

IDIOTORIAL

This is KWALHIQUA #11 (November 1973) and S F COMMENTARY #40 (December 1973) and is published, paid for, printed, and half-typed by ED CAGLE (Route #1, Leon, Kansas 67074, USA) and also published, half-typed, and probably collected by BRUCE GILLESPIE (GPC Box 5195AA, Melbourne, Victoria 3001, Australia, when he's at home. That's his address for letters of comment, too.)

KWALHIQUA is published six times a year by Ed Cagle, and is available for selected contributions and trade, "letters of comment longer and more engrossing than a hot sauce bottle label", or 50c or stamps. S F COMMENTARY is definitely available to people who currently hold places on the editor's subscription list, people who contribute or write letters of comment, and, as from January 1, for A60c per copy (\$US1 per copy).

KWALHIQUA is published by a man who is known throughout fandom as a combination of grizzly bear, coyote, and prowling tomcat. S F COMMENTARY is published by a man who is quite often mistaken for a combination of pet house mouse and fanzine-publishing computer. (The mind boggles at that one, I know, but it was the best I could think of right now.) On the rare occasions when they are seen together - as during the last two days - Ed Cagle roars along like an express train, while Bruce Gillespie does his usual imitation of The Little Red Engine Who Could.

But we get along. Like oil and water in an offset machine, we are different enough to make a good combination. Pity help me if we didn't. Kansas is a pretty wild place.

This is the Gillespie half of the combination, by the way. I feel nervous, typing an editorial for the KWALHIQUA half of the magazine as well as the SFC half. I feel like Leigh Edmonds would feel while writing an editorial for SCYTHROP. (The word is "inadequate".) KWALHIQUA has the reputation of being a Very Funny Fanzine. SFC is Very Serious; Charlie Brown has said that so many times I'm beginning to believe it. Ed Cagle gets mail that makes me envious. I get mail that would make him tired.

Even worse, I've done my best to spread the sticky treacle of SFC seriousness all over the light pastry of Cagle humour. (Now's that for a tortured metaphor, Delap?) The review of AGAIN, DANGEROUS VISIONS should have appeared in SFC #35/36/37: actually, the layout sheets were marked up for typing, complete with page numbers, when I had to delete it at the last minute. I meant to publish the RATS REVIEW in that same issue of SFC, before it became plain that I had 300 pages of material for a 150-page magazine. Poor Cagle has to cringe in a corner of his own fanzine (a difficult picture to grasp, if you have met Cagle) with only those two staunch Kwalhiquans, Bangsund and Swanshit (pronounced "Swans-hit") to help him. :: Onward - to the:

NON TRIP REPORT Part 2

It will come as some surprise to fandom in general and to readers of his reviews in particular that Richard Delap is the funniest conversationalist I've met so far during my American trip. Not that I can remember any of his jokes: he fires them too fast and furious. Also many of his jokes might offend the ears of the Bruce Gillespies in the reading audience.

Delap suits Kansas - it's the funniest place I've visited so far. It's almost

as funny as Australia. Where else but in Wichita, Kansas, could you see Miss Kansas Cowchip 1973 walking along the street? Where else could you go to a Thanksgiving party and get treated to a heady mixture of hillbilly records and bad guitar-playing - and beautiful food.

Come to think of it, where else could you meet Ed Cagle? Or Vicki. (Ah!) Or attend the best symphony concert I've ever heard, because the Wichita Symphony Orchestra occupies a concert hall that is several hundred times better than the Melbourne Town Hall. Where else could I meet Sue Cagle, the only woman brave enough to marry Ed? Or meet Travis and Eric and Alex, the only boys brave enough to be their sons? Or run across the following conversation: As Ed guides the car across the fields towards the Cagle mansion, Richard Delap complains: "Stop that, you maniac. You might run across a mouse!" Cagle: "Yeah? What are you going to do if we hit a mouse?" Delap: "Give it mouse-to-mouse resuscitation." Oh well. It was very funny in the middle of the night and the temperature outside was 24° and everybody had drunk a little too much.

I refuse to give a coherent account of my stay in Kansas. Anybody who doesn't visit Wichita, for strictly fannish reasons if nothing else, has no fannish soul. Okay, you people of St Louis, I'm not trying to put you down. St Louis must be the second fannish centre of USA. But it would only need David Emerson or John Bangsund to move here, and the St Louisans can give up.

I enjoyed my stay in St Louis, which happened just before I came to Kansas. To stay with the Couches is to breathe that heady aroma of fannishness which Buck Coulson doesn't believe in. It is really the collective smell of the paper of thousands of books and magazines. (The Couchsons' place has the same aroma.) I've never eaten quite so well or variously as when Leigh and Norbert and Michael entertained me at some of St Louis' most interesting restaurants. And at the Couch residence I actually heard, at last, finally, and after much waiting, the Rolling Stones' new record, GOATS HEAD SOUL. (Now I can tell the Couches that I've worn it out already.) Of course, in Kansas, Richard and Vicki went one better and played THE ART OF THE FUGUE. In St Louis I saw the details of the vast industrial operation that is called "Donn Brazier's TITLE". Donn says that he spends forty hours a week on that fanzine. I'll believe him; when I'm at home I spend forty hours a day on mine. Donn is the Distinguished Gentleman of fandom, and if there is any justice at all, which there isn't, both he and Ed should have Hugo nominations next year. But I nearly forgot another great St Louis fanzine: BT. Somehow I don't think Railee Bothman will get that December issue done by January, but it will be good when it appears. I enjoyed staying with Railee and Joe and daughters - and can't help wishing that Joe was working for BT fandom as well as model-railroad fandom.

Do I sound exhausted and confused? I'm afraid I am, and I am not going to reach Regina, Susan; or even Peoria, Phil; or see you in San Francisco, Charlie; or make that long-promised visit to Minneapolis and Madison. Or set foot in England. I'm going home fairly soon, and one day I'll be able to sort out the reasons why I couldn't last the whole six months. I'm not making light of all the events recently which have given me pleasure, not moved me (Kansas does that to you, too), or carved a place in my memory. But I'm wearing out. Leigh and I worked out that I had repacked my case to move house fifteen times before I reached St Louis. Add to that my stay at Bothmans', my stay at Richard-and-Vicki's, and then the move to the Cagles'. I tried to catch a plane to Champaign, but there are no vacant plane seats

that I can reach Melbourne. Not that anybody is going to welcome me there: I've just read David Grigg's apazine where he describes how much he is enjoying staying in my flat. I'll need a ten-ton truck to shift him from the balcony where he sips his coffee every morning! I feel that I'm failing my friends Owen and Gayle Webster by heading home so early - but whatthehell; even Owen has never seen the sights of beautiful downtown Wichita, or heard the most fascinating accents this side of the Bronx, or... Maybe I'd better not go into details there.

** ** *

Ed has just told me that he doesn't want to make this a joint editorial. A pity. But that means I can libel him. Ed Cagle is younger than I expected - maybe I believed all that Dirty Old Man line he puts over in KUALHIOQUA. He has a trimmed black beard, more muscles than you would find in two Bruce Gillespies, and he ambles along like that grizzly bear I was talking about. (I think I can get away with this line: Delap: "Here comes that Cagle in the door. He's just been out wrestling a grizzly bear." Cagle enters, pauses. Cagle: "She's pregnant.") And by American standards, he is a fine old man as well: at least I haven't heard conversations so pleasantly salacious since the last time I sat down at table in the Degraeves Tavern with Ken Ford and Leigh Edmonds and David Grigg. Ed Cagle is the Ken Ford of America, or something. (Okay, the Ken-Ford-when-he-is-36 of America.) Cagle is not quite as talkative as I expected; he can't get a word past Delap. Besides, Cagle is too busy ogling Sue. Or Vicki. So am I.

All I'm trying to say is that Ed Cagle is twice as legendary as the legend. There's only one other person I could say that about, and That Other Person lives in Canberra. John Bangsund is standing for DUFF in 1974. He plans to visit Leon, Kansas, if he wins. Help prevent this catastrophe! Vote for Leigh Edmonds for DUFF 74.

I've changed subjects again. It's easy to do here. You change subjects like the weather. And Kansas weather changes every other minute. Back to DUFF. I'm very pleased to see that lots of people are listed as candidates. I've heard little from Lesleigh about the forthcoming titanic contest, and nothing at all from Shayne, but it sounds as if they have been doing a magnificent job. I favour Leigh Edmonds because if he wins, he'll leave Valma behind in Melbourne. And I won't be standing for DUFF '74 - or any other year. I've just heard with much regret that John Alderson will not be standing after all. I don't know whether America could survive the Advent of Alderson, but it wouldn't forget the event for awhile. Best wishes to Sue Clarke, but I don't think even Ron Clarke's attempts to stuff the mailboxes with votes is going to let her win. Eric wants to travel here again! Geez! Quite a contest. And to think that the whole thing was decided upon at the last minute at Torcon, by Shayne and Lesleigh and I in a 2' by 4' room filled with at least a hundred people attempting to drink Aussie-supplied grog at one o'clock in the morning. (And I bet Antifan Stevens will win after all. Curacul)

Ed has told me that I have one more page to fill. I have several letters of comment I would like to print, and at least one I can never print, but I'll leave them til I reach Australia. For now, here is a quote from the WRETCHED MESS GIFT CATALOG. This catalog (sic), which seems to have been written by a combination of Ed Cagle, Bill Danner, and John Bangsund, advertises, for real, true dinks, all that: "the World's Finest Moose Holder. Made exclusively for Wretched Mess way up in the boonies of Alaska, where NOD ARE NOD

strong rope. Tie 1 end to big ring of your Moose Holder. Next, locate your moose. Sneak up on him from behind, with arrow of Moose Holder pointed toward moose. When you get close enough, gently lift the moose's tail & seat the arrow firmly. Next, take off in opposite direction, running, & paying out rope as you go. Finally, tie the loose end of the rope to any convenient stump or parking meter you pass. CAUTION: meese held in this fashion may not be friendly; petting is not advised. Your Moose Holder is a lovely 2 ft ornamental black hand-crafted iron, in impressive gift-moose box. An inspiring conversation piece, especially amongst people who like to talk about meese. **GENUINE MOOSE HOLDER \$4.95.** But read this advertisement in the correct accent.

Milford Poltroon, who wrote the above, offers "17 Unforgettable Reasons why you should buy plenty of good gunk & gorp from this cuddly catalog. 1. Up here in West Yellowstone Montana (wherever that is) we believe fun is a fine thing to have. So all stuff lurking inside this catalog is for your funments & jillies. 2. It is 33% more fun to sit in your home, office, or bathtub & giftshop from this catalog, than to mess around with crowds of people who do not always act or smell nice & like that. 3. Lots of fun stuff here you will not eyeball elsewhere. Wo. And lots of our prices are far too cheap. Yes. 4. We are a small home-owned profiteering operation up here in the Montana panhandle & need your money as much as anybody. More, in fact, to help pay for beer for our staff. 5. We forget the other 13 reasons." Hey y'all; the address is WRETCHED MESS NEWS, PO Box 668, West Yellowstone, Montana 59758, USA.

I can't top that, so I won't. As you poor unsuspecting saps who sit sipping wine at Degraives Tavern know, I have a little black diary. When Aussiefans get really drunk, they occasionally say funny things, and I sit there, stone-cold sober as usual (although drunk on laughter) and write down what they say. In the same diary I also write any other quotes which appeal particularly to me. Here is my first selection. I have plenty more.

Ken Ford: "The 11th commandment: The first rule of heaven should be, 'Thou shalt not get fucking boring.'"

Again, Ken Ford: "I know what a fan is: a person who still likes the people who shit him up the wall. Everyone should be a fan."

The Last Ken Ford: "Bruce Gillespie bares his soul in fanzines; Richard Geis bares everything but his soul."

The Kansas air is getting to me. Here's a stone-cold sober, sock-it-to-you, Deadly Serious Gillespie favourite:

Franz Kafka: "If the book we are reading does not wake us, as with a fist hammering on our skull, why then do we read it? So that it shall make us happy? Good God, we would also be happy if we had no books, and such books as make us happy we could, if need be, write ourselves. But what we must have are those books which come upon us like ill-fortune, and distress us deeply, like the death of one we love better than ourselves, like suicide. A book must be an ice-axe to break the sea frozen inside us."

