drove back to Ohio that afternoon, and by the time we arrived that evening I had pretty much roughed out the whole story in my head. I had decided on either seven or nine chapters of approximately 13,000 words each, so that I might be able to sell a few as novelettes if no one wanted to take a chance on using it as a series or serial. For this reason, I figured that each chapter would have to be somewhat independent of its fellows. This fell in neatly with what I had in mind as to the tone and texture of the piece. I wanted to separate the chapters in space and time, and so produce a sort of folk-story quality. I could have had nine chapters, but I threw out what I was thinking of using in two of them, because there is a breaking point in anything like this and I didn't just want to pile up incident. This could actually work to defeat the underlying essential direction of something of this sort. This decided, I began soaking myself in Hindu background. I drew dozens of books on the subject out of the Cleveland Public Library and I spent around sixty bucks on books which they didn't have that I felt that I'd need. That's how **LORD OF LIGHT** began.

I'd say that I actually employed only a small percent of what I learned from the background reading. But then, you never know where you're going to come across something useful. If you want a thing like this to have an authentic-seeming air about it, you've got to go in for a bit of this kind of saturation.

But it was fun. I mentioned it to Andre Norton, who was then a neighbor, and she recommended the massive **THE WONDER THAT WAS INDIA**, by A.L. Basham, (Hawthorn Books, 1936) which I purchased and proceeded to read. She also recommended **GODS, DEMONS AND OTHERS**, by R.K. Narayan (Viking, 1964), a retelling of Indian myths and legends. These were interesting for general background. I then picked up **TRADITIONAL INDIA**, ed. O.L. Chavarría-Aguilar. Ditto on this. Then I read the **RAMAYANA**, which influenced my fourth chapter, and **THE UPANISHADS** (trans. Swami Nikhilananda) and **BUDDHIST TEXTS THROUGH THE AGES** (ed. Conze, Horner, Snellgrove & Waley) -- both Harper Torchbooks. These latter two gave me the quotations at the beginnings of the chapters. They are all of them authentic -- and although I took the liberty of paraphrasing each somewhat, I retained the sense of the original. Then I read Herman Hesse's **SIDDHARTHA**, which probably influenced chapter three a bit. This same chapter was also influenced by the novel-length poem **THE LIGHT OF**

ASIA; OR, THE GREAT RENUNCIATION (**MAHABHINISHKRAMANA**), by Sir Edwin Arnold (1879). Then Andre Norton recommended one more book, **SHILAPPADIKARAM** (**THE ANKLE BRACELET**), by Prince Ilango Adigal (New Directions), a 2nd century work of fiction, from which I stole many metaphors for chapter two. (Oh, before I forget to record it, **THE LIGHT OF ASIA** gave me the four Lords of Sumernu with whom Yama does battle in the dream-sequence in chapter three.) And Dom Moraes' **GONE AWAY** gave me some pieces for chapter four's settings, as did the **RAMAYANA**.

Okay. I've touched on some of the reading involved. I wanted color, almost garish, so I dwell often in my thoughts upon Hindu paintings of the 18th century. I threw the color into costumes and settings. I wanted a sort of baroque style, because I figured that would be best for a folklore/legend-type thing. Also, I feel that a real book deserves one decently realized female character, and Kali suggested herself. I took extra pains with her for this reason.

Here, as in **CONRAD**, I wanted to leave it open to several interpretations -- well, at least two. I wanted to sort of combine fantasy and sf, I wanted to put something there for the lover of each form of speculative literature. As in **CONRAD**, I think **LOL** can be read as either one. Either Conrad is a mutant or he is the Great God Pan. The book may be read either way. With Sam, I do not say that he did not receive illumination, whether he believes it himself or not. I tried to balance the elements of science and fantasy in both, that's all.

As to the ending of **LOL**, I never know how one of my books ends until I write the ending. It would be no fun for me to go that distance if everything was foreordained. With **LOL** I came up with four endings and I decided, what the hell! When it comes to something like a legend there are always variations. So why not use all four? So I did.

And that, Ed, represents my Quickly recorded musings upon some of the major elements and intentions behind **LORD OF LIGHT**.

-ROGER ZELAZNY



Dear Ed,

This is a start of a list of Science Fiction items, available from Recordings for the Blind as taken from their 1976 Catalogue. Eventually, I should hope that this list will be conflated with one from the Jewish Guild for the Blind which I understand also does a lot of S-F, and with lists from any other agencies.

