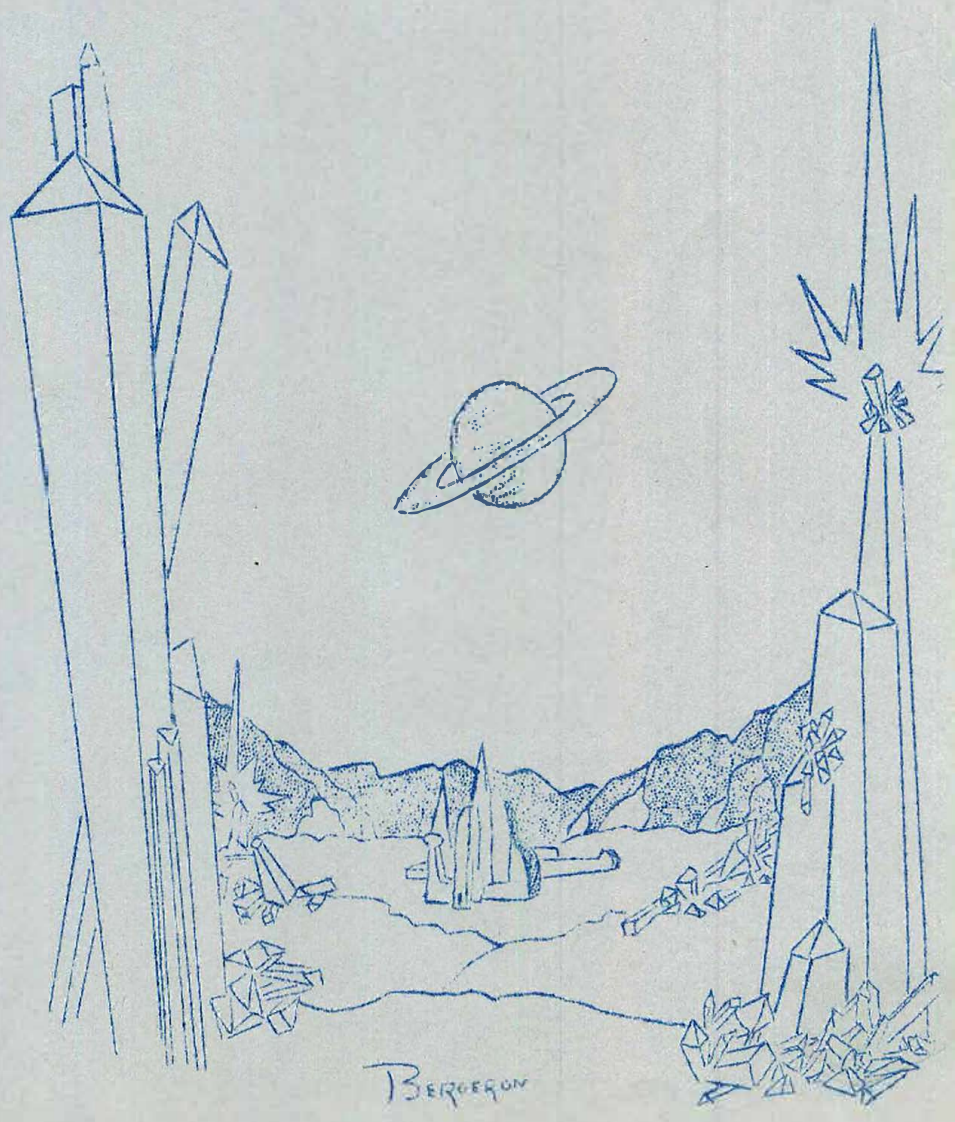
SKY HOOK



FIFTH ANN-ISH

WINTER 1952-3

SKY HOOK

SKY HOOK, combined with Chronoscope, is edited and published quarterly for the Fantasy Amateur Press Association by Redd Boggs, 2215 Benjamin street N. E., Minneapolis 18, Minnesota. This is the fifth anniversary issue, whole number 16, intended for the sixty-second FAPA mailing (winter 1952-3), and available for general circulation at 20¢ per copy (regular issues: 15¢ each). Opinions expressed by contributors are not necessarily those of the editor; however, all unsigned material is editorially written and reflects the viewpoints and opinions of the editor. A Gafia Press publication.

1953.

TWIPPLEDOP

In the darkness with a great bundle of grief
the people march.
In the night, and overhead a shovel of stars
for keeps, the people march:
'Where to? what next?'

-- Carl Sandburg.

FIFTH ANN-ISH

This is Sky Hook's fifth birthday.

Sky Hook is older than Galaxy; Fantasy and Science Fiction; Other Worlds; Imagination; If; Space Science Fiction; Fantastic Story Magazine; Wonder Story Annual; and I don't krow how many other science fiction magazines. It has long outlasted Worlds Beyond; Ootwa; and the revived Marvel.