Henry James: "And I find our art, all the while, more difficult of practice, and, with that, to do it in a more and more difficult way; it being really, at bottom, only difficulty that interests me. Which is a most accursed way

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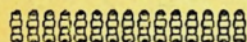
ALF

&

VEG

by

John Bangsund
po Box 357
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AUSTRALIA



I went to see my doctor last week, feeling a little off-colour, and he said, "You have a bad case of Brussels sprouts." "How did you know that?" I asked, politely, since what he said was quite true: Anson McTaggart had sent me the case some weeks ago from his farm in the Mallee, and I had eaten virtually nothing else since. (Waste not want not, they say. They lie.) "I know that," said my doctor, placing his fingertips together under his chin in a most professional manner, "because your face is green and wrinkly."

I blushed. The doctor asked me to do it again. "A fascinating effect," he murmured, "but a little too Churrigueresque for these parts." (Two can play at this game, I thought.) "Then what," I said, "do you suggest to restore my normal Palladian countenance?" He glared at me. "A psychoanalyst perhaps, for a start, since you obviously have an edifice complex." I blushed again, and he regained his composure.

"Anaverdol should do the trick," he said. "If it doesn't..." "Yes?" I said. "We'll have to amputate, of course." "Of course," I said, nonchalant-like. "But it's all on National Alf, so I shouldn't worry," he said, scribbling runic symbols on his pad. I didn't really expect him to worry.

I left the surgery and, the horns of Alfland faintly blowing, walked into my friendly neighbourhood pharmacy. I proffered my prescription for government-subsidized drugs, and the pretty little girl in the shop wanted to charge me fourteen bucks for them. Arghhhh! "I beg your pardon?" she said - very polite kid that. #Arghhhh! "I repeated. "Oh," she said, sweetly, "just a moment please." And she went behind the glass bit at the back of the shop and came back with the chemist and he said G'day what's the trouble? and I nearly made a funny noise again but managed to stammer out something to the

and I knew I'd really go off my head without that anaverdol stuff.

He said, "You can only get this stuff on National Alf if the doctor writes 'SPQR' on the scrip."

"That's Latin for something, isn't it?"

"Yes, Latin me know whether you can have it for a dollar!" (I hate punsters. For a moment I forgot my condition and looked sternly at him. He calmed down almost immediately.) "And as you can clearly see," he said, wiping the tears from his eyes and from the scrip, "there are no such letters here."

"Arghhhh!" I said.

He looked at me strangely. "I beg your pardon?" he said.

"Oh, ah, just wondering, um, what to do about it, sob."

"Why not go back and get the doctor to change it?" he said.

This seemed an excellent idea. As I walked out the door he was slapping his thigh and saying to his pretty assistant, "Latin me know! - hee hee! - get it? - Latin me know!" "Oh you are a one, sir," she was saying. Go a long way that girl will.

I returned to the surgery and my doctor wasn't there. I explained the situation to one of his partners. He said, "Can't do it, you know. You have a bad case of Brussels sprouts, certainly, but to get anaverdol on National Alf you need a bad case of kohlrabi at least." I looked at him with an earnest look. "If I have to pay fourteen bucks for the stuff, I'll become kohlrabi!" He didn't look convinced, not even interested. But just then my doctor came in and there was a bit of discussion and I tried my hardest to look like a bad case of kohlrabi and finally he scribbled "SPQR" on the chit. I tore back to the chemist, and he handed over the stuff for a dollar, but he was still in a state of ill-concealed merriment. "Come on," I said, "what does 'SPQR' really mean?"

"I'm not sure," he said, "but I think it means 'special perks for doctors' relatives'." And off he went again, in gales of unseemly laughter.

Boy, the things you have to go through to have Brussels sprouts!

Kohlrabi I mean, Alf, Dinkum. No, true, really.

Just joking - hah hah - about Brussels sprouts.

National Alf: If you were really kohlrabi you would be writhing on the floor.

Me: Just watch. See! - writhing!

Alf: And going all blotchy and choking and...

Me: Blotchy and choking, you said?

Alf: Uh huh.

Me: If I could act like that I'd be earning a fortune and could afford fourteen bucks.

Alf: Well, acting is very good for the character, not to mention physique, quite apart from paying well if you're good at it.

Me: Truly?

Alf: Truly. Incidentally, that bit of advice will set you back fourteen...
I beg your pardon?

Me: Arghhhhhhhhhhh!

I had barely reached page 11 of a short memo to Dr McTaggart, telling him briefly what I thought of his agricultural efficiency, when a telegram arrived from him. ADVISE URGENTEST UNEAT SPROUTS STOP PIGS GREENEST WRINKLY STOP HOPING THIS FINDS YOU WELL AS IT LEAVES ME STOP ROTTEN WEATHER HERE COLON OH SCREAMER EMRULE TO BE IN ENGLAND ETCETERA COMMA EH QUERY

Now where the devil did he pick up all that jargon? "Urgentest" and "uneat" are typical journalist's telegraphese, "screamer" and "emrule" printer's talk (although most printers I know have a ruder word than "screamer" for

*Journal of the Pastrycooks' Federation



THE DIRTY OLD WOMAN

a column, by

OPHELIA SWANSHIT

CHASING THE WILD PICKLE &c or:

AS THE SWAN SHITS

WOMEN'S LIB TO THE GRIND, I mean GRID ... The football coach of a small local high school near here was horrified to discover this fall that he didn't have enough players turn out to make up a full team. So he recruited a few capable young women to join the squad.

Problem now is that the other teams in his league refuse to play the coed group.

STRIKE WHILE THE GRID IRON IS HOT ... I enjoy football (especially pro) and I really object to things like the fact that the best all-around football book I've read is called "The Thinking MAN'S Guide to Pro Football." I mean, what's with this bit, this incredible mystique built up over the years that a woman's only possible function on the football field is to freeze her ass at halftime while cleverly rolling a baton all the way from her left pinky to her right pinky?

Or, alternatively, to jump up and down waving a pom-pom like a damn fool while yelling, "First and ten, DO IT AGAIN!"

Up your astroturf too, fellah.

MALE CHAUVINIST PIGSKINS ... Compared to the world of football, Bobby Riggs is a devotee of Germaine Greer. And this is especially true of both college and pro ball, which are openly and unabashedly dominated by men.

is just plain out and out SEXIST.

I mean, there's always a pass receiver who "just got a piece of it," And one Texas college team that has the well-known battle cry "HOCK 'EM HORNS!"

Blitzed quarterbacks always "eat the ball," and who (certainly not Ever-ready Ed Cagle!) would have any doubts about the meaning of the sports page headline were it to declare for all the world to see:

OPHELIA SWANSHIT MAKES THE TEAM! ... Well, it depends on which team. I mean, those guys should be so lucky. For instance, have you ever noticed how, out there on the field, these great big he-men are running around patting one another on the ass? Well, it seems to me that having females on the team would make that sort of thing a whole lot more fun, not to mention also somewhat more socially acceptable.

Believe it or not, Fran Tarkenton's not the only one who has ever gotten safely out from behind the line of scrimmage with a brilliant fast scramble. (Nor, on the other hand, is he the only one who has ever made a miscalculation and ended up getting sacked.)

And speaking of such things as a good tight end and a pair of unbeatable wide receivers ... well, let me just say that if I were on a team, the quality of the holding penalties would be greatly increased.

HOWARD IS HANDY BUT DON IS DANDY ... And let me tell you that from this dirty old woman's point of view, it looks like Fumbling with Frank would be plenty of Fun too.

In fact, as far as I'm concerned, Monday Night Football could last all year round because no other sports program has ever come anywhere near it for pure entertainment value.

Well, that's not counting the night that Curt Gowdy described one baseball pitcher with the immortal comment: "He really gets his balls off."

But the thing is that when Dandy Don says something like that, he knows damned well what he's saying when he says it. For instance, the Danderoo thinks that Fair Hooker has the greatest name in pro football. "Four years ago I said I'd never seen one, and I still haven't," was the gentle way he phrased it earlier this season.

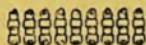
About Fair Hooker, by the way--at first I thought they were putting me on. I should have known better (would Dandy Don lie to me?). Now my dream is to have a news clipping with the boldface headline: "FAIR HOOKER SIGNS MILLION DOLLAR CONTRACT!"

Dandy Don hasn't made any comment yet about the name that seems to me to run a pretty close second, however: Booby Clark. (Well, the thing about Hooker is that it really is his name while Booby is a nickname.)

Still, any time now I expect to hear Howard Cosell break out in that awesome alliteration of his and enthuse, for 30 million viewers to hear,

"WATCH THAT BOOBY BOUNCE BACK!"

Ophelia Swanshit November 1973



* ABC Monday Night Football. 9 PM EST, 8 PM CST, and climax time at Ophelia's pad. Check your local TV (Mis)GUIDE for listings in your area, other time zones, and occasionally in Macao, Papua and Le Havre, with emphasis on the latter. Even if your TV GUIDE doesn't list it (and even if it does, ignore it, it's always wrong), don't miss a chance on seeing Howard get "vertigo" again. . .

AGAIN, DANGEROUS VISIONS

edited by HARLAN ELLISON

Doubleday, Garden City, N.Y.; 1972; \$12.95; 760 pp.

AGAIN, DANGEROUS VISIONS

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book review
by
RICHARD DELAP

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In the introduction, "An Assault of New Dreamers" there appears a flat statement: "I did not want to edit another Dangerous Visions," groans editor Harlan Ellison.

For those who may have been away the last five years, in outer space or other odd places, Dangerous Visions was the giant volume of original science fiction stories published in 1967 that became the cause celebre of the much-discussed "New Wave" in sf circles. The book sold extremely well and enhanced Ellison's already notable reputation as the enfant terrible of writers who with all time and space to roam about in were nevertheless becoming a little too stodgy for their own good. DV changed all that in no time flat. I liked the book, at least in part, though to this day I fail to see why it became the center of the tremendous controversy that ensued. With a few isolated exceptions the book was never really as "dangerous" as the advance publicity would have you believe, and I somehow could not see the point of playing the radicals of the sf right and left through another volume calculated to prolong a war which didn't make any sense to begin with.

So Ellison didn't want to edit and I didn't want to read another book of trend-setting stories; and while he was obviously excited over the results of his new work, I could ignore all his editorial "curlicues and gingerbread," however entertaining they might be in themselves, as so much hardsell.

But if my prefabricated wall of resistance was already molded into place, the onslaught of forty-two furiously inventive writers crumbled it almost instantly, and Again, Dangerous Visions emerges as the definitive volume of new, quality science fiction on the rampantly expanding horizons of the genre.

The taboos and restrictions which were prodded and pinched but seldom truly deflated in DV are now just nonexistent. The writers here don't

even seem to know they exist! Readers "with preconceived notions of what "safe" and "dangerous" themes in sf may be are advised to squelch such notions before even opening this book, for Ellison and his brigand band have turned such concepts into mere words of folly as they sneak up behind you and shove stillettos into your back (or, as is sometimes the case, up your ass).

Not all the stories are good, to be sure, and a few are unqualified disasters. But even the disasters are for the most part attempts to do something different, to break away from the predigested mulch that keeps sf nestled in a barricaded corner, where it can be controlled by editors who feel they have a duty to hold the ends of the universe within easy reach.

It's difficult to make up my mind how to group the stories for discussion. I had first thought to take the best stories together, discuss them at length and relegate the less successful works 'nto paragraphs of short-shrift dismissal. I often work this way (over the screams of the dying), but A.D.V. demands something more, a sense of progressions, the flow of stories as they are ordered in the book itself. So I've settled with the idea of starting with the first story and moving straight through to the last. This means a long, possibly too tiresome review that may smack of rote method, but it's a chance I'm willing to take in the hope that I can convey the ups and downs of this ultimately progressive and tremendously exciting trip.

Ellison covers himself protectively -- for all his bravura he still shows those traces of insecurity, poor fellow -- by mentioning that his approximately 40,000 words of introductions "come free," and if you don't like them you've no reason to complain because they can be skipped. This is true, but I think any reader who does so is a fool, for Ellison's super-hype gives the book an additional mettle that, however you react to it, is an important aspect of the total unit -- I mean, what's a stormcloud without a little thunder and lightning? Ellison has a tendency to litter his opinions with minor factual errors -- Asimov's Sensuous Dirty Old Man comes out Sensual; a grade-Z horror flick, I Drink Your Blood, becomes a trifle more vivid as I Suck Your Blood; and Ellison, surprisingly for someone in the film business, doesn't seem to know the difference between the Motion Picture Code's 'R' and 'GP' ratings -- but I have the suspicion that he just may be throwing out bones for the nitpickers to gnaw on. Take them or leave them, as Harlan says, but I suggest you take them. With salt. And good humor. As intended.