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09 0976000 150 813 TJ226(02)
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01 3796400 830 080 TH171(02)ATH
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04 1355400 760 501 74-15615 TM915(03)
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15 6964000 160 808 TA197(02)
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03 2625950 060 081 59-5405 AA259(03)
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NOTE, Any errors in the above list are undoubtedly those of the typist.

This list will be continued in later issues.

The Hapless Child and other inscrutable stories. Music by Michael Mantler. Words by Edward Gorey. Available from the Watt Works.

Those of you who are lent, as am I, to demented forms of literature, will find this offering a must for your collection of Edward Gorey. It serves up some of the finest music available in the progressive genre along with the fine writing word for word of Edward Gorey.

There may be among the readers, some people who are not familiar with Gorey's work. If so, I would like to take a few lines to explain. He writes stories, poems, and limericks in a fashion that I can only term Edwardian Bizarre. His art work is in the style of the old Edwardian woodcuts. As for his writing, I can think of no other way to describe it except Bizarre. For example; in the title cut, "The Hapless Child" Charlotte Sophia was put into a boarding school by an uncle. She took her doll, Hortense which... was torn limb from limb by the other pupils. He states this within the context of the poem very matter-of-factly. This is so with all his writing. The horrible, the grotesque, and the mundane are all treated with the same indifference.

The music, written by Michael Mantler, enhances the indifference of Gorey's words beautifully, while being technically correct, at the same time. It is done in a very progressive manner, yet it is not hard to listen to for pleasure. The musicians, which include Robert Wyatt-vocals, Carla Bley-piano and synthesizers, Steve Swallow-bass guitar, Jack DeJohnette-percussion, and Terje Rypdal-lead guitar, are among the finest I've heard. Carla Bley does some very nice synthesizer but her best piece is the piano work on the title song, "The Hapless Child." Without a doubt, Terje Rypdal is one of the best lead guitarists working today. The lead on cut one, side one, "The Sinking Spell" is by far the best. Steve Swallow and Jack DeJohnette round out the music with the finesse of a full orchestra.

With this album digested, I eagerly await more offerings from the people at the Watt Works.
Sherwood Frazier

TOLKIEN AND THE SILMARILLION by Clyde S. Kilby. Harold Shaw, Publishers, 1967, 86 pages, \$3.95.

This book is the personal reaction of Dr. Kilby to Tolkien-the man, and his writings. It chronicles Dr. Kilby's meeting with Tolkien in 1964, his summer with Tolkien in 1966 and his subsequent correspondence with him. He spent the summer of 66 with Tolkien in order to help him prepare the SILMARILLION for publication, and get to read many of Tolkien's manuscripts at that time.

He gives a very human picture of Tolkien-the man with all his contradictions. For instance, Tolkien admitted to Kilby that LotR would not have become a best seller without the Ace Edition, yet he was very upset over the whole affair and it worried him so much that he could do little or no work for a very long time. Depending on his mood and the circumstances Tolkien either liked or disliked the writings of Charles Williams. In 1966 his light reading was primarily American detective stories and science fiction, but in his essay on Fairy Stories he had spoken contemptuously of SF. (On the other hand the essay had been written many

years earlier.) In his interview with Resnik for the Saturday Evening Post (see NIEKAS #18) he said Middle Earth corresponded to Europe, with the Shire in England, but later denied to Kilby that he had said this. He was very insecure about the worth of his writings and was discouraged to continue work on the SILMARILLION, and needed Kilby's reassurances.

Clyde Kilby gave many interesting anecdotes of his stay with Tolkien, and gave many previews of what is to be found in the SILMARILLION when it is published next year.

He also discussed the Christian aspects of LotR. I found a few of his arguments a bit forced, especially about parallels to the Old and New Testament, but all in all convincing. He gives a chronology of the order in which JRR Tolkien wrote various parts of The Hobbit, LotR, and Silmarillion, and analysed the relationship between Tolkien, Lewis and Williams.

This is a very short but meaty book, and is a miracle in hardcover for only \$3.95.

The book has been taped by Recordings for the Blind after the catalogue John Beardman is working on had been compiled. It is very well read but the reader taped all the footnotes at the end. It is virtually impossible to flip back and forth on the tape to match the footnote to the text.

Ed Meskys

The Sword of Shannara, by Terry Brooks, Random House hardcover (\$12.95), Ballantine Trade paperback (\$6.95) Simultaneous publication in April '77.

The cover of this book refers to it as being "An Epic Fantasy". That is what it is, in the true sense of the word. It has all the necessary ingredients; the high adventure, the wondrous magic, and the perilous treks that made LotR a masterpiece of fantasy.