It is far from being the oldest FAPA publication, but it is older than most subzines, including Peon, Spaceship, Opus and Quandry.

Sky Hook was born in the null-A age, and lived right through the engram era.

Only 17 of the present members of FAPA were around when Sky Hook #1 appeared in the February 1948 bundle. The lucky fapans are Burbee, Coslet, Cox, Croutch, Dunkelberger, Laney, Miller, Moskowitz, Perdue, Speer, Stanley, Thompson, Tucker, Warner, Wesson, Wilson, and Woolston.

The first issue was a 13-page affair that was almost lost in a 296-page bundle full of fine stuff. Horizons was there, of course; so were Burblings, Fan-Dango, Masque, Phanteur, Plenum, Light, Glom, Synapse, Ego Beast, and a Coswalzine. It was an all-star mailing, and even today it is thoroughly entertaining.

Sky Hook itself consisted of three departments which have survived to the present: "....," "Twippledop," and the mailing review; one article, "Amazing Prophecy"; "Contentment: An Obvious Parable' by Dale Hart; and three rather long poems. I have just spent 10 minutes rereading the issue, and while it is inferior to later issues, it does aim in the direction I still follow.

I have said before that Sky Hook was "inspired" by Jack Speer's old fapazine, Sustaining Program. The flat statement is misleading, for Sky Hook has never looked or read much like SusPro. However, SusPro's mailing reviews set the standard I have aimed at in "Eye to the Past" and SkHk's "....." follows Speer's "Quoteworthy Quotes" in tradition if not in direction and purpose.

What is copied most directly from SusPro is the attitude I have tried to embody in SkHk: that of approaching all subjects and problems critically, in a mood of serious speculation, setting my-

self as much as my readers straight on the questions being debated. Obviously I did not assume this Speerish attitude without finding a similar bent already present in myself, but SusPro showed me that such a viewpoint could be made the basis for a valuable fapazine.

Predictions about the future of any fanzine are risky, but I am confident that Sky Hook will be celebrating its tenth anniversary in 1958. I sincerely hope each of you is still around at that time. See you then.

HELPFUL HINTS

Look for advertisements for the Science Fiction book club in magazines other than ASF, if you aren't satisfied with the selection of free books they offer there for joining. An ad in True, which I answered, offered the Astounding anthology, Day of the Triffids, The Illustrated Man, and Rogue Queen, in addition to all books except Sands of Mars, offered in the ASF bacover ad.

Sprinkling a little sugar over peanut butter prevents it from sticking to the roof of your mouth. It also enhances the taste.

HOW TO RECOGNIZE CHEAP SF MAGAZINES

The typical cheap science fiction magazine has a title containing at least two mind-wrenching adjectives. But the typical publisher of cheap science fiction magazines isn't satisfied with it -- every other issue he changes the title a little, so that the sucker is hooked again, thinking it is a new magazine. To help in this deception, the publisher also alters the size, format, number of pages, and title logo of every issue.

Despite this, the magazine is always poorly printed on sleazy yellow paper, unevenly trimmed. Fifty per cent of the staples don't go completely through the magazine. The cover is always a garish red, and the picture is always buried in an avalanche of titling from all sides.

Inside are a number of stories, and at least one of them runs about 20 pages, so it is labeled a "complete novel." You won't want to read any of them, so let's ignore them.

There is a long woolly letter department in which children find an amazing amount of merit in stories which had no merit. And of course there is the editorial department, in which the editor declares that he is buying the best science fiction in the field and that next issue he is featuring a new classic by Basil Wells.

The price? Oh no, the cheap science fiction magazine costs 25¢ or 35¢, just like any other science fiction magazine.

THE CASE FOR CORRECT SPELLING

Someone says, Why should anyone know how to spell correctly?

Correct spelling has the utility of allowing the reader to look up an unfamiliar word in Webster -- a not unimportant consideration where the sense of an article may depend on the meaning of one key word. I fear some of you would be entirely lost if I were to write a philosophical dissertation on "impiricism."

More important, correct spelling pleases our sense of consistency and taste. Badly spelled words offend us much as a girl dressed in jeans affronts us at a formal dance. We place a high value on good grooming. A pageful of execrable spelling is badly groomed literature. The writer has not bothered to shave or brush his hair before venturing into public.

We may grant that behind the slovenly garb may pulse a great heart. But a sloppy man is probably a sloppy thinker. Incoherency and misspellings unfortunately go hand in hand.

We judge writing as we judge apples at the market. The sweetest fruit may be the one with the scuffed skin, but we choose the more perfect one.