Ellison says John Heidenry's "The Counterpoint of View" is a "keynote entry . . . intended to set the tone and mood for what is to follow . . . a surreal set-piece that somehow cornerstones the intent and attitude of the book." Some will find it intellectual nonsense (which, of course, it is) and others will find its two pages a crafty bit of intellectualism (which, of course, it is too). But anyone who can begin his second paragraph with a subtlety like this -- "Shakespeare was introducing cryptography into English letters (having earlier practised with fictional fiction in The Comedy of Errors and other plays)" -- and travels from there along a helix that refutes every theorem we accept while concurrently refuting the refutation deserves our respect for more than mere cleverness. He nearly exemplifies the adage, "Science fiction is what we mean when we point to it," and beyond that any definition brings in a margin of error. It's a delightful work, and truly does "set the tone and mood."

I would have thought a story opening with the destruction of the entire Earth in a great "blow-up" would be asking for anticlimactic troubles ever

in "Ching Witch!," however, Ross Rocklynne sticks it out on a personal level with his physically half-human (yet mentally entirely human) survivor of Earth's destruction, Captain Ratch Chug. Chug becomes a hero of the youth culture on Zephyrus and his ego trip takes him on a very strange journey with an even stranger conclusion. Rocklynne explains the story's inception coming from his brush with the Haight-Ashbury hippie culture, but adds, "I tried not to make it timely." If the story's origins are clear enough in themselves, even without the author's explanation, the story is certainly not one of those cash-in-on-the-current-craze fluffs milking the public interest of late; and though Rocklynne states the story is "not supposed to have any theme," there are many throughout, all of them interacting in a current of the give and take of life. It's a fine, fast story which leaves the reader begging Rocklynne to continue writing and not make this delightful work a final bullet.

Wasting no time, Ellison has next placed one of the book's nuclear explosions of sf art, Ursula K. Le Guin's "The Word for World is Forest," a superb novella-length example of the breadth possible only in the finest of science fiction. Le Guin's themes are many-colored and fragmented, as are the occurrences of day-to-day living, yet they are not unpatterned. Like a kaleidoscope they form many patterns of conflict and merging within a contained sphere of reference. The author admits her tale is a moralizing one but adds "I am not very fond of moralistic tales, for they often lack charity. I hope this one does not." She succeeds completely, and while not lacking charity her story does not whimper. Neither does it barkingly proselytize. It offers the pros and cons confronting its basic moral question, and offers them with little fear of the harsh conflict necessarily involved. One may resent or cherish the obvious parallels to the problems in today's world -- segregation, Vietnam, corporate sheep-herding, etc. -- but none of them, fortunately, are honed so as to be applicable only to our time. The problems are inherent and everlasting human ones to which Le Guin insistently points out there are no answers forthcoming until we understand exactly what the difficulties really are.

There are no villains in her characters. The situation itself is the villain, and it is predominantly reflected through the vision of three persons: Captain Davidson, who is unable to accept the natives of Athshe (small, furred humans, called 'creechies' by the offworlders) as human beings and cannot adjust his mode of thought to embrace any way of life different from his own; Captain Raj Lyubov, the only man to have made an effort to unravel the customs of the natives, including a half-realized understanding of a culture which thrives primarily on a planet of world-spanning forest, yet has attained a state of existence which involves an ability to pass between a state of reality (world-time) and something beyond (dream time); and Selver, a native whose forest world undergoes a systematic annihilation by the visiting 'giants' but whose comprehension of the destruction comes only through a personal involvement with something previously unknown to his society, the art of murder.

An innocent civilization is beautiful, but its unsullied beauty survives only in isolation and Le Guin does not believe such isolation can exist in a universe of interdependants. We are faced with our power to alter the balances at whim, and to bear the guilt of error. The tendrils of reaction spread in all directions, and even in the far future it seems probable that we will still be unable to detect and control them all. They branch rapaciously into a network of miasma and eden, hope and despair, sparking the questions that have, do, and surely will plague us for many more years. Le Guin's story is dangerous because it leaves us shouldering our own burden of responsibility. For all the care and concern we show, there are still more mistakes to be made, more guilt to be borne -- and that is

honest work you can find in fourteen tons of speculative fiction. It is brave, and the reader must have courage to stare directly into its objective face. With such courage you will find not avarice and bitterness but naturalism and beauty (and, yes, Mrs. Le Guin, charity). Such a reward is very much worth looking for.

After the excellence of the Le Guin story, almost anything would have trouble emerging from its shadow, so Ellison follows it with something light and, unfortunately for Andrew J. Offutt, not very good. Offutt admits that "Fox Value Received" results from a clash with a hospital cashier regarding the balance of a debt, and proposes that "this IS a dangerous vision" on the grounds that his (former) agent told him "it's against the rules to spoof the medical profession." First, the story is much too obviously a fantasy spun out to cotton candy consistency from a common and cheaply-flavored base ingredient. Secondly, it isn't a spoof of the medical profession at all, no matter what Offutt's (former) agent tells him. The idea of leaving a child in the hospital because one refuses to pay the bill immediately strikes me as a hypocritical situation, a tactical refusal to face the inherent horror of the individual's loss in the iron grip of Big Business. Even played for laughs, it's much too thin, too indecisive and too desperate to wring out the needed irony.

Gene Wolfe's three little mood pieces -- 1. "Robot's Story" 2. "Against the Lafayette Escadrille" 3. "Loco Parentis" -- under the cover title, "Mathoms from the Time Closet," are what Wolfe calls "my hang-ups," and adds that "many of the things you thought I said, you said." Apparently his hang-ups aren't in the same closet as mine and I found it difficult to relate to the first and last stories. The middle one, however, gave me a slight tingle, but whether from a simple hookup to my own hang-ups or from a true artistry on Wolfe's part I'm not really sure. They're all short pieces and should be read if you're curious to know if Wolfe, toggling psyche switches, has the good fortune to toggle one of yours.

In this age of porno shops and clinical sex studies, it's hard for many young people to believe that some of the Old Guard, the Puritans so to speak, still cringe at the mere mention of subjects like masturbation, which is the central hinge to Ray Nelson's brilliant fantasy, "Time Travel for Pedestrians". Those who may damn the story for its method of approach shouldn't be reading this book in the first place (unless they're seeking to 'broaden their horizons,' as the saying goes), but if they can make it over that initial hurdle they'll find the story is surprisingly one of the more moral stories in the book. Those looking for what Nelson calls "some real guts and glory" in their fiction will find it in abundance in this ballsy look at time-travel embarked upon by a man who sprinkles a dish of ice cream with an organic (hallucinogenic?) drug and masturbates his way to other times and places to the insistent tape-recorded chant of "Ego-Death." The situation becomes a philosophic duel, a study of excess and contrasts. Beginning with a graphic, startling, soul-searching experience in transsexualism, Nelson grips the reader by the crotch and hauls him through a series of violent deaths stemming from both love (or whatever passes for love at the time) and hate. And following each death is a rebirth, a lovely cycle through which religion dances a frighteningly confused harmony around the brave traveler, with a special accent on the contrasts in western and eastern religions. But how can such an adventure end-- in the courage of convictions? in the hands of a capricious Fate? The contrasts persist and anyone who reaches the end of this superb story without copping out in disgust or horror has already won his half of the battle with the dark angel. Nelson has given the sf reader exactly what

discovery in the depths of human consciousness.

Religion is seen from a different point-of-view in Ray Bradbury's verse, "Christ, Old Student In a New School." Those of the Christian faith may find in this Christ-poem the "promise of new opportunities" Bradbury sees in the future, but it may also confuse those who held the notion that Bradbury is anti-technology, since his verse suggests fulfillment in "rockets through the roof / To night and stars and space." Being neither Christian nor anti-technology, I am left contemplating the spirit of the author's beliefs as an expression in style, with such as this: "Man warring on himself an old tale is; / But man discovering the source of all his sorrow / In himself, / Finding his left hand and his right / Are similar sons, are children fighting / In the porchyards of the void?!" And somehow, sad to say, the spark is not there; the subject is too great, the words too small, the mesh confusing.

Like me, you may be finding ecology stories getting a little hard to swallow these days; their taste is overfamiliar. After all, our news stands are loaded with dozens of books and magazines, a seemingly endless stream of scream and rant and rave . . and profit. It has become the new profession, to be "aware," to be concerned, but it is a profession almost totally ignorant of priority -- and the decimation continues. Does Chad Oliver's "King of the Hill," a fantasy of a billionaire with a plan to save the worthwhile denizens of Earth from the yawning grave, do anything more than the reams of serious and pseudo-serious essays? Probably not, but if it fails to move us to action it is at least a story with a reasonable sense of humor and drama, which makes it worth more than many times its length in ecology scare sheets.

"The 10:00 Report Is Brought To You By..." is a message story, but in it Edward Bryant fails to see the cant of his work, for this story of the exploitation of violence and sensational subject matters in the television newscasts exploits its own subject. There is no real point in telling us we are voyeurs (and hypocrites about being so) without at least trying to tell us what we might do to, if not change, at least understand why we allow ourselves to be so blatantly used. Although the year is 1980, it's obvious that Bryant is writing about Now, extrapolating nothing but an increase in the size of today's worryrags. As science fiction it's uninteresting; as message it's as familiar as a tv jingle, without even an annoying, lilting melody to stick in your brain.

And speaking of familiar messages, you wouldn't think there was much left at this date to say about the so-called generation gap, after all the thousands of pages of factual material on the "youth revolt" and innumerable silly stories of LSD in the water supply, adults incarcerated in prison camps, etc. etc. etc. This dreamworld of youthful hopes seems to have convinced the majority that the world will somehow soon miraculously embody all the idealism -- or at the very least change the status quo enough to see their possible realization. It takes an author with guts to dissolve the sugarcoating and project a different, more horribly probable culmination of today's trends, and Kate Wilhelm is not just parroting a trite diatribe when she worriedly states "I think this is a de-motented society." She's willing and supremely able to show us why, in a projected future where the establishment of the adults has calcified into such a rigid structure that rebellious discontent is on its deathbed and youngsters will never know dissent because it will never exist. Sound impossible? Look around you, then, look closely at the young people (and if you're young, rip off your mask and really look at yourself for a moment), examine the pretense and the fears (especially the fears) that prompt conformities. Wilhelm's startling X-ray vision alone is

enough to make "The Funeral" thoughtful reading; but even more compelling, more nerve-wracking, are the black and grisly undercurrents churning beneath, shifting to reveal brief flashes of vivid colors we're so afraid to glimpse, rivulets of sadistic scarlet, pulsing violets of repressed sex. The story is so unbelievably intense that, like a horrible accident, one doesn't want to look but cannot turn away. As with her brilliant novel, Let The Fire Fall, the story runs the risk of being overlooked because so much of its stinging bite is in the undercurrents, not spread out over the surface with screaming, flashing neon tastelessness. Read it slowly and with passion; you'll feel the needles sink in painfully and the resultant deflation will not be pleasant. But, by damn, you'll remember it. Bravos!

James B. Hemesath's "Harry The Hare" is a quick bit of nostalgia about a popular cartoon character who has reached the end of his reign with the advent of tightened Hollywood budgets and the disinterest of new audiences. He gives himself to his remaining fans, snipping himself into pieces in a surreal homage to the style and humor of animation when it was an art rather than an empty technological profession. The story lacks the sharp edges of a clean cut and isn't really very successful, but Hemesath seems to have talent and may possibly do some better things in the future.

In introducing Joanna Russ' story, "When It Changed," Ellison has the courage (gall?) to state forthrightly: "... as far as I'm concerned, the best writers in sf today are the women," and I'm not afraid to stand beside him and second the assertion. I found myself more fascinated by Russ' 2-page afterword than by her 6-page story -- not her best effort, although the first and last page contain some exquisite philosophical imagery -- and I wonder if perhaps I wouldn't have been happier just bouncing the author's conjectures against those of Shulamith Firestone, Kate Millet and Germaine Greer, counting the places where they merge and dissent. Russ' story is not an essay-in-disguise, but it does offer some valuable speculations re the alleged difference between the sexes, posing questions which cannot be truthfully dissected with assumptions. If sexual preference is so easily adjusted to an atypical situation (isolated or limited indulgence or both), then can any preference really be a perversion? Is it then a perversion in a typical situation? Does sexual perversion even exist? Her thoughts seem to have advanced a great deal since the losing battle she waged with sexuality in her colorful but confused novel, And Chaos Died, and the intrinsic nature of the story may help the reader overlook the rather lacklustre development of the plot. It's a flawed but still good story, with little meat but lots of interesting clackety bones.