The characters were a joy to meet and know. I felt close to them at many times throughout the story. The author has done a great deal of "prep work" to make the history hold together. I feel that this is essential for a good fantasy story.

Because this was an Epic, I unconsciously found myself comparing it to LotR. I gave this up because I didn't feel it was fair to the author and it is a different book.

The work is set in post-technological times, many years after a major war which has destroyed civilisation. Mankind has diversified into a number of separate species; ordinary man, dwarves, elves, gnomes and various other creatures.

The quest is for a magical sword which can only be wielded by the true descendants of the House of Shannara. Only the lead character, Shea, with the sword can stop the Warlock Lord from conquering the world.

The book is well illustrated by the brothers Hildebrandt with numerous one page illios and a large center fold out of the main characters.

I would highly recommend it to all those who enjoy the adventure and comradery of a truly epic fantasy.

Sherwood Frazier



LETTERS

Dear Ed:

Many thanks for NIEKAS #20. In Ted White's otherwise well-thought-out piece on love, sex, and the stories of Georgette Heyer, he seems to blame the world's present state of disorder on the hypocritical diplomatic conventions ("Accept, sir, renewed assurances of my most distinguished sentiments..."). But the other system has been tried, with unsatisfactory results. Time was when diplomats told each other what they really thought of each other. Since what they really thought of each other was often far from flattering, somebody sooner or later lost his temper, and they would fall to punching noses, pulling hair, kicking shins, or running each other through with swords.

Aside from the attrition this caused the diplomatic corps, these quarrels sometimes encouraged the very wars that the diplomats were supposed to prevent. The only example that comes to mind is that between Rome and Tarentum in -282, which brought Pyrrhos of Epeiros into Italy, when a Tarentine shot on the Roman ambassador's toga; but I believe there were others. So the Congress of Vienna (1814-15) set up the present code to make sure that, whatever reasons nations went to war for, it shouldn't be for the reason that some ambassador said what he really thought of another.

About John Brunner's preference for descriptive over prescriptive grammar: he has a good argument, but then he violates it right away by objecting to the loss of useful distinctions like that between "infer" and "imply." The loss of such distinctions happens all the time -- cf. the disappearance in +XVII and +XVIII of "thou" for the singular 2d-person pronoun -- because we might as well face the fact that many (perhaps most) people are linguistic slobes, who read little or not at all and care nothing about fine logical distinctions. So they use "like" for "as," "infer" for "imply," "disinterested" for "uninterested," "aggravate" for "irritate," and so on. But the language is always in flux, pulled one way by the slobes and the other by the prescriptive grammarians, and no one can tell in advance who will win in a particular case. Meanwhile, the existence of moribund, disapproved, and otherwise ambiguous usages furnishes the fiction writer with useful tools of characterisation and atmosphere. If I have somebody say: "Like I said..." I have made a subtle comment on his educational level. If I want to give a slightly archaic atmosphere without interfering with readability, I can slip in a moribund subjunctive ("If a man die, shall he live again?") and so on.

Kaor,

L. Sprague de Camp

Dear Ed:

I hope you don't get tired of hearing that NIEKAS is an exceedingly attractive and enjoyable f'nzine, but it is.

May I offer a few comments on Poul Anderson's "Writer Wrong" in #19? (My subscription only began with #20 and I didn't see the essay in time to comment sooner.) Surely most people decide what profession they will follow by balancing preferences, aptitudes, and economic reality. Why should a writer be much different? Or is it right for them to be highly commercial as long as they don't admit it. Some readers apparently didn't appreciate Mr. Anderson's frankness. His comments on narrow-minded literary critics are harsh, but shouldn't surprise readers of his fiction. ("The Critique of Impure Reason" in TIME AND STARS, for example). The last section of his article expresses

justifiable anger at critics' persistent mislabeling and misunderstanding of his work. Judith Merrill called him a Fascist right in F & SF--this may be the obnoxious Miss Merrill's stock epithet for persons whose views differ from hers, but it's an absurd political comment. Sam Moskowitz referred to

"The Longest Voyage" as a Viking tale in SEEKERS OF TOMORROW although the story's setting is plainly pseudo-Elizabethan. Just out of curiosity, I tabulated the cultural correlatives of 40 Anderson stories. The following cultures were directly represented or imitated (in whole or in part, with some overlapping): Norse, 8; English, 7; Celtic, 6; Greco-Roman, 5; Polynesian, 5; miscellaneous European, 5; American Indian, 4; Mongol, 4; Persian, 3; Mexican, 2; Jewish, 1; and African, 1. Mr. Anderson's settings are as variegated as they are authentic.