Perhaps we choose unwisely, but that is the way we choose. I am a nonconformist at heart. I think there should be room in all stylebooks for artful misspelling ("Leeh was theditor lastime"), but I don't think there's much excuse for chronic ignorance.

A WARNING TO THE CURIOUS

Fantasy and Science Fiction cannot function with less than two editors, plus

a managing editor and an advisory editor, but it is trying to get along with a circulation department handled by one arthritic little old lady in a sub-sub-basement at 570 Lexington avenue.

At least that is the conclusion I draw from my experiences since I unwarily subscribed to the magazine a year ago:

(1) I asked that my subscription (one of those five-issues-for-one-dollar deals) begin with the April 1952 issue, inasmuch as I had already purchased the February issue from the newsstand. The little old lady began it with the February issue.

(2) I renewed my subscription last summer by accepting a $3 "bargain" offer. The invoice came back marked for $4.

(3) After I had remitted the money ($4 -- since Mr Boucher suggested that I had "delayed so long that the offer had expired"), I received a notice that I had "already missed an issue" because I hadn't remitted soon enough. Fair enough. So I bought a copy at the newsstand. A few days later I belatedly received the issue I was supposed to have missed.

(4) The following issue, the fourth or fifth under my new subscription, included a notice, "Your subscription expires with the next issue."

(5) My nerves considerably frayed by now, I wrote the little arthritic lady to please cancel my subscription. She did not answer my letter, but I am a trusting soul and bought the next issue at the newsstand. The following day a subscription copy showed up.

Thus, out of 11 subscription issues I have received so far, three have duplicated copies I had already purchased. Another was so horribly mutilated by the post office that I had to buy another copy for my files. My two subscriptions, a total of $5, have yielded only seven usable copies -- which means that each issue cost me about 71¢. For some reason I am beginning to suspect I have been an awful sucker.

F&SF is a magazine I highly recommend, but I don't recommend subscribing to it. Buy F&SF, but buy it from the newsstand, as I will do henceforth. Pay only 35¢ for each issue. If you value your mental equilibrium, don't trust your money to that little old arthritic lady in the sub-sub-basement at 570 Lexington avenue.

YOU CAN BE #1 SF AUTHOR!

When Bob Swisher brought out the S-F Checklist of fanzines (now revived by Bob Pavlat and Bill Evans) fans rushed to see who could obtain first place in the listing. Now that Don Day has published his gigantic index of prozine stories I foresee a similar scramble to place first in future editions (if any) of Day's index.

Someone can obtain first place (now held by Robert Abernathy) in the alphabetically-by-author listing by selling a story under a pename such as Alastair Abbot or Abraham Aarons. First place in the index by titles can be usurped from E. Mayne Hull's "Abdication" by selling a yarn called "Abaddon of Mars" or "Abandoned in Space."

Abou Ben Adhem's name probably led all the rest because the angel's scroll listed names alphabetically. Using an appropriate pename, you can be just as good as he was. To the typewriter, man!

WOMEN OF THE "HEART"

"They -- the women I mean -- are out of it -- should be out of it. We must help them to stay in that beautiful world of their own, lest ours gets worse." So speaks Marlow in Joseph Conrad's famous novella "Heart of Darkness."

In this story the darkness is the savage interior of Africa, and symbolically, the whole intractable universe, irrationality, pre-history -- everything opposed to civilization, which is a small flickering light in the world, a light which can go out. Where do the women of the story fit into this pattern?

There are two women, one fat and one slim, sitting in the Company's London offices, knitting black wool "feverishly." One wears "a starched white affair on her head." Marlow remembers them as "guarding the door of darkness...one introducing, introducing continuously to the unknown, the other scrutinizing the cheery and foolish faces with unconcerned old eyes." Thus, these women symbolize fate

and stand midway between the realms of light and darkness. If they guard the black gate, equally they stand at the door of light. They knit the black wool, but as the fates must, they live apart from the struggle.

Marlow's "excellent aunt" is the next woman in the story. The setting -- by her fireplace -- and her "bright" talk about "weaning those ignorant millions from their horrid ways" indicate that she represents the naive civilized person to whom the hovering darkness is only a vague rumor. "It's queer how out of touch with truth women are," says Marlow. "They live in a world of their own, and there had never been anything like it, and never can be."

Strangest woman in "Heart of Darkness" is the bronze native woman. There are sparkles of light about her, "the flash of barbarous ornaments," the glass beads, and the "charms...that hung about her /that/ glittered and trembled at every step." The color yellow dominates her person: she has "tawny cheeks," bronze skin, and wears brass ornaments upon her arms and legs. A night-light is often yellow. In this woman Conrad symbolizes a sort of St Elmo's fire seen at the very stroke of midnight. For though she is part of the savagery, her alien loyalty and devotion are a faint glow against the night.