Those familiar with Kurt Vonnegut Jr.'s previous work (and today who isn't) may find "The Big Space Fuck" very much off his usual form. It is surely one of the most cruel things Vonnegut has ever turned out, even in its obvious self-satirization. It is despairing, and perhaps somewhat evil, in its depiction of a plan to fire a rocket of frozen sperm to the Andromeda Galaxy, to assure the continuance of the human race which is dying in the Earthly wastes of its lusting greed. It is heartless in its accusations directed toward the excesses and ignorance of the individuals who make up a sheep society, yet it is cynically, wickedly funny about the sickness behind the termination of a world. Schizophrenic, humorless yet joyless, it is an insane story of graveside manners which readers will likely be categorizing as madness and/or sadism for months to come. I personally don't think it quite deserves the attention it is bound to catch, considering the often superior company in which it stands, but there's no doubt that the story is an attention-getter.

With a very limited production, T.L. Sherred has still become one of the most respected authors, and "Bounty" will surely...

precisely why. In two pages he takes an idea, a chillingly plausible idea, and lets it turn our concepts of justice, law and order, into an upside-down cake laced with pretty poison, as a violent society re-adopts the old western code and citizens find the lure of a cash reward for killing armed robbers a satisfying control. It's a striking, pungent, subtly acid vision that pointedly condenses more about the violent nature of man than a library of sociological and Federal reports. It's not a smidgen less than excellent and one of the book's stellar achievements.

Surely all of us have wondered what it's like to be an astronaut, but how many of us have succeeded in pulling the figure down from the plastic, public pedestal to the sweat and smell and fragments of capricious thinking that keep us, the rest of humanity, somehow 'different' from the famed and adored/hated? K.M. O'Donnell's "Still-Life" seeks to make us alter our perceptions of such a figure to fall more in line with ourselves, the real human beings. And if a nagging feeling in the back of your head insists that, of course, such men don't really react so humanly to a reality that holds to a fantastic experience like space travel -- hmmm, then maybe you'd better check again your own concepts of reality and humanity?

I wish I could say I liked H.H. Hollis' "Stoned Counsel." It is neatly written and has a clever idea to play around with -- namely, the use of drugs to fight out court battles. Clients have a choice but lawyers are ~~required~~ required to undergo drug sessions in which the facts and supposed facts are ~~handied~~ handled about in hallucinogenic trips until the deduced truth is revealed, at least as far as can be ascertained by the computerized legal system. Yet Hollis concentrates so heavily on the kinky visual images of the drugged lawyers, images somehow pulled from the two minds and projected onto a screen, that the actual story becomes secondary to the Wham-Pop-Zowie display and is never more than a thin excuse for the stylistic method. While some of the descriptions are quite vivid and little of the story is actually dull, one emerges from it all feeling that the dangerous vision has been sidestepped behind an extravagant facade.

Bernard Wolfe's sf novel Limbo, according to critic Damon Knight, was "full of gallows humor. . .lavish, intricate masses of philosophical apology and analysis, as luminous as anything in Koestler. . .thoroughly peppered with puns. . .poetic and penetrating. . .a great achievement." Then, just to confuse us it seems, he also said "it falls (far) short of perfection" and that the novel's central character is "never believable." Such strange comments are what prompted me to read the novel and it was only then that I grasped what he meant. In the twenty years since the novel was first published, Wolfe has scrupulously avoided genre classification and now, like Vonnegut, can afford to piss off with "finger exercises" (as Wolfe calls them) in "the irrelevant muzzy junk of sf" (again, Wolfe's phraseology).

I think that the two stories here, under the umbrella term, "Monitored Dreams and Strategic Cremations," shows that Wolfe hasn't changed an iota in twenty years; he is far short of perfection yet still produces a great achievement. "The Biscuit Position" is literary napalm aimed at those who insist that such atrocities as Vietnam are necessary to world peace, while "The Girl With Rapid Eye Movements" tangles with the application of science on the homefront, namely the scientific invasion of privacy. Ideas are hurled to and fro with orgiastic abandon, many of them flying out the window with the force of uncontrollable radicalism, never to be seen or heard from again; others are hounded and cornered, probable rabbits at the mercy of slaving hounds. Wolfe's characters, for all their engaging puns and disarmingly literate chatter, are still only mouthpieces who seldom confront their philosophical problems with anything resembling real sweat,

suppose this, too, is part of Wolfe's condemnatory assessment of the current human condition, but it does keep the reader at a distance from the source of and personal relationship to the challenge at hand. Yet in spite of such dazzling if slightly annoying cleverness -- including a bristling, razor-toothed afterword which concludes that "Humanism. . . is incompatible with scientism" and will leave romantic sf lovers screaming and drooling with shock and gross mental pains -- Wolfe's ideas are not just the familiar no-nos and do-not-opens we usually find in the popular versions of controversy examined through milkglass. No, the stories are not, in the usual sense, sf -- but I agree with Ellison: "Damn the rules." Read them!

Ellison tries to sustain the fake charisma about David Gerrold ---- whose only (and questionable) claim to fame thus far is a silly Star Trek script and a few negligible stories -- and it's one of the few times I balk at the editor's super-hype method. "With a Finger In My I" is as littered with hazy thinking as the author's concluding comments about definitions of sanity and public tolerance of antisocial behavior. The story tells of a man whose 'reality' is constantly shifting and changing in response to others' reality, but tells it in such a muddled and eventually nonsensical way that it never does more than flounder in silly syrup. The allusion to Lewis Carroll in a Cheshire cat psychiatrist, along with an unending stream of dullard humor, pointedly reveals how far Gerrold has to go before he can understand the levels of Carroll humor, much less emulate them.

Piers Anthony's "In The Bath" is seriously flawed by a contrived and preposterous framework, by needless and artificial detail of the protagonist's personal lusts (detailed in a too-willing compliance to Ellison's suggestion, as outlined in the introduction), and by a conclusion which is much too inconclusive dramatically. Yet the story works in many ways, dealing as it does in shock value and quite ably doling out some eyebrow-lifting scenes in profusion. It takes place on an alternate Earth where domesticated mammals are nonexistent and women are bred, milked and stocked like cattle. While Anthony is never quite able to provide Hitch, the investigator sent from our Earth to check out preliminary reports on Counter-Earth #772, with a reasonable explanation for his (or Earth's) involvement in the alternate world(s), he succeeds very well once the preliminaries have been arranged and readers are likely to find themselves involved despite the dubious setup. Chop off the opening and closing paraphernalia and there is a sustained mood of horror, something very akin to the humanitarian urge to put one's self in the other's place before deciding to throw stones. . . then recoiling violently when the stones come anyway. The unresolved questions and suppositions lead one to suspect that Anthony could wrest a good novel from this if he could create a logical whole, but meanwhile the reader can ignore the cursory frills and enjoy the sustained unease which makes the heart of this story so disturbing.

Lee Hoffman's "Soundless Evening" tells of the world of tomorrow ---- and, as the author states, "concerns now" -- with no room for children except as one-for-one replacements in a stable population, but is so emotional that it neglects common sense. Infanticide is so irrational an act in all but the most primitive or unusual circumstances that its acceptance as an answer to population control must have more than the placid acceptance Hoffman projects here if it is to have some recognizable vision of terror. The only threat offered is overpopulation, and this speculation concocts fear-jerking as a fake rabbit out of a suspect hat. Nice ruse for a magic act, maybe, but quickly boring and quite untenable on any larger scale.

Next comes an innovation, a "viewword" story. This is a nonsense term

word and drawings titled "(Spot)" -- actually written/drawn as a literal 'spot' that I won't reproduce here for fear of giving the overworked editors of this magazine a heart attack. There is some light entertainment in reading/watching the spot expand until by story's end it consumes half a page, and like a mild but clever joke it works well as a one-time item. It doesn't have the power to amuse over and over like Wilson's cartoons or more complex literary humor, but the initial reading is funny and I think that's probably enough.

Joan Bernott's "The Test-Tube Creature, Afterward" is a thoughtful item about a man and his 'pet,' Hillary, an intelligent animal mutation which (who?) assumes a place in the man's life that, according to the author, should be filled by a human being. There's no arm-twisting method to push the reader into thoughts of inverted, misguided or disproportionate love; yet these are the thoughts inspired and implied by the story's conceptual eddies of perversion, eddies which draw up something buried deep within us all, I think, and may well reveal through this one interpretation the many substitutes we accept in our emotional outlets, often without recognizing their nature.

After the sinking of their ship, an engineer and woman journalist drift for days on a makeshift raft, the man racking his brain for methods to keep them alive while the woman slips irretrievably into madness. A study in isolation, Gregory Benford's "And The Sea Like Mirrors" is made even more intriguing by the presence of aquatic aliens who leave cryptic messages for the humans and who seem to be manipulating a plan to take over, or at least fully inhabit, the Earth. Benford occasionally slips into an annoying artsy-crafty tone that makes his allusions to bigger-than-life sociology sound pretentious, but the story is reasonably successful in dealing with the isolation of individuals as a spearhead of drama.

Evelyn Lief's "Bed Sheets Are White" is a hate-letter to the general acceptance of hypocrisy in the American Way of Life, a projection showing the lack of response which is condemning us to a hell of our own making. Lief tells us that just around the corner are laws against true understanding, laws against honesty, laws against nature -- i.e., a horrible and horrifyingly intense effort to shape us into schizo-perverts in the holy name of prejudice. The fact that I like the style in which Lief writes, as well as what she has to say, does not keep me from disliking the story very much. It loses all its dramatic impact in a simplification that assumes the reader will succumb to fright tactics for their own sake. Ms. Lief, you assume too much.

Ellison speaks of various writers doomed to be crushed by fame in his introduction to two stories by James Sallis -- "at the fitting shop" and "53rd American dream," with the over-title "Tissue." I find that one of the mentioned authors, Horace McCoy, is one I had previously thought about when reading Sallis' works, which often reflect the fatalistic, micro-cosmic vision McCoy employed so accurately in his classic short novel, They Shoot Horses, Don't They?. Trying to explain Sallis' stories in plot synopses is not unlike trying to embrace geophysics with apples and oranges -- the medium simply is not the message. The reader is invited to bring his own interpretations to Sallis. I will only say that the stories reflect forms of fear ("New York terrifies me. . . and that. . . is somehow what it's all about," says Sallis) which humanity has spawned in a world of sophistication and rampant null values. You may or may not like Sallis -- I like him -- but it's impossible to just ignore him. He knows the nerve centers.

Elouise, a human specimen of perfect health on a world where such perfection is an exception in a populace suffering from almost every conceivable malady, is examined by the planet's Council of Doctors, who conclude that

Saxton's "Elouise and the Doctors of the Planet Pergamon" is the fact that Elouise's plight is not the only issue of the story, the usual overinflated method of half-wit writers who facetiously bet moral points only when playing with a stacked deck. Saxton uses Elouise as both a character study and as a mirror, detailing her desire to find a place for herself where the only acceptance she has is in her own head -- a head subjected to cultural pressures, a head primed to explode in new (yet quite old) directions. I have not always agreed with Saxton's fictional psychological analyses, yet my objections often seem more instinctual than rational and I have trouble refuting her completely. This time I agree with her -- which, sigh, means someone out there will be screaming: No, No! --but however one reacts to her ideas it's a sure bet that she can trap both the wary and unwary, the believers and nonbelievers, in her skillful spell. A good story.

Ken McCullough's "Chuck Berry, Won't You Please Come Home" is a 'tall tale' about a tick ~~which~~ grows to monstrous proportions, fed on blood stolen from a laboratory and cared for by humans who find in him a special rapport. Ellison gives the author a super-3,per- hype for "writing mad: a things with the pen of a poet," and while the story is mildly amusing and very hip, I will only say that it seems to require a special taste that I don't seem to have fully developed. McCullough, however, seems to be another new writer who merits a careful watch.

The discovery of a small group of Neanderthals living in mountain caves in Europe sounds like something even the most hackish sf writers would regard as foolish in this day and age. What a delight to find David Kerr's "Epiphany for Aliens" treating it with a respect that has no relation to maudlin sympathy or contrived adventure or any of the funny-looking hybrids. With clean and polished prose Kerr creates a fertile psychological probe that involves the reader personally, while concurrently revealing a socio-cultural overview as closely examined as the characters who reflect it. This one is wonderfully fresh and seems to prove that even the oldest cliché is never quite dead.

The gap between art and science has usually been considered an unbridgeable one, and while scientific gadgets have already come into play in the creation of art, the purposes and quality of the two fields are held as diametrical. In "Eye of the Beholder" Burt K. Filer sees the possibility of union, and finds that the "romantics among us" are possibly a deadly anchor in humanity's progressive march. Can instinctive artistic genius uncover an applicable method in finding a pathway to the stars? Incredible as it may seem, Filer presents a theory which seems both scientifically (in a speculative way) and psychologically sound and provides a solid foundation for a stimulating and very well done short story.