But back to NIEKAS #20. The articles on Georgette Heyer made her sound so interesting, I sent my husband out that very night to look for her books. He found eight in the Bookmobile! My thanks to the group for introducing the deliciously charming Miss Heyer. Unlike Marsha, I didn't let the dinner burn while reading. I forgot to feed the baby instead.

I enjoyed Piers Anthony's reviews. He's prickly but perceptive. Whom can you get of like caliber to review his books? His parody-approach to STAND ON ZANZIBAR actually conveyed that book's nature better than a straight treatment would have.

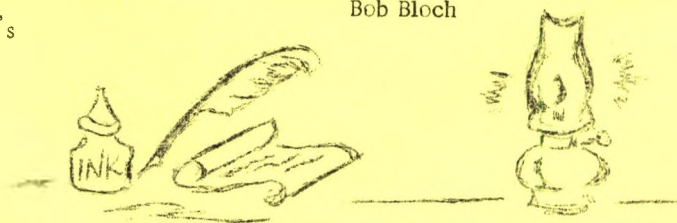
My husband keeps calling Georgette Heyer "Georgey-Girl".

Cordially,
Sandra Miesel

Dear Ed:

NIEKAS #20 isn't a magazine, it's a book--- and a word-count shows that GONE WITH THE WIND is a short-story by comparison. You and that hardy crew of non-union compilers are to be congratulated. I doubt if members of the Compiler's Union itself could surpass the job you've done. As to the content, all I can say is that you and Felice and cohorts have maintained the usual high standards. I find myself in disagreement with Don Wellheim's speech--but then, if it wasn't for NIEKAS, I would never have been able to read it, let alone react to it adversely, or even versely for that matter. I also take some slight issue with Philip K. Dick's STORY TO END ALL STORIES FOR HARLAN ELLISON'S ANTHOLOGY DANGEROUS VISIONS, I feel he overlooked the finishing touch; after the female discovers she has eaten God, I think she ought to have indigestion.

But you've got something for everyone here -- how could you help it, with all those pages? -- and I'm glad and grateful you sent said same along to me.

All best,
Bob Bloch

Dear Ed,

A remark by John Brunner in your letter column seems to tie in with another by Larry Janifer and with the speech by Doll Wollheim that you also published, and thus to call for an answer.

It happens that John uses a serial of mine as his example, but of course there are many others. He complains of it featuring a background and leading characters which he has used three (or is it four?) times before. In short, he doesn't seem to approve of series.

Presumably he doesn't mind series which go from here to there, each story building on the last in a definite manner, the whole having a definite beginning and end. That's really just a loose-jointed form of novel. I assume John dislikes what Jim Blish calls "template" series and I, less pejoratively, might refer to as "open-ended". In these, the basic situations, and often the main characters, remain pretty much the same throughout.

Now it is true that an open-ended series is very easily run into the ground, turned into a dismal repetition of what may once have been a good idea. This is naturally to be avoided. In the case of the Polesotechnic League stories, I try to introduce some new element in each: usually a new planet, sophont race, culture, or what have you, something not hitherto suggested in science fiction. It would be quite possible to have different heroes, operating in separate future histories, in every story. My feeling is that by using the same people repeatedly, I can develop their characters and backgrounds more fully than would otherwise be practical -- and, I hope, make readers come to look upon them as old friends. A number of readers have, in fact, told me that they do.

Granted, after a while the variations themselves begin to fall into a pattern. Then it is certainly time either to drop the series altogether, or change it into something else entirely. The latter is what happened to Dominic Flandry. Essentially the same type-things were beginning to happen to him as had already happened. I abandoned him for several years on that account, and am only bringing him back of late because it has occurred to me that his life and development both before and after the original group of stories offer a new element. In short, the open-ended series has now been converted to the novelistic type, a la Horatio Hornblower.

John goes on to say: "It shows no detectable sign of the fact that since the settings and underlying argument were evolved the contemporary world has altered appallingly rapidly. Well, why should it? It isn't laid in the contemporary world, but in a future society which long ago solved the problems of the twentieth century and has now gone on to generate problems of its own. One might as well complain that Georgette Heyer's characters are unaware of nuclear warheads and population explosions."

If John dislikes series, and feels that all science fiction ought to show Contemporary Social Consciousness, he is entitled to his own tastes. They are not universally shared, as Don Wollheim points out. Myself, I like every kind of writing, on every kind of theme, as long as it's good; and I try my hand at them all. One of the most valuable assets science fiction has at the moment is precisely its widening range of subject matter and its continuing experimentation. Let us not try to choke off anything or anyone. I'm sure John and Don agree. It's just that frequently statements like theirs are so phrased as to suggest a touch of fanaticism -- which, of course, is not intended at all.