"The Intended," of course, again represents light: "the fair hair, this pale visage, this pure brow...surrounded by an ashy halo." She symbolizes all women of constant love and unswerving loyalty -- virtues equated with light -- who live in "that beautiful world of their own" without suspecting the limitless darkness, though it literally surrounds them. (She is in mourning.)

All the women in the story, then, stand apart from the dichotomy of light and darkness. In their own way, they are lights unto themselves.

THE MARILYN MONROE DOCTRINE

The aide entered deferentially and saluted extra-smartly as he caught the Supreme Marshal's eye, to make amends for interrupting him at breakfast.

"Sir, Pacific headquarters reports that the force-shield has just been extended so that Hollywood, Burbank, and Glendale are now in our power."

Eyes glittering, the Supreme Marshal spat an orange pit at the aide, who instantly withdrew. As the door closed, the Supreme Marshal permitted himself a thin smile. He turned to his guests at the breakfast table.

"It appears, my friends, that the force-field propagates just as you postulated."

"We got the idea from a science fiction magazine, sir," one of the group murmured modestly.

"Ah yes, you're science fiction -- uh -- fans, aren't you?" mused the Marshal. "Nevertheless, you shall be rewarded for your achievement. The propagation of the force-field is just what we require to extend liberated territory and squeeze the invader from our beloved U. S. A."

"That is our reward, sir," said a fan dutifully, his mouth full of shredded wheat.

The Marshal lifted one gloved finger and frowned under his gold-encrusted cap. "I insist on bestowing a reward. It is psychologically sound, and my policy. What reward would be suitable? Hmmm. Hollywood captured -- undoubtedly with all of its personnel. Movie stars!"

He smote his fist on the table to show he had reached a decision. "There should be at least five movie actresses, or actors, for every one of you -- uh -- science fiction fans. And you shall have them! What do you say, fans? Which five movie stars do you want for your harems?"

BNK AND BNP

You are a big name fan, no doubt, but what if FooFoo is capricious and you

"From An Observatory" by H. G. Wells is reprinted from Certain Personal Matters (1898), and was originally published sometime between 1893 and 1895, at the very beginning of Wells' writing career.

end up as king or pope? What then? Your own name, big as it is, won't be big enough then: Pope Towner, King W. Mildew, Queen Lee.

However, you can easily choose a name that will be big enough. For it is the custom of king and pope to choose a name to rule by, usually one already made illustrious by one of his predecessors on the throne. Just on the offchance that you do become king or pope someday, you might profitably spend an hour now selecting the name you'll rule by and under which you'll be known in the histories.

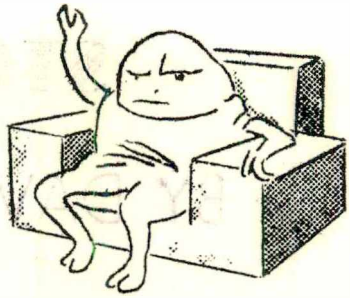
If you like novelty and change as I do, I hope you'll select a name other than "Pius" when you become bishop of Rome. The recent pontiffs of that name are undoubtedly worthy men, but seven out of the last eleven popes have been named "Pius." It's time for a pope with a new name. There are so many rich, resounding names to choose from.

You could be Benedictus XVI, Leo XIV or Sixtus VI -- what a joy to be Sixtus VI! But there have been popes by those names in the past 300 years, and that's the recent past in papal history, which traces back to 64 A. D. Why don't you select a name that hasn't been used at least since the middle ages? In those days the pope was sovereign of the temporal domains of the Holy Roman church.

Calixtus IV would be a magnificent name; there hasn't been a Calixtus as vicar of Christ since 1455. There hasn't been a Bonifacius since the 1380s, nor a Celestinus since St Celestinus in 1294. The last Gelasius was Gelasius II back in 1118.

Or reach even farther back. Agapetus II was successor of St Peter in 946, and there's never been a III. Some names like Romanus (897 A. D.), Valentinus (827), Sisinnius (708), Conon (686), and Virgilius (537), have never had a second claimant to the name. Think of using a name that has been vacant for nearly 1500 years!

And if you become king of England, be brave and choose a name that will break the run of drab Georges. Just because both Charles came to bad ends is no



good reason why you shouldn't be Charles III, a dashing fellow with a brilliant court. Maybe you could even top Henry VIII if you became Henry IX.

Why couldn't you reach back beyond the days of the Conqueror and lift a name from one of the Saxon kings? What better ruler to lead Britain to a new golden age than Harthacanute II?

The principal rationale of selecting a ruling name is that it will be a good omen for your reign if you take a name made glorious in the past. But it must be admitted that some of these kings and some of the popes too were rascals.