Richard Hill's "Moth Race" is so much a story for our time that it is difficult to classify it within the broad spectrum of sf, since that tends to lessen the immediacy of its important message. Hill says it is a "conspiracy story and it is not pleasant" -- a mild way of phrasing it since this is surely one of the most unpleasant and shuddersome stories in all of A.D.V. We are shown a world kept under remarkable control through the use of "easypills" and the excitement of a yearly Race -- the lucky spectators, randomly (?) chosen, get to watch from racetrack bleachers -- where a few brave souls gamble with their lives, racing around a two-mile track in cars likely to smash at any moment against randomly (?) rising and falling metal walls. The Champion, the only man ever to have won this race, watches from the trackside, looking and acting bored though his unique status entitles him to limitless material wealth. Yet we do not get the story from the Champion but instead from a trackside viewer, John Van Dorn,

-- who controls the race? How? Why? Such questions cannot help but be coupled with the ones we ask today -- who? how? why? What is really shocking is our own uncertainty; if we truly believe we have grasped the Truth, how must we react when we discover that we are irrevocably wrong? Hill is not an answer man. He seeks only to make us aware of how unaware we may be of the formulae at the base of reality. Must we be as gods even to attempt an answer? The paradox and terror of Hill's memorable story dumps it all into the reader's lap; he may jump and run or stare and puzzle over it, so at least we have that choice, don't we? . . . or do we? (Errr, even thinking about it scares me all over again. . .)

The notable thing about Leonard Tushnet's "In Re Glover" is that it reads like sharp, stinging black humor -- involving the voluminous legal tangles resulting when a rich man with terminal cancer decides to have himself frozen, to be revived when a cure is found -- yet in spite of the humor of heirs, lawyers, corporations and hangers-on hassling definitions in a series of courtrooms, which is very funny, the story stems from the sober theme of a morality dependant on a confused society's confused concept of morality. I only fear that some readers will accept the humor and ignore the gravity, but I will not blame Tushnet if that happens. He's written a fine story that deserves to be read, and it's very possible that his humorous technique will work to impress rather than depress the message. I hope so.

Ben Bova, editor of Analog magazine, homefront of the "hard" sf tales, writes a Women's Lib sf story? Well, "Zero Gee" certainly reads that way, like something meant to follow up a Cosmo centerfold. The story involves three people orbiting the Earth: an Air Force astronaut, a pretty young female photographer for Life -- well, pretend it's been revived -- and a woman scientist whose primary duty seems to be to chaperone the other two. The unexpected thing about Bova's approach is the lack of technical mishap or somesuch thing to provide drama; instead he concentrates on the astronaut's effort to seduce the young lady, fully convinced his masculine charms and the excitement of zero gee copulation will turn the lady into a willing sex toy. There are surprises in store for the astronaut, but the reader will find that even off the Earth his psychological territory is overfamiliar, with the offensively dominant male receiving his just desserts and the submissive female revealed (surprise?) to have her own cleverly disguised dominant nature. All in all it's just plain silly.

Dean R. Koontz's "A Mouse In the Walls of the Global Village" is a ruthlessly horror-filled story of the danger to the individual in a McLuhanized future. Koontz plucks the emotional strings of a "Stunted," a man who is immune to the procedure which has turned most of the world's population into Empathists able to communicate in direct mind-to-mind contact, and shows us a fate perhaps even more disgusting than that of the present-day Negro or homosexual (both examples of diverse minority groups which maintain only a limited amount of tolerance and/or acceptance). The story is well-written and effective if one wishes to become involved only on an emotional level with the protagonist; but on close examination the logic gets very shaky as social extrapolation, and Koontz has obviously avoided the more serious problem of attempting to explain an outcast who has chosen his way of life. Koontz capsulizes the content very well in the story's closing scene: "But sorrow, after all, does absolutely nothing. It is much like holy water. It is not even used to quench the thirst." This is the sort of comment which reveals the tunnel-vision directed upon the story's unwilling victim of chance; yet even a limited viewpoint may be channeled in meaningful directions and I think the story is worth reading, flaws and all.

various sf/fantasy writers (with one exception, unless Blish considers a certain Victorian sex novel to be fantasy) that is so studded with "in" jokes and puns of a quasi-fannish slant that the uninitiated are doomed to miss much of the humor, some of which centers on reader reaction to the authors parodied as much as to the authors themselves. I won't spoil the fun of the guessing game for those who want to check out their own knowledge of the genre, but I admit that the whole effect seems to me awfully flat and uninspired, even for a story which, the authors say, is "only a game." The best moments are ones of criticism -- Blish, ignoring his critical bent seeping through, claims "the story isn't literary criticism" -- for example, his casual slash at an author whose repeated conflict with English prose was often a losing battle: "what sort of creature could make so magical a sound? . . . scaly and winged, in some parts of the valley they dangled from every participle." (Now if that isn't literary criticism, I'd like to know exactly what the hell it is!) There are moments here and there that may coax up a few chuckles, but at twenty pages it isn't sustained enough to be very successful.

The really striking thing about "Totenbuch" by A. Parra (y Figueredo) is that it is an experiment which may or may not work as intended by the author. Going by Parra's concluding explanation of what he tried to do, I found it interesting to observe, retrospectively, that it worked for me -- but exactly the reverse of the way intended. I experienced the sense of helplessness he wanted but for reasons other than those he mentions. I felt no response to his "promise of sado-masochism" and no disappointment in that he delivered "nothing"; yet Parra says that his attempt at ambiguity is unsatisfying and didn't come off while, to me, this ambiguity is the remarkable strength behind what he sets out to convey, "the real experience of frustration." In places the technique is brilliant, and however it works with each reader seems less important than the likelihood that, by hook or crook, it works. If it is beyond some readers' "powers of comprehension," as Ellison warns, it is probable that even those readers will not fail to detect the integrity and craft in this fine bit of fiction. I am impressed. More, please, Mr. Parra.

Written as entries in the journal of Oliver Wendall Regan, a geneticist whose Nobel-prize winning "complete genetic map of the mouse" has led his fellow travelers on a starship to dub him 'The Star Mouse,' Thomas M. Disch's "Things Lost" takes a delightful turn by saying much more in innuendo than it says in Regan's attempts at straightforward reportage. As with much of Disch's work, most notably the strange novel, Camp Concentration, it is touched with bits of genuine excellence that in the end fall just short of the élan which graces truly memorable work. It is a very fine story with telling (read: depressing) insights into dark corridors between human immortality and death; yet when all's said and done, one looks back at the characters and their day-by-day, desperation-posing-as-fey-psychological-games chatter with the same eye Disch uses -- clinical, watchful and very dispassionate, removed to a distance by the vacuum of a lens, the same kind which bridges the technologist and the microbe yet keeps them on two very separate planes. Disch tries to close this gap, most noticeably with an early reference to an anonymous child silently watching the immortals take to the stars, but his cast of "stable stolid" (as Regan calls them) are just too stable and too stolid to involve the reader on any level other than intellectual curiosity. Disch is playing a game of solitaire. I'm fascinated watching him, but just never quite involved.

Small or no, a mouse giving birth to a mouse is wondrous; a writer at the same feat, huffing, puffing, blowing and sneezing, is . . .

"Boomer Boys on Little Old New Alabama" is a laborious effort to produce a mouse, and the work involved for the reader (and, presumably, the writer) to get through such tribulations just doesn't seem worth the effort once the feat is accomplished. Lupoff has taken pains to involve quite a group in the birth process: the white race of N'Alabama are described in a slangy, short-cut prose which is an obvious culture-satire of the Negro ghetto language (with nods to Joyce for word (dis) array and puns; the blacks of N'Haiti, at war with the whites, are progressive, ordered and terribly sane, but having trouble maintaining their 'good' life as the war effort drains their supplies and productive balance; and the S'tscha on N'Yu-Atlanchi, diminutive human zygotes adapted to live in the saline oceans, are unable even to contemplate their impending fate as instruments of desperate measure in the black-white war. All the stylistic extravagances aside -- some quite good, others less so -- the story is basically nonsensical space-opera, complete with an outer space battle that owes more to the early pulps and comics than to the "new wave" which permeates the style. And if that isn't enough, Lupoff has done his research on voodoo -- he even lists his source books, for Gawd's sake -- and has apparently decided that if Richard Matheson could provide a pseudo-scientific explanation for vampires (in I Am Legend), it sure as hell can't be too difficult to give a pseudo-rationale for a futuristic version of zombies. And, heavens, it just goes on and on like this, scrambled and scrambled from here and there, occasionally amusing, often boring, never succeeding in getting it all together. And after all that work -- squeak! a mouse! Through a character at story's end, Lupoff excuses himself: "...but what the hell, the boy has to earn a living." With the help of his diarrhetic typewriter, Richard A. Lupoff earns his living. Hoe-ho-hum-ray.

M. John Harrison, who self-admittedly once wrote "veiled sexual allegories," has apparently not given them up, and in "Lamia Mutable" the veils are so patchwork that no connections with Kents and medieval superstition can upgrade the paucity of imagination in this jigsaw tale. For one thing, the author simply puts too many irons in a very small fire (which goes out long before we reach the ironic climax of transmutation), and while his trio of grotesque characters invade the "ash flats of wisdom," the reader begins to realize that Harrison's effort "to pose as many unanswered questions as possible" is the sheerest and unworthiest effrontery. A very unsatisfying effort, I'm afraid.

As Robin Scott related the sad, empty life of con-man Sidney Becket in "Last Train to Kankakee," I kept thinking -- oh, yes, I've read this sort of thing before. When Sidney dies of heart failure during a Tijuana lust tryst and his wife stores his body in a secluded freezer, I thought -- oh, no, not another cryonics/revival story. And when Sydney awakens in the future and finds all his wants satisfied but bored, driving him toward suicide, I thought -- what else can he do, it's all so familiar. And when he finds that death isn't exactly what he'd expected and that man's relationship with God is -- well, do you see? Scott led me to believe he couldn't surprise me, yet in the end he did just that, and I think his story's a good one.

"Kaheris, the unknown astronaut, existential hero" is described by Andrew Weiner in "Empire of the Sun" as "a kind of tribute to the comic books." What I want to know is why should Weiner try so hard to create this comicbook schema of sf clichés -- war with Mars, government wheels within wheels, the mysterious ever-present Man in the Mask, the concluding nova of the sun -- when the comics relay the feeling of pure exploding color in an exaggerated admixture of fantasies with a much truer sense of absurd excitement. The story seems well enough done for what it has to say, but it seems too much a personal literary exercise to have much interest to anyone

Terry Carr is another fine writer who can use well-worn material yet give it that excellent imagery which flashes so brightly that one hardly notices the familiarity of the plot. In "Ozymandias," the mutants have inherited the world following an atomic war, grouping into two clans, the robbers and the thinkers. The latter have been destroyed by the former who, like all groups seeking to retain tradition and fearful of true knowledge, obtain their power by stealing it from the past, in this case by raping the vaults of materials left from the pre-war world. The vaults are not only storage bins for supplies but also contain the bodies of cryonic subjects waiting for revival. The old and the new can be a dangerous mix, as the robbers know from past experiences with hidden bombs, deadly gases, etc., yet the danger is more than one-directioned, as Carr shows in a dramatic conclusion in which, if it wasn't already clear, everyone has lost. Not a remarkably original story, to be sure, but slickly handled and quite readable.

Like the first volume, Ellison closes A, DV with something he calls a "smasher." In the first book it was a sex story by Samuel R. Delany, "Aye, and Gomorrah. . .," about a new perversion spawned as a byproduct of the technological age. James Tiptree Jr.'s "The Milk of Paradise" is quite similar to Delany's in that it too deals with perversion, but it is a far more disquieting story in that the sex is also inexplicit in detail but much more explicit in suggestion. What is so weird about this story is that what Tiptree says may not have nearly the impact of what one thinks he says. His reality of human sexual fulfillment has the diamond-hard glitter of all facets trained on a single objective -- sexual perversion is relative. In a society conditioned to 'missionary' sex, anything done only for pleasure is perverse; so in a human society, where is the place for one who has been conditioned since birth to respond to a non-human form of love? Imagine such a person being used by humans, curious as to his response. (This concept explodes in some of the story's most horrifying moments, on a par with a detailed description of the sexual molestation of a child, a confusion of innocence with sophistication.) Ellison is understandably enthused with this story and I think he's right to be; but if it turns out to be the award-winner he suggests, one has to give the common readership more credit for intelligence than has been granted so far. To be honest, I don't think this story will be very popular -- but, then, I'm brutally cynical -- for it's much too close to the prismatic core of sexuality and most will be prone to reject it out of disgust or fear. Such reaction should only demonstrate how good the story really is, however, and I'm convinced everyone should at least try to contemplate and face up to the bitter forthrightness Tiptree has brought to this remarkable story.