Probably not even by Larry Janifer, though for the life of me I can't see why anyone would be so offended by the remark that writers ought to get paid for what they do and that there are other equally interesting things than writing. Indeed, someone whose mind is not turned outward to the real world isn't likely to have much to write about.

I do deplore a certain current trend toward pompousness. Can it be due to a hope of being noticed by the Bandar-Log of the literary reviews? If so, believe me, brethren, it isn't worth it. Let us always respect our craft; let us always try to write at the upper limits of our abilities, and keep trying to raise those limits. But let us for God's sake stop taking ourselves so blooming seriously!

Regards,
Poul Anderson

Dear Ed:

Very nice seeing you at the Lunacon. Thank you, as well, for the NIEKAS, which I have read in large part and of which I am moved to say: Jesus Maria, kiek daug darbo tokiam Niekai!

Anyway, Charles Einstein is also, I'm convinced, the pseudonymous author of Win--Or Else!, a Lion Library original paperback copyright by Lurton Blassingame, who happens to be Einstein's agent. Unfortunately for bibliophilia, I cannot find my copy of the book, which is about a baseball team that has just moved to a new city, and was written when the Browns became the Orioles. So I don't recall the byline. But if one liked The Only Game in Town, one would find this close relative an OK approximation. And I happen to think Game is Einstein's only nearly-realized novel; his other stuff is often delightful in part, but, except for Win, given to becoming a collection of one-liners, especially The Bloody Spur.

Einstein is also the author of a funny, funny, wonderful novella about monosodium glutamate and the first Sinai war, called TRUK. To my knowledge it has never been published, probably due to awkward length and bad timing. There are a number of ex-employees of Playboy Press, however, who treasure the memory.

My favorite Einstein book--and I'll even re-read Wiretap, every so often, though I can't stand it, and I think The Last Laugh is a piece of cheese, --is his non-fiction job on the San Francisco Giants, written when he was on the sports desk of a paper out there. But then, Einstein is at his best when describing the truly complex problems of craftsmanship within a given specialty, and in that case God had given him Alvin Dark for a protagonist.

Keep the tikybe, baby.
Algis Budrys

Dear NIEKAS:

Niekas 20, that hundred-odd page bi-annual. I can't hope to comment on it at all, so must cut my losses and remark only on what directly concerns me; namely certain challenges to my commentary on DANGEROUS VISIONS. I get the general impression that more than one person was aggravated by that piece--mine, I mean --so perhaps some clarification is required.

First, the spelling and typography are those of the (former?) editor, not mine; I agree with the plea for consistency in such things as underlining headings or book titles, and my own practice is to underline (meaning italicise) the titles of novels with a solid line, while stories are set off in quotes and magazines are in caps. Thus, The Lovers, I Have No Mouth etc., and ANALOG. I note that careful care was taken to preserve any grammatical lapses of mine, such as "mitigate against" (should have been "militate against" in #20), while changing a phrase like "the guise of objectivity" to

"the guise of subjectivity." Possibly that last was the beginning of some ill-feeling: " * * * "

You see, I have a standing objection to those "reviewers" who choose to vent their personal gripes in the name of objective reviewing. We have all seen them, I'm sure. If reviewer doesn't like the author, he pans the book, regardless of its merits. This is hardly what reviewing is supposed to be for. Now many people seem to dislike Harlan Ellison, and thus there have been many vilifications of DANGEROUS VISIONS. (Many people also like Harlan Ellison--but that doesn't change my point.) I myself am no more objective about Ellison than the others I see--but his anthology was still well worth remarking on, and I meant to do it. So I borrowed a little of Harlan's own technique and made a purple case, and I spelled out in virtual parody that attitude I detest. I quote: "I know I won't sell more books than Silverberg, or better fiction than Zelazny--but watch me vivisect 'em in the guise of objectivity!" And I went on to do exactly that.

It was an arrogant commentary, oh yes! I worked very hard to make it that way. I'm sure Tanner and Budrys and certain fan reviewers can work just as hard to make their commentaries obnoxious, too. And you can be reasonably certain that Harlan Ellison's own white heat does not come off quite as spontaneously as appears to the recipient. Nastiness is an art, make no mistake. So for those of you who get all worked up about my commentary--congratulations! You were supposed to.