But you don't mind. Maybe you're sort of a little rascal yourself.

THIS CORNER OF THE UNIVERSE

Both Clifford D. Simak and Noel Loomis of Minneapolis prodom were hospitalized during December, but both are back in production now....

Mabel Seeley, author of "The Footprint" in the January F&SF, is another Minneapolis contribution to fantasy, but she no longer lives in the Twin Cities...

Last issue I lamented that during 1952 death had claimed both John Dewey and George Santayana, dealing a sad blow to contemporary philosophy. Before the year ended, death also took Benedetto Croce, the great Italian philosopher....

"Breaking Through the Sound Barrier" is a fine picture to see in any case, but it is also science fiction, at least by implication. The speculative aspect is there, in the ultimate aspiration of the characters, and in the symbolism of the final scene: the child sits upon an observatory mockup of the moon....

If a ringed planet was unknown, sf artists would have to postulate one....

Yeah -- and you're name's MacBitch!

STONE WALLS

BY DAVID H. KELLER M.D.

I WAS ON MY WAY to Middletown, Connecticut. It was the first time that I had been in New England, and, being an ardent student of early Americana and the Revolutionary war, I was thoroughly prepared to enjoy this vacation. The country was so well built up, the town and country estates were so close together, that I was out of New York state before I realized it.

Then for the first time I passed a real stone wall. There had been others, some low, some high, carefully cemented with white mortar, separating golf courses or carefully manicured lawns surrounding the palatial summer homes of the itinerant rich. Such stone creations were not worthy of the name stone wall. What I was looking for was a real stone wall, such as I had read of. It seemed that New England was a land of stone. The only way to prepare a field for crops was first to harvest the crop of stone. No matter how carefully this was done, the next spring thaw heaved more stone out of the ground. These must be piled on a stone boat and hauled away from the cleared land. It did not take the thrifty settler long to realize that these stones would make an excellent fence. Thus each field furnished its own boundary line or protection from cattle. Often there was a surplus after the wall was built and these would be placed in a mound in the center of the field, a place for chipmunks and snakes to riot in. Seedlings eventually furnished thickets of food and shelter for song birds.

The train passed through such a wall. It must have taken years to build it; not only a labor of a lifetime, but one of love. No one could have had the courage to finish it unless he liked the solitude of nature and the constant overcoming of the law of gravitation. Perhaps more than one generation had spent countless hours in its construction, and certainly a dozen snow white oxen had, at different times, hauled the stone boat in that field.

Turning to the man beside me, I showed him the wall. There was a slight tremble in my voice as I said, "There is a real stone wall. Back of walls like that 'the embattled farmer stood and fired the shot heard round the world.'"

The man looked quizzically at me. He was fat, well-dressed, with an air of prosperity, and was apparently intelligent. Finally he replied, "Oh! A stone wall. Lots of them between here and Boston. I don't like them -- too outmoded. Bought a swell country place a few years ago and the first thing I did was to have every foot of stone wall on the place hauled off. I put wire fences in with concrete posts, and believe me, those fences look worthwhile. Here is my card. If you want a real fence, come and see me. I manufacture the finest wire fences in the world."

Thanking him, I put the card in my pocket, and in a few minutes changed my seat. For some reason the man did not seem to fit in with my antiquarian mood. It would be impossible for me to thoroughly enjoy my first visit to New England with him beside me. A seat by myself, with memories for companions, was better than such modernism. However, the travel was heavy and I soon had a rather well-dressed lady by my side. A few minutes later we passed a small town and I saw, for the first time,

a real New England graveyard. It was very old, but well cared for. The gray stones were upright and in nearly perfect alignment.

Again my enthusiasm overcame my caution and I actually pointed out the spot to the lady. "That must be a very remarkable cemetary. No doubt many Revolutionary soldiers are buried there."

She smiled condescendingly. "We take good care of those places up here, as we do our other antiques. It is quite expensive, though, to mark all those graves with the D.A.R., S.A.R., and G.A.R. bronze insignias. If you are going to one of our larger cities you should see the new cemetaries, or memorial parks as they are now called, which have perpetual care. You pay so much for the plot and the Association provides the care. I am a stockholder in one of the companies. They pay over ten per cent dividends."

"Of course they don't have a yearly graveyard working?"