Finally, Ellison gratefully gives a page-length credit at book's end to Ed Emshwiller, who did the fine illustrations which form an integral part of Doubleday's excellent packaging.

And so, 760 pages later, Again, Dangerous Visions reaches its conclusion. To those curious and patient readers who have traveled the length of the book with me here, it will seem that quality-wise the book is inconsistent and loaded with the ups and downs which seem to mark the majority of the original anthologies. True, true, but in looking back I find that even many of the least impressive stories are ones that I can remember clearly and which have an identity of their own, giving the book a sandpaper abrasive texture that is far more appealing than the sad bland puddings so common to the genre. And the best stories -- well, nothing more need be said except that next year's awards lists will surely be sagging with the weight of nominations from this remarkable collection.

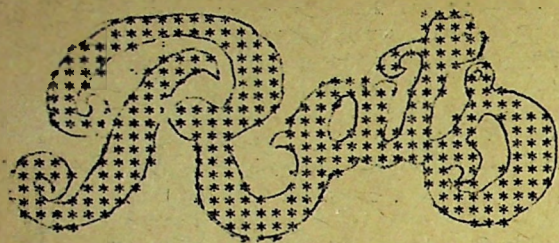
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- Jack Thibeu, in ROLLING STONE



REVIEWS

Every amateur book reviewer really wants to be paid for his efforts, and allowed to reach the wide world Out There. This year it was my turn. Soon after Peter and Laurel Olszewski began to publish that scurrilous, blasphemous journal RATS (banned in every parochial school in Australia) they asked me to write book reviews for the magazine. A professional at last. : : BRUCE GILLESPIE

Well, not quite. RATS' rates put me only just inside the "professional" category, and I'm fairly sure that only about two of the magazine's readers ever read my reviews. However, the following reviews make up a very high proportion of all the writing that I did in 1973; besides, the column gave me a reason for writing at least 1200 words of properly thought-out prose every month. With a few exceptions, here are the RATS REVIEWS I did before RATS ceased publication abruptly after the July issue. You will notice that in some of these reviews I have adopted a style that is quite different from my usual brand of inspired rambling. I tried to write "for the audience", although not even the magazine's editors were quite sure who were in the audience. I tried to adopt a style that put over an opinion in the least words possible, and packed the maximum meaning into those few words, without losing basic lucidity.

I had a completely free choice of books to review so I tried to make a mixture of books I wanted to push (such as s f and Ozlit) and generally available books that I thought would appeal to the audience. I hope s f readers enjoy the reviews of non-s f as much as I enjoyed writing them. I've left out some reviews: those of DESCHOOLING SOCIETY (discussed much better in SFC 31), SO (it deserves much more than 600 words), and THE DEATH OF THE FAMILY (since I have a much better review on file). In some of the following reviews, I have added paragraphs which did not appear in RATS.

Finally: I'm assuming that RATS has not been revived while I've been travelling. If it has - hurrah! If it hasn't: well, thanks, Peter and Laurel, for including me in the fun. If anyone

"Among the things Billy Pilgrim could not change were the past, the present, and the future."

Billy Pilgrim was born in Ilium, New York, grew up there, was drafted into the US army during World War II, was captured by the Germans, transported across Germany to the city of Dresden, became one of the few people living there who survived the American fire-bombing in 1945, escaped from Germany, returned to USA, married a rich girl who was so ugly that nobody else would marry her, lost his wife in a car accident, was captured by a Tralfamadorian flying saucer in 1967, and because of his experiences on the planet of Tralfamadore, spent the rest of his life trying to convince people that they should not worry about dying. Also, Billy Pilgrim becomes "unstuck in time" so that all these events seem to be happening to him simultaneously all his life.

That's a plot?

Well, try this for a plot.

The American science fiction writer Kurt Vonnegut Jr. (who doesn't like to be called a science fiction writer these days) was one of a small group of American soldiers who survived the fire-bombing of Dresden, during which more people were killed in one night by conventional bombs than during the atomic-bomb attack on Hiroshima in 1945. Throughout the 1950s and 1960s Vonnegut tried to work out a way in which he could tell the story of his experiences adequately. In the first chapter of his book he tells how he finally got around to it. Finally he adopted what I call the "Looking Glass Effect". You will remember that in Lewis Carroll's THROUGH THE LOOKING GLASS, Alice found that the only way she could get to the top of Looking Glass Hill was to walk in the opposite direction. In the same way, Kurt Vonnegut could only bring himself to write about Dresden when he abandoned his original intention to write a bitter, factual account.

So the "plot" of the book is really made up from all the crazy, funny people and inventions from his other five novels (including Mr Rosewater and Kilgore Trout from GOD BLESS YOU, MR ROSEWATER, and the Tralfamadorians from THE SIRENS OF TITAN) mixed with the sad, entirely believable life of Billy Pilgrim, and Kurt Vonnegut's own observations about life in the twentieth century. Billy Pilgrim stands firm as a symbol of all the harm that war can do to people. He and the other characters remain human despite the strenuous efforts of strange outer-space creatures and American bomber pilots to destroy their humanity.

SLAUGHTERHOUSE-FIVE has many depths to it: for instance, Vonnegut claims in the first chapter that he has never written a story with a villain in it. But he comes very close to making the zany Tralfamadorians into his villain. They tell Billy Pilgrim that all moments in time are of equal value, that death does not matter. Vonnegut sets out to show what death really means. (Each time anything dies in the novel, Vonnegut adds the phrase, "So it goes." "Body lice and bacteria and fleas were dying by the billions. So it goes." Or, "'How does the universe end?' said Billy. 'We blow it up, experimenting with new fuel for our flying saucers. A Tralfamadorian test pilot presses a starter button, and the whole Universe disappears.' So it goes.") Billy ends up brushing aside thoughts of death; Vonnegut shows us why we must be angry about every death.

In one passage Vonnegut writes that "the German reserves were violent, windy, burned, bristly men. They had teeth like piano keys." In another passage Billy Pilgrim leans over his decrepit mother to catch what he thinks are her last words. "At last she accumulated enough energy to whisper this complete sentence: 'How did I get so old?'"

And what was it really like to live through the fire-bombing of Dresden? "There were sounds like giant footsteps above. Those were sticks of high-explosive bombs. The giants walked and walked."

If these random quotations don't send you running to buy a copy of this book, nothing will. It's one of the best American novels for many years.

(RATS, Vol. 1, # 4, February 1973)

Peter Mathers

THE WORT PAPERS (Cassell Australia, 1972, 282 pages, \$5.50)

Is it possible to live in Australia and stay sane? Is it possible to write good novels in Australia and still eat three good meals a day? In his latest novel, THE WORT PAPERS, Peter Mathers asks the first question; after having read the book and found out something about its genesis I'm asking the second question.

According to the Average Glen-Monash-cream-brick-veneered-8.15-train-commuter Australian, all of the characters in THE WORT PAPERS are mad. Yet most readers would find something of themselves in the people of this book. So who is trusting whose definition of madness, and who is wrong?

Thomas Wort represents one kind of madness. He lives one kind of life but believes in another. He is an executive for Mediums Limited, has a nice wife and several nice children, and travels the jet routes around Australia. But he sees that Mediums Limited and its controllers are engaged only in futile and absurd activities. Thomas betrays himself because he doesn't get out of the company. He tries to put up and shut up, but slowly he is going mad.

THE WORT PAPERS also tells the story of William Wort, who is Thomas' father. William has the madness of false expectations. He lets his very woolly ideas push aside his love for his family, so he and they wander around from one poor farm to another. After one extraordinary adventure in the Kimberley Ranges and several years spent overseas during World War II, he begins to find some sort of balance in his life.

But already he has passed on his madness to his son Percy, who is supposed to have written THE WORT PAPERS and handed them on posthumously to his "big brother" Thomas. Percy is a person To Whom Things Happen. Percy and his father attempt to help an old tramp who drops a match which begins a bushfire in which Percy narrowly escapes from being burned to death. Peter Mathers calls this section, "Journey and Employers (& obligatory bushfire)". Percy buys a jeep, a woman tries to steal spare parts from the jeep; when Percy catches her, she invites him home, lets him sleep under her bed for the night, and next day sets out with him to drive to Alice Springs. Percy is always poor, always in trouble, and always funny. After reading THE WORT PAPERS, the reader must admit that Percy is not mad. He just thinks, acts, loves, rides motor cycles, and loses jobs much faster than anybody else he meets.

Percy Wort is a visionary, not a madman. But Australians often mistake the one type of person for the other. He is a visionary because the author, Peter Mathers, is a visionary. Few Australian writers of any type enjoy the exciting qualities of words as much as Mathers does; almost no others can use them in such a dazzling way. Time and again the reader might think that Mathers plays with words just for the hell of it - until suddenly we realise that every page must have been sweated over, line by line, word by word. We read the book for the first time and it doesn't seem to have a shape; it seems to be only brilliant yarns connected to surrealistic stories, decorated with puns, jokes, and rambling asides. But Mathers writes, "Caves have so far featured several times in this series of recollections. (Caves of recollections joined with one another by passages long and narrow.)" "Caves" like the story of Percy's frenetic motor-bike ride down the southern coast of NSW; "passages" like Percy's "stories for children", which are really great short stories contained within the larger framework of the novel.

If THE WORT PAPERS is "about" anything, it is "about" the experience of seeing clearly in a country whose people are committed to closing their eyes.

All of this answers the second question that I asked at the beginning of this review. No, it is not possible to write good novels in Australia and still sell well; not if you're Peter Mathers, that is. So far the book has been nearly ignored, although the author has worked for five years on it. The rub is that Mathers lives in a real garrett, just like all those poor, starving, nineteenth-century writers you used to hear about. In another country, in another era, where and when good novels had the buyers they deserved, Mathers would have made his name and his fortune with this book. In hardback, THE WORT PAPERS costs \$5.50, three dollars less than a recent (paperback!) book about the Rolling Stones. With all due deference to Mick and the boys, you'll still have THE WORT PAPERS on the shelf thirty years after the Stones have been forgotten. And you'll enjoy its lunatic sanity just as much then as now.

(RATS, Vol. 1, #5.)

Hermann Hesse

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|---------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| <u>STRANGE NEWS FROM ANOTHER STAR</u> | (Noonday Press N432, \$2.10) |
| <u>JOURNEY TO THE EAST</u> | (Noonday Press N109, \$1.70) |

Noonday Press has recently released STRANGE NEWS FROM ANOTHER STAR, by Hermann Hesse. It is a collection of short stories originally published, misleadingly, as a collection of children's stories.

One of the best stories in the book is FLUTE DREAM. The unnamed story-teller's father gives him a flute and sends him off into the world, saying, "It is now high time for you to see the world and gain knowledge." Playing his flute, the story-teller charms a girl, Brigitte, whom he meets by the side of a river, and they spend an idyllic day together. Brigitte must leave him; he wanders on. By the seaside he meets an old man who invites him to get into his boat. They sail away from the shore and the sky darkens. When the story-teller protests that he wants to turn back, the old man says, "There is no way back. One must continue to go forward if one wants to fathom the world. Sail on, wherever you wish." The story-teller takes the helm and keeps on sailing into the unknown. The old man disappears. The story-teller stares at his own reflection in the water; the face that looks back at him is that of the old man.

The story that began as a children's tale has transformed itself into a penetrating parable about the whole of human existence. The young man meets "himself" in another physical form, but he must agree to venture on into a new kind of spiritual world before he can "become" himself. The two opposites - the young innocent traveller and the wise old philosopher - have always been possible parts of the same character. Now they have become joined into one.

In this and all the other stories of *STRANGE NEWS FROM ANOTHER STAR*, the reader meets simple words, simple ideas (especially Romantic ideas of the nineteenth century), and a simple structure (that of the fairy tale). The reader follows a story with some interest and gradually begins to read faster and faster, sensing that the writer is performing some unexpected, mysterious tricks. Then, the end! and a burst of some kind of revelation. Hesse has changed all the elements of his story into something new. And often the reader is left scratching his head, wondering just what happened.

The same thing happens in *JOURNEY TO THE EAST*, which is a short novelette, although Noonday Press pretends that it is a novel. *JOURNEY TO THE EAST* shows Hesse's interest in Eastern culture far more obviously than the early stories do. In part 1 of *JOURNEY TO THE EAST* the story-teller, H H, tells how he joined a mysterious group of people called the League. Priest-like, the brothers of the League set out on a pilgrimage that they call the Journey to the East. But nobody has a clear idea of the direction of the journey, which becomes complex and even magical. Members of the League travel all over the world, and even all through time. The members of the League must renounce all worldly pursuits and perform many esoteric religious ceremonies.