Still, some specific challenges warrant a reply. Mike Ward has a number. First, he suggests that I panned DANGEROUS VISIONS because I didn't happen to get into it, and I'd call this the very kind of smear he accuses me of. For the record: there is a positive side to my relation with Harlan that didn't enter the commentary. He was kind to me when we met in 1966 beyond the call of duty, and I came away from that encounter with an enhanced opinion of him. I do not think it would be an exaggeration at this point to say that he and I are friends. At any rate, I am to be represented in AGAIN, DANGEROUS VISIONS by a provocative novelette. I said in the commentary that I meant to be in any such volume even if I had to pay for the privilege, but Harlan didn't hold me to that. No--I regretted not being in the first volume, but that was not what set off my comment on it.

On my quotation of Harlan's remark about Norman Spinrad "out of context" (as what quote isn't?)--I also aim on friendly terms with Spinrad, and we have corresponded off and on for the past three years. He saw the commentary before it was published--I sent Harlan a carbon, as is my policy for such pieces--and did not take exception to that reference. Perhaps he comprehended what you, Mike, evidently did not: my own reference was a facetious one, in the spirit of the original. And while I'm on the subject of Spinrad, let me add another remark: I have the utmost respect for his guts in telling off the magazine editors of the sf field collectively; I regret I did not have the guts to do likewise. I feel he was dead right.

And exception is taken to my remark about Larry Niven appearing to have bought his way into the volume. I agree: that was a disgustingly insidious thing to say--and absolutely true. It did appear that way. I had expected Harlan to send a note to NIEKAS, to appear in the same issue, correcting that, but he didn't. So I'll do it myself, now. I have been informed that Larry Niven's story was purchased for DANGEROUS VISIONS early in that volume's history; only when it was later foundering financially did Larry come to its rescue with a handsome sum of cash. For that I commend him--and I wish that aspect had been made clear in the volume itself, for I'm sure many people misinterpreted it the way I did, though

they may not have said so in print. I do not apologize for calling the situation as I saw it, but I was mistaken.

And I am sarcastically tagged for remarking about Frederik Pohl's story. So great events change people only superficially, if at all; so what else is new? Pohl--the editor would have bounced this one promptly. Mike feels the story was not about that, but about racism. As I recall, Ted White had a similar opinion. Now that attitude is interesting, and deserves further exploration. I happen to be a Northerner living in the South. My neighbors cars bore WALLACE stickers during the 1968 election campaign, and we once saw hooded Ku-Klux-Klansmen at a meeting. Bigots in industry brag about how they keep the niggers out despite the "Equal Opportunity" advertising, and you can bet that the minimum wage law doesn't seem to apply to too many Negroes. In so many ways I am regularly reminded that racism is still very much with us. It is an ugly thing, not funny at all, even in a joke, and I have precious little sympathy for anyone who doesn't appreciate that fact. But I believe I can recognize a purely racial theme when I see it--and I did not see it in Pohl's story. It is curious that you did.

In that story, it is a day or two after the arrival of the Martians, and it seems they are now the butt of all the timeworn jokes. As it is put in the story itself: "... instead of picking on the Jews and the Catholics and--and everybody, they were telling them about the Martians." Note that, please--two religions and "everybody", no races--and consider what might reasonably be included in the last term. About whom are such jokes told? Well, in the army it is about second lieutenants and "RA's"--the ones who make it a living. At least it was in the draftee circles in which I moved. In certain areas of New York I believe it is about homosexuals--"You say that's a ferry boat? I never knew you guys had a bloomin' navy!"--and here in St. Petersburg there are ones about the old-timers. There are sex jokes, fish jokes, "little moron" tales, and a whole slew about women--the little wife, the mother-in-law, women drivers. Even about cars; I heard plenty about the Volkswagen in the dozen years I owned one. In short, anything at all that is different. To say that such jokes are directed only at members of other races--other than what, please?--and that it will somehow improve the lot of any segment of the population to have yet another butt of such quips--to say that is to make no particular sense. And to write a story purporting to be SF that only makes the point that anything different does attract humor of this type--well, I feel the job was done much better by Carl Sandburg in 1936, in his poem "They Have Yarns." The entire thing was made up of jokes, thus illustrating the nature of a nation.

No, I stand by my original opinion: the basic message of this story is that even so momentous an occurrence as the coming of the Martians makes no real difference to the average man, as a character in the story remarks. Nothing basic has changed. It is a sad comment on Man, but it still doesn't strike me as a major story in itself. And for all I know, Pohl did bounce it, for he does not hesitate to run his own material in his own magazines if he thinks it meets their standards. Oh sure--he mentions race in his afterword. He also says what he thinks of such post-mortem discussion, and I recommend that you reread that. I judged by the story, nothing else. But Mike Ward likes the rest of my commentary. Sorry--I can't say that I feel particularly honored.