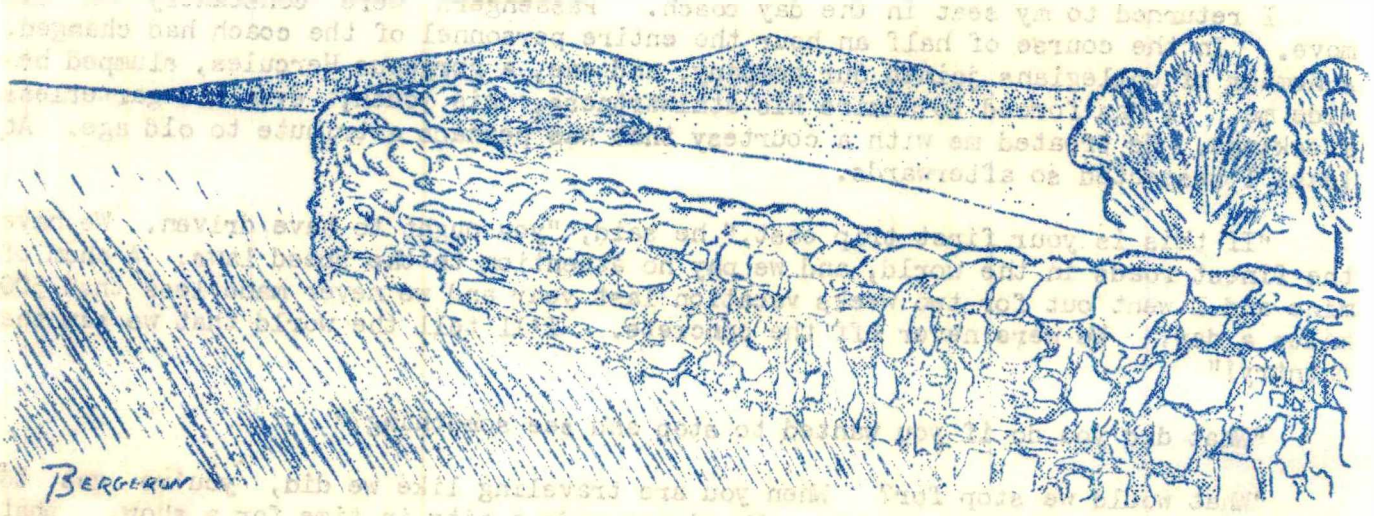
"I really do not know what you mean."

"It is something like this. In some small towns they have a special day when the whole community goes to the graveyard. The men cut down the brush and grass while the ladies plant flowers and scrub the stones. At dinner time everybody joins in a picnic lunch. The entire day is spent in making the place look better."

"How quaint! I never heard of it. I wonder if it is not something like our Memorial day observance?"

"No," I replied rather sadly, "I do not think so," and went into the smoking car. A train of thought had been started that must be finished. Paying no more attention to the landscape, I selected a man who was evidently a clergyman. After a few casual remarks anent nothing important, I said, "I am a stranger in these parts. Just been spending a few days in New York. How do the people there bury their dead?"

He was most cordial in his reply: "Of course the very rich have their private private lots or mausoleums in perpetual care cemetaries, but most of the people be-



long to burial associations. It costs so much to join and so much a week. When a death occurs the association attends to and provides everything."

"But do they have family plots?"

"No, not in the same sense as in the smaller communities."

"Are the graves marked?"

"Certainly, but nothing elaborate or individual in style. Of course every day there are a number buried in Potter's Field. You know about that?"

"Yes. After the burial do the family ever go back -- to care for the grave, to put flowers on it?"

"They can if they want to, but everybody is so busy and the cemetaries are some distance from the city; the cemetaries are so large that it would be hard to find the grave without a guide."

"It used to be different," I said. "A man carried his personality with him even to his tombstone. Families took pride in the appearance of their family plots. On the tombstones they used a prose that was, in its way, more beautifully dignified than any poetical epitaph ever could do. For example, on the tomb of my great-great-great-grandfather are the words: 'Hier ruhet in Gott der erblasse leuchnam der verstorbenen Christofel Keller.' The translation into English is difficult but it could be freely rendered, 'Here rests in God the blanched body of the landsman Christopher Keller who is dead.' Tennyson used the same thought in his poem. Perhaps you recall it?

'Life and Thought have gone away
Side by side;
Leaving doors and windows wide,
Careless tenants they.'"

"I never heard that," replied the man. "People do not read Tennyson much nowadays. Were your people Dutch?"

"No. We were Alsatian."

I returned to my seat in the day coach. Passengers were constantly on the move. In the course of half an hour the entire personnel of the coach had changed. A number of collegians joined our company, and one, a gorgeous Hercules, slumped beside me. I was forced to admire his stalwartness, his youth, even his garterless stockings. He treated me with a courtesy that was perhaps a tribute to old age. At least I suspected so afterwards.

"If this is your first trip east," he said, "you ought to have driven. We have the finest roads in the world, and we pay no attention to the speed laws. A chum of mine and I went out for two weeks vacation last year and we never made less than 500 miles a day. We were never off the concrete. I'll tell the world that we saw the country!"