One of the brothers disappears from the group; the story-teller says that the disappearing brother must have been the person who seems to have stolen from every other member of the band. The story-teller becomes dissatisfied with the quest, and soon leaves the League. At this stage, the "plot" of the book seems to have finished at the end of part 1. But, as in many of the *STRANGE NEWS* stories, Hesse gently and firmly leads the story-teller (and the reader) back to the "real" plot of the story. Hesse shows how his story-teller tries to rediscover the League and his own sense of purpose. The ending of *JOURNEY TO THE EAST* is breathtaking; it is one of the finest examples of Hesse's own version of "heightened awareness".

* * *

Only a few years ago, the readers of Hermann Hesse rightly regarded themselves as members of a small minority among readers. They were lucky if they could buy translations of any of Hesse's books in Australia (although *STEPPENWOLF* has been available for some years from Penguin, and there was an early American paperback edition of *MAGISTER LUDI*). Yet by 1973, Hermann Hesse has become one of the best-selling writers in university campus bookstores in USA, Europe, and now in Australia. Why?

Probably brilliant sociologists would take millions of words to answer this question. The simple answer is that Hesse was forty years ahead of his time. Also he was reviled in his native Germany because he hated war. He had a passion for Eastern culture when most Europeans still regarded the Indian, Chinese, and Japanese cultures as the uncivilised products of "natives of the colonies". Hesse explored the idea of existentialism before the word was invented. His ideas about self-discovery sound very like the anti-psychiatry methods of Laing and Cooper. Hesse showed new possibilities of religious experience when sophisticated Europeans were still trying to forget about old

forms of religion, and hadn't yet discovered that they might need something to put in its place.

And, more than anything else, Hesse realised forty years ago that modern technological civilisation would betray its admirers. In his work, Hesse reaches towards a "heightened awareness" of spiritual existence; this kind of quest has become fashionable again only recently.

Anna Kavan
ICE (Picador 330 23442, \$1.40)

In her novel ICE, Anna Kavan also uses simple words, simple structures, and simple concepts - and ends up with something that is just too simple altogether. Anna Kavan is not a word-magician like Hermann Hesse, although she does try very hard.

In his introduction to the novel, Brian Aldiss is more complimentary than I can be. According to Aldiss the "walls of ice" that the novel describes "represent more than the mysterious evils closing in on the author. They have a universal application." Unfortunately, they don't.

Aldiss also says that Anna Kavan was a "born writer" and that the whole novel "is as alert and lively and mobile as a good spy thriller". Unfortunately neither statement is true.

Many readers will not worry whether ICE is a "good novel" or not. They will remain fascinated by the way in which this book describes some of the visions of a woman who was slowly dying of heroin poisoning. For instance, Brian Aldiss, England's best science fiction writer, thought that ICE was the best sci-fi novel of 1965, although the publisher had not labelled it as such. Aldiss wrote to Anna Kavan, expressing his admiration for the book. She wrote back, was very surprised to discover that ICE might be science fiction, and met Aldiss. A year after their meeting, Aldiss read that Anna Kavan had died.

So ICE is interesting mainly because of the circumstances in which it was written. Unfortunately it holds more interest for a psychiatrist or a student of psychology than for someone who wants to read a good novel.

In ICE, Kavan's hero chases the heroine endlessly from one snowy country to another while walls of ice gradually cover the earth. Endlessly the hero describes his quarry as "silver-haired", a very thin girl with "big eyes" and "long lashes". Sometimes the walls of ice advance and sometimes they retreat far from the scene of the action. On a surface level, the story makes sense. On an emotional level, it makes little sense. It is just flat and trivial. ICE is a recurrent hallucination, almost certainly drug-induced, but the author does not have the verbal powers to make the reader share the hallucination.

But many readers will remain fascinated by the way that ICE reveals a mind disintegrating under intolerable stress. As for Brian Aldiss - just this once, he made an error of judgment.

Peter McCabe & Robert D. Schonfeld

APPLE TO THE CORE: THE UNMAKING OF THE BEATLES (Pocket Books 78172, \$1.50)

Beatles, or in the development of pop music during the last decade. Crisply and succinctly APPLE TO THE CORE describes how Brian Epstein discovered the Beatles, what his discovery did to the Beatles, how the Beatles behaved after Epstein died, how the Beatles established Apple Corps and declared, "All you need is love", and how other people picked up the pieces after the Beatles found that they needed a little more than love.

The hero of this book is the Beatles' first manager, Brian Epstein. Its villains include almost everyone else, including the foolish Beatles themselves. The subtitle of the book is "The Unmaking of the Beatles", and McCabe and Schonfeld show what a desperately miserable business Apple Corps became during its final stages.

Although I admire the huge amount of research that the authors must have undertaken, I still have two bones to pick with them about APPLE TO THE CORE. Why must they make the second part of the book almost as detailed and boring as a stockbroker's report?

And why don't the authors connect the Beatles' personal difficulties more closely to the variations in their music? It's true that they give a good account of why the making of SERGEANT PEPPER'S LONELY HEARTS CLUB BAND coincided with their abandonment of concert tours - but there are many musical details that they might have discussed more fully.

My guess is that McCabe and Schonfeld know far more about company finance than they do about pop music.

(RATS, Vol. 1, #46, April 1973.)

Norman Spinrad

THE IRON DREAM (Avon N448, 255 pages, \$1.25)

Adolf Hitler?

You've probably heard the name. Saw it in a science fiction magazine, perhaps. He emigrated to USA from Germany in 1919 after dabbling briefly in right-wing politics. While learning English in New York, he became a sidewalk artist, an illustrator for science fiction magazines, and in 1935 he made his debut as a science fiction writer. In 1955 he won a posthumous Hugo Award (the Oscar of the s f world) for his final novel.

Now, afyer many years out of print, you can read LORD OF THE SWASTIKA, Adolf Hitler's last and most popular book, and only Hugo winner.

It's an exciting yarn. The hero is Feric Jagger, who is a genetically pure human, "a figure of startling and unexpected nobility". At last, a real s f hero you can admire! In the country where he is living temporarily, Feric is surrounded by horrible, roughly humanoid creatures. Feric wants to migrate to Heldon, where only true men live. At the border into Heldon Feric outwits the guards who are under the influence of the utterly evil Dominators. Feric is horrified when he finds that the only true nation on earth is also riddled by the Dominators and mutant tribes. You should read how Feric lets loose the pure psychic energy of his genes to make everybody obey him. Talk about exciting! Then there's the scene where the people finally get rid of the

Dominators. And during the biggest scene of all Adolf Hitler really makes your hair curl when he shows Feric Jagger's army blowing up the entire Empire of Zind!

They don't write science fiction like that any more.

* * *

But Adolf Hitler didn't emigrate to America in 1919, did he? And Russia and China are not the sole dominant powers on our world. And in that other universe, Adolf Hitler confined his fantasies to words that became the wish dreams of s f readers.

That other universe is the invention of Norman Spinrad, author of the still-banned BIG JACK BARRON, and of one of the funniest s f stories ever written, THE LAST HURRAH OF THE GOLDEN HORDE. Spinrad writes just the book that Hitler would have written if he hadn't become dictator of Germany. The curious thing is that LORD OF THE SWASTIKA (disguised as THE IRON DREAM) reads very much like half the serials that still appear in the s f magazines. Read any Keith Laumer or Gordon Dickson recently? Spinrad might be making fun of Hitler, but he is merciless towards his fellow s f and sword-and-sorcery writers. Spinrad litters his pages with long-familiar words like "stimuli" and "psychic response", "gleaming", "grand", and "dazzling" - the stock-in-trade of the panders to adolescent fascist wish dreams. We happen to live in a world where Hitler's fantasies came true and caused the deaths of more than twenty million people. Yet, it seems, people still dream of killing other people in their millions, and still nurse secret desires to wipe out "inferior" nations.

Spinrad would have really laughed if THE IRON DREAM had won a real Hugo Award - because he would suspect that many of his readers had not caught the joke. People who do get the joke will also be entertained by Spinrad's brilliant analysis of the fascist mentality.

Richard Brautigan
TROUT FISHING IN AMERICA (Picador 330 23346, \$1.40)
IN WATERMELON SUGAR (Picador 330 23443, \$1.40)

Trout fishing in America is an activity. Trout fishing in America is a person. Trout fishing in America is a place. And somehow Richard Brautigan makes us believe that this magical phrase represents all the activities, people, and places that he discovers in his travels around America.

TROUT FISHING IN AMERICA is a group of forty-seven short episodes, none of them longer than eight pages. The publishers say that this is a novel. It isn't, but it is more than a collection of short stories. The book describes some events and observations that occurred to the narrator while he and his woman and child and friends wandered around rural America. The publishers say that Richard Brautigan has become "a cult among the young". Well, he's over thirty (born in 1935), and he's not a cult with me, but like many of America's young people he and his friends are interested in living a free, non-urban, non-technological life close to nature.

The narrator of TROUT FISHING IN AMERICA says that when he was a child his grandfather told him about trout fishing. "He had a way of describing trout as if they were a precious and intelligent metal." When the narrator sets out on his travels, he spends much of his time looking for good trout streams. He

investigates many other long-forgotten delights of rural America - although most of these bits of paradise are never quite what they seem.

"One spring afternoon as a child in the strange town of Portland," he writes, "at a distance I saw a waterfall come pouring down off the hill. It was long and white and I could almost feel its cold spray." Even as a child he was always looking for the perfect spot to go trout fishing. At that age he thought he had found it. Next morning he got up early, took slices of white bread to make into doughballs for bait, and set off. As he approached the creek he saw that it did not look right. When he came close enough, he found that it wasn't the trout stream he had been looking for. It wasn't even a stream. "The waterfall was just a flight of white wooden stairs leading up to a house in the trees... I knocked on my creek and heard the sound of wood."

In *TROUT FISHING IN AMERICA* most of the ideal trout streams seem to turn into places of wood. Brautigan writes about Cleveland Wrecking Yard, where, he says, anybody can buy cheaply a used trout stream - all divided into bits. "We're selling it by the foot length," says the salesman at the Cleveland Wrecking Yard. "You can buy as little as you want or you can buy all we've got left. A man came in here this morning and bought 563 feet." The waterfalls sell for \$19 a foot. The birds, fish, flowers, and insects come in separate lots.

Like many people today, the narrator tries to live a truly free life. But to live off the land, he must fish for trout. But to eat the trout, he must kill them. So what's the difference between industrial polluters killing trout and fishermen killing trout?

Brautigan shows that he realises this paradox. The narrator and his friend catch a trout and lay it on a rock. Instead of breaking its neck, the narrator's friend pours port wine down the trout's throat. "The trout went into a spasm. Its body shook very rapidly like a telescope during an earthquake... Some of the wine trickled out of its mouth and made a stain on the rock. The trout was laying very still now. 'It died happy,' he said." The narrator says that it is all right for a trout to have its neck broken by a fisherman but "it is against the natural order of death for a trout to die by having a drink of port wine." Why?

One of the best episodes in *TROUT FISHING IN AMERICA* makes a hero out of a man who had gone fishing for seven years and hadn't caught a single trout. The narrator admires this man just as much as he admires people with the ability to catch trout.

One of the most likable characters in the book is an old man whose name is *Trout Fishing in America*. But before the novel ends, he dies.

In this book there is page after page of brilliantly epigrammatic prose, witty observations, funny stories, and meanings that might or might not be wise or terrifying. Somehow, all the pieces do form an entire jigsaw puzzle. Americans seem to love trout fishing - "this land is your land", and all that. But soon they'll destroy all their trout streams, all their sources of life. Even the people who celebrate nature, like the hippies who live in independent rural communities, help to destroy life. In Brautigan's song to freedom, there are many sour, funny notes of disappointment and death. But he sings so well that the tune comes out right anyhow.

The tune of IN WATERMELON SUGAR, however, does not come out right. It just comes out - sugary.

IN WATERMELON SUGAR is the story of an ideal counter-culture community, somehow existing in peace and contentment after the rest of industrial society has disappeared. (Presumably it wiped itself out.) "No one ever wrote a true novel about happiness," wrote Joseph Hone, and Richard Brautigan does his best to prove this right. This little heaven, IDEATH, is a dull place where most of the people we meet don't do much, and where even the most complicated conversations read like this: "That was a wonderful dinner," Bill said. "Yeah, that was really fine," Charlie said. "Good stew." "Thank you." "See you tomorrow," I said." And so on.