To conclude: for those who wonder why I made such an

arrogant comment on DANGEROUS VISIONS, instead of merely another (yawn) routine safe review--I did it because the material warranted it. And that, perverse as it may seem, is a compliment, as I believe Harlan himself recognized. It was a fighting book, and it got a fighting discussion. I believe many people reacted to my review with the same mixed emotions they got from the book itself, and that by damn was the point.

Sincerely,
Piers Anthony (etc.)

Dear Ed:

To restrict comments to the matters that seem to demand them the most, and abandoning all effort to cover the entire issue systematically: I feel strongly that the worldcon should be a worldcon in fact, rotating in whatever manner an international committee of fans decides at the outset, with that rotation altered as experience and votes at the worldcon dictate. It might start with a United States--British Isles--European continent three-way rotation, with Japan or Australia permitted to win a bid if it can whenever it can, much as the U. S. "worldcon" used to go outside the United States whenever Canada or England won a bid without disturbing the basic rotation. Meanwhile, there would be a national convention in the United States which would be held annually, which would rotate from year to year among West, Midwest, and East, and this rotation could be suspended for a year if Canada scored a win. There would be for three national conventions per year in the United States, on the theory that this is the only way to keep the United States convention from impossible bigness, but I doubt that fans would ever agree to three national conventions of equal stature in the three geographical regions spaced throughout the summer so that it would be possible to attend two or ever three of them if you had enough time and money. Existence of both a real worldcon and a national convention would settle many problems before they become serious, such as the fact that pretty soon, United States fans may be fewer numerically than fans in other nations and the attendant probability that a well-attended "worldcon" in England or Europe might produce much more radical changes in the rules than these. I'd think of the worldcon as something with an entirely new set of traditions, perhaps emphasizing new fantasy movies of the art variety, art, and other forms of fantasy that present few language barriers. United States fandom wouldn't necessarily be poorly represented at the worldcon. I see estimates that the new Boeing passenger plane to fly from U. S. England round trip fare down to about \$200.00 It might be easier soon for the East Coast United States fan to attend an event in England than in California, when you reckon with lower expenses while in England.

Up to now, I've assumed that Heyer fandom was like unto Dorcas Bagby fandom. But all this space devoted to the author and the works virtually convinces me that there really is such a writer and her books really can be found in libraries and on newsstands. (Don't ask why I haven't checked the card catalog and paperback racks--remember all those fanzines requiring attention.) If my behavior follows the usual pattern, I won't read any Heyer books until all the rest of fandom starts to tire of them, then I'll finally read and I'll find myself all enthused at a time when nobody wants very much to talk about them any longer. You realize, of course, that Heyer fandom is a much more serious matter than

Tolkien or Eddison fandom because there's so much more there to be read. I sometimes think that Webern has an enthusiastic following among young music lovers only because all his compositions can be heard in about three hours. It saves so much time to become fond of someone whose output was limited.

Don Wollheim's talk included many wise remarks. But I'm increasingly dismayed at the way people are taking sides and growing bitter over the New Wave matter. All of a sudden, science fiction criticism is threatened with the same fate that so many other forms of literary criticism has undergone. People are starting to criticize groups and philosophies instead of stories. This almost inevitably leads to even worse situation in which you don't even criticize the groups of writers and the philosophies which they're supposed to maintain, but instead you criticize the criticism. Many terrible things have happened in fanzines, but this is one evil they have not undergone, and if it ever breaks out, it might take years to eradicate.

Your generosity with the art work this time should silence the only major criticism of Niekas, the one that claims that it contains too many words. (Here's another matter in which I lack the courage of my convictions. Secretly, I think I'd be deliriously happy with a 106-page issue in which every page was cut on the micro-elite typer and there were not any pictures at all.) The back cover probably is the most important piece of art for me. All those tiny Bode drawings in the comic strips and filler illustrations which have appeared most frequently in fanzines have been tantalizing. I've wanted to see some of his drawings in generous proportions and now I'm even more enthusiastic than before about his ability.

Yrs., &c.,
Harry Warner, Jr.

dear Ed.itor:

HELp, I am being held captive by a group of Fanatics somewhere in the wilds of New Hampshire. The fiends have me chained to a machine called MICRO and have told me that I will be let loose only after I make a "dead line"! What the [#\$&*&* is a dEdlin??e, and where is Rumpst... whatever his name is when you nede him?

I am only 29 (plus or minus a few months) and am too young to whether away to nothing (even if it would take a few years to do.)