"What did you do if you wanted to stop and see something?"

"What would we stop for? When you are traveling like we did, you've got to keep on going to get your mileage. We always made a city in time for a show. What would be the use of stopping?"

I smiled and braced myself in the seat to secure the necessary courage to answer: "It's like this. I used to drive a horse and buggy in a hilly country. Sometimes when the hill was long, I would walk to make it easier for the horse. I was always looking at the flowers and out into the woods. If I saw anything unusual, I would stop the horse, take down his check-rein, and go and see exactly what had caught my eye. For example, the Philadelphia lily is small but it is so red that it stands out like a bright flag in the green of the woods. While I was digging up the bulb to transplant it in my back yard, the old white horse would eat a little grass or a few wild onions."

The collegian laughed. "You couldn't do that, old-timer, and make five or six hundred miles a day."

"No, I suppose not," I replied, "but I do not understand why you have to go that far in a day."

"Why, to get to a place where they have a good show at night. You wouldn't expect us to stay all night in a hick town, would you?"

"I believe I understand. You leave one city in the early morning and drive as fast as you can, so that you will reach another city by nightfall. A day without mileage and a night without a show is just a wasted 24 hours?"

"That's the idea. Now you are beginning to understand. We are getting off at Hartford and driving in to Boston. We have made as high as 80 on the straightaway. Come with us and we will blow your hat off."

"Thanks, but I had better stay on the train. I am going to Middletown."

"Don't stay there. That's where the goofy house is."

So that ship passed in the night -- out of my life.

Finally I returned to New York, contented at least with the thought that I had seen a little bit of New England. Pridefully they had shown me the home of the celebrated silver plate industry and the factory of a noted noiseless typewriter. Various proud citizens told me that the state was debt free and was on the pay-as-you-go plan. I learned that Connecticut had so many miles of concrete and so many dollars per person in her savings banks. During the entire time I never heard the word "Yankee." No one spoke of ancestors or referred to the Revolution. Those who entertained me tried to show me everything, but none suggested a trip to an old graveyard. On Wednesday night I was entertained at the latest movie instead of attending prayer-meeting.

Back in the metropolis I went to see a noted literary man. I had heard much about him and considered myself fortunate in having secured a letter of introduction. He was more than cordial until I happened to ask him if he was in the reserves.

"I certainly am not!" he replied. "I was in the last mess and I am thoroughly disgusted with the entire performance. All that this nation got was higher prices, labor trouble, and a world-wide headache. I believe that we have the worst government in the world. Our mutual friend said in his letter that you were a very fine and well-educated man. You certainly do not favor a large standing army, do you?"

"It's like this," I replied, as I rose and reached for my hat. "My ancestors fought in the Revolution. My children have 19 Revolutionary forebears. I served in both wars and I am now a lieutenant colonel, retired, but still in the reserves. I admit that this country is not perfect, but after all, it is our country and we ought to stand by it."

"That sort of patriotism is obsolete."

"Maybe so," I said and, thanking him for his courteous reception, I left and walked back to the hotel. I saw the old doorman playing with a cat. There, at least, was a man old enough to harmonize with my moods. I stood near him as feminine New York tripped by us in 14-ounce ensembles. He saw what I was looking at and I knew that he saw it. We both smiled.

I said, "In England, years ago, a poet sang:

'Her little feet stole in and out,
Like mice, beneath her petticoat.'"

The old fellow actually laughed. "Sure," he said, "but they are wearing them higher now."

That gave me some more food for thought as I went to my room and packed my suitcase. Finally I arrived at the Pennsylvania station. My vacation was nearing its end. I had started for New England with certain ideas and come back with others. I placed my suitcase on the floor, braced myself against the surging multitude, and thought, What did it all mean?

Once again I came back to the poetry of my youth, and the wounded king spoke to his faithful knight, while the ladies waited in the boat that was to take Arthur to that fairy land of Avalon-by-the-Sea, where he would be cured of his grievous injury and one day come back to his beloved England. The rushing feet of thousands melted into the wish-wash of the waves on the shore as the king said,

"The old order changeth, yielding place to new;
And God fulfils himself in many ways,
Lest one good custom should corrupt the world."

Suddenly I snapped out of it and called a redcap.

"Put me on the 10:15 express to New Orleans and on your way past a newsstand we will stop. I want to buy a copy of Snappy Stories."

THE OKIES AGAIN

A typographical error in the list of "Okie" stories appended to James Blish's article "The Okies -- and Others" in Sky Hook #15 and a recent addition to the series prompt me to publish the following revised list. Here, then, is the index of James Blish's "Okie" series to date: "Bridge" (aSF, Feb 1952); "Okie" (aSF, April 1950); "Bindlestiff" (aSF, Dec 1950); "Sargasso of Lost Cities" -- formerly listed under the author's title, "Jungle Story" (Two Complete Science-Adventure Books, Spring 1953); "Earthman, Come Home" (aSF, forthcoming).