IN WATERMELON SUGAR becomes slightly interesting when a group of rebels tries to ruin the community. However, the rebels must have been wrong all along, for eventually they end their rebellion by committing suicide without anybody doing very much to oppose them.

This is a fable that is written very simply, but it's duller than a sermon. How could the man who wrote this also have written TROUT FISHING IN AMERICA? Will the real Richard Brautigan please stand up?

(RATS Vol. 1, # 7, May 1973)

Joseph Johnson

WOMB TO LET (National Press Pty Ltd, 34 Lonsdale Street, Melbourne, \$5)

WOMB TO LET is one of the best Australian novels to appear for years - yet Joseph Johnson, the author, took six years to get it published.

"Both Australian and British publishing is in a bad way," Joe Johnson said recently. "For instance, Australian publishers did only seventeen novels last year. WOMB TO LET wasn't one of them. After all the other publishers had rejected it, Bob Cugley of the National Press agreed to take a risk on WOMB TO LET and he published it himself. He has printed 500 copies, selling at \$5 each." (Bob Cugley is the famous printer, now in his seventies, who has published such "risky" Australian novels as Frank Dalby Davison's THE WHITE THORNTREE.)

Needless to say, Joe Johnson does not earn his living by writing novels. He grew up in Gippsland, became one of the most successful students ever at St Patrick's College, Sale, dropped out from Melbourne University, and now survives on odd jobs and with much help from his wife Merrill and four-year-old daughter Hildegaard. Joseph Johnson, a friendly, soft-spoken man in his early thirties, is a real veteran of the ways in which Australian society insults its best writers.

** ** *

Not that WOMB TO LET is the sort of book that Australian publishers or audiences jump at. In its 177 pages it ranges from incest to buggery, mysticism to realism, and through almost every type of prose available to the modern writer. It's not a "nice" book, and even for reviewers who are supposed to nut out such things, it's just a bit confusing.

But that doesn't matter. For anyone who can read, this is one of the most

excitingly written books ever to appear in Australia. For instance the book's first scene takes place inside the womb of Elendhof's mother. Elendhof is the book's pushy little hero who insists on waging war on his twin sister while both of them are waiting to be born. "His cyst-a, Elendhof discovered as he examined her for the nth time, lacked more than three teeth. And as he probed around her tiny cunt, he noticed that she responded, not much more than an almost imperceptible shiver, but something, perhaps. He persisted in the experiment and found that if he rubbed her up the right way he could work wonders with her, could make her change position, could park her anywhere in the womb he chose and could even stand her on her head... and he knew how uncomfortable that could be."

And when Elendhof's mother (to be) insists on lying down, getting up, and walking around, making things uncomfortable for her son (to be), he gives her so much pain that she is forced to retire to bed during most of her pregnancy.

Elendhof is not exactly "born" - he escapes from the womb. He pushes out by himself, and while his mother is still asleep, lowers himself to the floor by his umbilical cord. When it breaks, he crawls halfway across the floor. His father, asleep near by, wakes up, takes one disbelieving look at his newly born son, and runs out of the house, never to be seen again. Before escaping the womb, Elendhof had knocked the daylights out of his sister, who then had to be born by Caesarian operation.

After that, the lives of both Jay Elendhof and his sister Catherine are a bit of an anticlimax. Jay has escaped from the womb into what he calls the Second Womb (the world in which he grows up) and ceaselessly he searches for an escape route into a Third Womb. When he finds it, during the very last part of the book, he is not very happy with what he finds. Meanwhile, in the Second Womb, his sister Catherine and he are bound together in a relationship of extreme loves and hates; in different sections of the book they feel driven both towards and away from each other.

The first part of WOMB TO LET is a grotesque joke that reminds me of Gunter Grass' THE TIN DRUM. The rest of the book is more confusing. In part 1 Johnson writes from the viewpoint of Jay. Abruptly, without introduction, he changes to the viewpoint of Catherine. When later in the novel Johnson re-introduces Jay, the reader must get used to two completely different ways of looking at things. As I see it, Johnson has tried to show that although Jay and Catherine lead fundamentally opposite types of lives, between them their lives make up a totality which neither of them could express alone - like the two halves of a ying-yang symbol. Jay is a hedonist and dropout, searching for disaster, disdaining security, who turns out to be more conformist and less sensitive than his sister. Catherine searches for security through religion, "falls in love" with God, and becomes a nun. When she feels that God has rejected her, she becomes a prostitute.

Johnson changes his prose style in each section of the book to reflect the changes in the lives of his main characters. So readers who enjoy the lusty story-telling and funny philosophical speculations of part 1 might find it difficult to read the fractured, concrete-poetry style of the middle section as Catherine falls into madness. Readers who can accept that Elendhof can remember his time in the womb might find it difficult to accept the fantasy-like episode at the end of the book.

Buy this book anyway. In WOMB TO LET you won't find the expected, the mundane, or the dull. If Joseph Johnson had written just another Australian

novel, full of sheep and swaggies, or penthouses and pickled party-goers, he would have had it published six years ago. But one of the best things to say about WOMB TO LET is that you can't spot it as an "Australian novel" as soon as you open it. It owes a lot to the European tradition of Grass, Kafka, and Gennep, and much more to the richness of Joseph Johnson's imagination. In other words, it has just that spark of life that Australian publishers most like to snuff out.

(RATS, Vol. 1, # 8, June 1973)

THE MULLER-FOKKER EFFECT (Panther 586 03651, 224 pages, \$1.10) John Sladek

RATS INTERVIEWER: Mr John Sladek is sitting beside me tonight, waiting to tell us about his latest novel, THE MULLER-FOKKER EFFECT. But first a few words of introduction. Mr Sladek told us that he left school in 1960 and took up a series of jobs including short-order cook, technical writer, railroad switchman, cowboy, and President of the United States. Um - later I must ask you about that last job, Mr Sladek.

Tell me, Mr Sladek, why did you write THE MULLER-FOKKER EFFECT?

JOHN SLADEK: To make money. You see, the FBI had just discovered that I had been posing as Richard Nixon for two years, and...

RATS: Um, I see. Now, in your book, you write about the Muller-Fokker tapes, which can carry so much electronic information that a man's personality can be inscribed onto them. What gave you the idea for the book?

SLADEK: One night I broke into Richard Nixon's office. I needed some small change to feed the parking meter outside, and his office was the nearest. I had started to open the desk drawers when I looked up to see the figure of the President himself looking at me. But the President wasn't moving. All the lights were off. He was sitting straight up, looking dead. But he wasn't dead. The "President" was made of plastic, and he was operated by a computer tape plugged into the back of his head. I disconnected the tape, put the plastic man in a corner, and took over the US government for a couple of years. And got the idea for my book.

RATS: Mr Sladek, you seem to be saying that the wild, zany events in THE MULLER-FOKKER EFFECT are based on fact. I'd better tell the listeners that in the book, four Muller-Fokker tapes are sold by mistake from an Army surplus store. They get into the wrong hands, and all of America starts to fall apart. Mr Sladek, how much of the book is based on fact?

SLADEK: Some of it has already come true. In THE MULLER-FOKKER EFFECT I wrote about a religious Disneyland called Bibleland. It's divided into Old Testament Land, New Testament Land, Heaven Land, and Hades Land. Visitors take the Garden of Eden boat ride and visit the Noah's Ark zoo and buy rubber crowns of thorns, chocolate nails, apostle haloes, and Eden apples. It's my best idea for years - and now some American businessmen have actually gone ahead and built Bibleland!

RATS: Yes, listeners, THE MULLER-FOKKER EFFECT just shows that it's impossible to exaggerate anything that happens in the USA today. But, Mr Sladek, do you really think that the US Army will ever form a unit of soldiers,

disguised in drag, called the Pink Barrettes? And is that man of that magazine - you call him "Glen Dale" of "STAGMAN" magazine - is he really still a virgin? And is the evangelist Billy Graham - er, Billy Koch - really a robot controlled by computer tapes?

SLADEK: That's not what's worrying me. THE MULLER-FOKKER EFFECT first appeared in hardback three years ago. Now that the paperback's come out, America has become twice as mad as in my book. You just can't write satire anymore!

RATS: No less a critic than Grendel Twitterton had described THE MULLER-FOKKER EFFECT as "ersatz satire and elephantine non-humour combined with the minimum of interpersonal confrontation between its leading characters." How do you reply to such criticism?

SLADEK: I have nothing to say.

RATS: And that's how I would describe the book.

Now, before we finish...

SLADEK: No more questions, please. Is there a computer expert in the audience? My Muller-Fokker tape is running dooooooowwwwwnnnnnn... Click!
(RATS, Vol. 1, # 9, July 1973)

John C Lilly

THE CENTRE OF THE CYCLONE (Paladin 586 08121, 220 pages, \$1.55)

"I took 100 micrograms (of LSD) and got into the water tank. I spent about an hour in the tank working on whether or not my heart and respiration would continue if I did leave my body. I quickly learned that under LSD, if one can relax and enjoy it, one's heart and respiration do become automatic and one does not have to worry about them... I quickly found that it was very easy to leave the body and go into new spaces. One could go anywhere that one could imagine one could go."

Dr John C Lilly was one of the first US experimenters with LSD. He began to use it in 1954, and scientifically studied its effects on the minds of himself and fellow-workers during the 1960s. One of his most interesting experiments was taking LSD while suspended in a "sensory deprivation" water tank. THE CENTRE OF THE CYCLONE tells the story of his own trip and his personal journey. Eventually he could reach heightened perceptions without using drugs or any other external aids, and his work is still continuing.

Unfortunately THE CENTRE OF THE CYCLONE, which sets out to describe some of the world's most exciting scientific work, makes an unexciting book. John Lilly is not a good writer, and he cannot tell about the changes in his own mind so that other people might follow him. People who have travelled already a fair way along the same road might enjoy the book. For me the most splendid thing about the Paladin edition was the cover.

Philip Jose Farmer

TO YOUR SCATTERED BODIES GO (Berkeley, 220 pages, \$1.20)

THE FABULOUS RIVERBOAT (Berkeley, 256 pages, \$1.20)

In TO YOUR SCATTERED BODIES GO and THE FABULOUS RIVERBOAT Philip Jose Farmer

has invented an almost perfect science fiction idea. An unknown race of people (called "Ethicals" in the second book) resurrect all the people who have ever lived on Earth. All these people find themselves on the banks of a three-million-mile-long river which winds around the surface of an unknown planet in an unknown solar system. All of the resurrected people wake at the same time. All of them are naked, hairless, and without the physical disabilities that killed them in the first place. Mysterious devices which they call "grails" provide them with all the food that they need.

In other words, Philip Jose Farmer creates a physical heaven. It's a heaven which shocks Victorian middle-class Christians as much as it shocks tenth-century Buddhists or twentieth-century atheists. But the creators of this heaven have stocked it so well that every person who ever lived should be able to pursue a life of complete ease and pleasure as long as the creators of this world allow him or her to do so.

But - surprise! - heaven quickly turns into hell. In TO YOUR SCATTERED BODIES GO Farmer "resurrects" Sir Richard Burton (the nineteenth-century explorer) as the main character. (Sam Clemens is the main character in THE FABULOUS RIVERBOAT.) Only a few hours after Burton awakens, he sees a man murdered by a frightened mob. The group of people that become Burton's party arm themselves with chipped pieces of heavy stone that lies in the ground. The creators of the unknown planet have placed people along the river roughly according to the time and place of their deaths. Soon people begin to form national groups and to set up boundaries along the river. When Burton's people build a boat to travel along the river, they are constantly attacked by these "nationalist" groups.

Do you see what I mean by "the perfect plot"? Farmer creates his world, fills it with real people, and describes the process by which they gradually destroy heaven and re-create the various hells of which the world has always been made. TO YOUR SCATTERED BODIES GO and THE FABULOUS RIVERBOAT reflect a grim view of humanity, but Farmer is such a splendid, clear-sighted writer that he makes us believe entirely that human beings are capable of ruining this "perfect" world just because of their own humanity.

TO YOUR SCATTERED BODIES GO is filled with savage and often funny religious and cultural ironies and its sequel, THE FABULOUS RIVERBOAT, is even more ferocious and coldly brilliant. Farmer is currently at work on the third (and last) in this series, to be released in 1974.

(The above two reviews were due to appear in the defunct RATS # 10.)

(All these books can be bought or ordered from The Space Age Sock Shop, 317 Swanston Street, Melbourne, Victoria 3000, except for LCHB TO LET, which should be purchased from the publisher.)

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