Every Time I type on MICRO it changes what I type, a Round. Then someone comes in and mutters "no dedlin yer" and make me go back and correct what MICRO MADE me do wrong.

I can't take much more of this. I hope I make a dead line soon.

PLEASE send a Search party, whty,

reSpctfly,
margareT mShepard.

PS, anyone wishing to shoot the typists may find her at ... 7 Pleasant Street, Salem, NH 03079.

Micro Micro Micro HELP!!

SOME CONCLUDING REMARKS

Ed Meskys

Well, as I write this, NIEKAS 21 is just about finished, thanks mainly to the yeoman efforts of Margaret Shepard. . . with assistance from Sherwood Frazier, Todd Frazier, Raphael Folch-Pi, and Larry of Belmont. We might even have it for Beskone, our original schedule.

I just had read for me PERSONAL NOTES #6, published by Dick Harter, in early 1976. (PN is published irregularly by Dick, distinctly at his whim, tho a polite request will usually get you a sample copy). In an earlier issue the three semi-professional magazines had been discussed, ALGOL, LOCUS, and SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW, and Marsha Jones had made some interesting remarks about NIEKAS in a letter in #6. I quote, with Dick's editorial comments:

"...I was rather charmed by your recounting of the strange beginnings of LOCUS, something I'd not thought about in a number of years. On the whole I'm inclined to agree with your assessments of what makes LOCUS, ALGOL, and Geis what they are. It is also, unfortunately, what makes it so hard to decide which of the three to vote for for the Hugo or whether to vote for something else which might, in a different way, still be deserving of the Hugo. It will be interesting to see what happens if Ed does carry out his periodic threats/promises to revive Niekas. I can't help wondering how Niekas, a magazine which had a distinct, if slightly scrambled, personality would be compared with the current big three. The thing that I remember most clearly about it; besides all the quantities of stencils I typed and the paste-ups I did, was the friendly atmosphere of it, something the big three all tend to lack today. In a way, I think Niekas was a personalzine that just got out of hand and grew. Most personalzines that grow also turn into something other than a personalzine but Niekas always seemed to me to be a personalzine masquerading as a genzine in embarrassment at the zine it had achieved. I'd like to see it revive."

(Marsha)

"Well, so would I. That's an interesting thought about Niekas being a friendly zine. Now that I think on it, that is a rare characteristic in big time fanzines. Mostly the big zines become impersonal (although SFR cannot really be said to be impersonal) or suffused with controversy. (A major fault, by the way, in OUTWORLDS but not in SFR - Bowers cannot hold his own as an arena master and Geis can. Both are cockpits for feudists to snarl at each other; but Geis puts strength of content in the material which is not feudist and the contents of OUTWORLDS which are not the effusions of the feudists seems rather pallid by contrast.) It may be simply a matter that NIEKAS was always much more communal in its creation and spirit.

Another characteristic of NIEKAS that was quite unusual (and would even be more so today) was the blatant non-professionalism of its appearance. The big three are all quite professional (whatever that means). To illustrate, consider SFR, which most people do not think of in terms of superlative layout - which it is. The layout in SFR is not slick and pretty; it is uniform and functional, designed to make the magazine easy to read and to direct and hold

the readers attention to the text, without getting in the way. NIEKAS, on the other hand, always had a jumble of typefaces, layouts, etc., that were erratic individually, and mediocre collectively. This is good. I say it is good, because there is a danger in being too good in layout and format. Quality and consistency of format do not leave any room for the unexpected, the merely erratic expression of personal idiosyncrasy. Personal rambling is difficult when one is dedicated to a polished finished product."

(Dick)

(Ed) This was a very interesting insight. I never really thought of NIEKAS as a personalzine, tho I have described it to people as dealing with everything and anything that interests me, from Tolkien to Gilbert and Sullivan. Thinking about it, that's just what it is... an overgrown personalzine... tho it reflects the personalities of my immediate circle of friends in addition to that of myself.

I'm afraid that the typefaces are more jumbled than planned this issue. We were going to do everything in Micro-type, and got a few pieces stencilled. Then we had to give up because Margaret did most of the typing and couldn't bring micro home with her. In the future I hope to go back to the pattern of the old NIEKAS... editorials, indexes and letters in micro, articles and reviews in elite. My apologies for the extra jumbled appearance of this ish.

We already have some material on hand for next issue. Lead articles will be an interview with Lloyd Alexander by Nan Braude, and another article will be Journey of the Ring Bearers. We have some other material on hand, and the rest is up to YOU. We especially want art, reviews of anything... be it books, fanzines, movies, TV and/or porno graffiti on walls!!!