AGE

BY POUL ANDERSON, JOHN CHAPMAN, AND OLIVER SAARI

OLD JOSH MacCAMPBELL, the ancient Scottish mutant, looked up to the green sky of Vega XVIII and back to the thyratronic complex whose silver busbars conducted a 50 megampere current at 50,000 volts from the gadolinium pile to the hyperspatial tube which short-circuited the distance between this strange alien foreign unearthly remote planet of the giant star and the liquid helium lakes of Astrakhan XLIII where the hostile Qwertys brewed their radioactive beer and plotted gigantic schemes against the terrestrial hegemony of the eighteenth galactic empire which had been founded 3554 million years ago by the followers of Bonnie Prince Charlie after his ultimate defeat and now was dominant through its highly advanced psychotechnocratic quantitative scientific advances which had made psychology an engineering subject, practiced through the statistical mass-effect on the some 27 times 10 to the twenty-eighth individual intellects of the race which had replaced the earlier inhabitants of the galaxy by analyzing the metric of the four-dimensional non-euclidean manifold in which space was embedded, coming as it did before evolution had caused sufficient progress in the more energetic members, and pushing the green button Old Josh sent quadrillions of watts of power coursing into the huge coils which generated the MacDonald field that, as everyone in the galaxy knew, buckled space with a zipper action instead of the conventional magnetic buckle effect, thus eliminating an indefinite number of megaparsecs of distance and going directly from point to point in a space-time continuum which more recent scientific analysis had revealed to have at least 35 dimensions of which some involved constants approximating zero and therefore negligible to the earlier physicists of the almost prehistorically remote atomic age where there had still been cities as yet not rendered economically impossible by advances in transportation, and sent the energy directly through to the destination which the greatest military and scientific brains of the galaxy, combined into one supreme unit through the interaction of the famous Lens, had previously selected, and with the generation of this field Old Josh noted the secondary effects of the beta-radiations issuing from the pile, causing a change in the three basic physical constants as they applied to the space in the immediate vicinity of the machine, this of course being the effect Josh really desired, his real motive being hidden behind a series of apparently meaningful manipulations of the controls of the gigantic MacDonald field apparatus which under close scrutiny would unveil the true purpose of the great engine, which of course involved the release from captivity of ten million Exiled Old Men on the planet Glencannon VI located three and a half parsecs beyond the galactic isle of Loch Ness, thus causing an overpopulation the effects of which would infiltrate through the galaxy to come to the notice of the emperor in a few thousand years with certain inevitable consequences, among which would be the de-energizing of all the robots in the galaxy, thus causing a serious lack of robots which would necessitate the substitution of the earlier type of MacTeague machines, as well as the invasion of the monstrous inhabitants of Alhambra XVI who would attempt to subjugate the dog-men of Woof, the cat-men of Meow, the snake-men of Sssss, and quite a few plain ordinary men, in the

course of which there would surely be a revolt by the planet MacAnson whose freedom-loving inhabitants had never liked the rule of the immortal man imposed on them several million years before by the Castor of Bean, who was actually a pre-natal re-incarnation of the emperor himself, who was actually Gilbert Gosseyn in one of his less obvious forms, manipulating the universe to serve his own undefined ends which actually have nothing to do with this story, as a consequence of which Old Josh MacCampbell was now making his last-ditch stand against the creeping infiltration of subversive effects into the galaxy who, by virtue of their coexistence in many probability worlds among which were the ones Old Josh was trying to create through the use of the only remaining de-atomizer in the galaxy, following the pattern set down through milleniums by the Ancient Psychotechnicians of Haggis V who had conceived the gigantic scheme of plotting the whole future history of the universe in such a manner that the empire could not help evolving the perfect bathtub, capable of accomodating any living or robot member of the multitudinous galactic races and providing their ablutions with appropriate fluids such as ammonium sulfide, uranium hexafluoride, benzyl dichromate, sulfazeohiathiaparapencinilimide, or water, were carrying through a scheme laid down ages ago by the evil races of Eddore to subjugate the aforesaid universe whereas the party of the first part was endeavoring to prevent the aforesaid evil scheme, and by establishing bases among the unsuspecting younger races strategically located in the structure of the galaxy providing a pattern of maximum defensive strength, had endeavored since the beginning of time, when the universe exploded from its initial state and plunged headlong toward the final, to thwart the evil forces of Eddore, and as Old Josh reflected idly on the similarities of the situation to the days when he had guided the good ship MacAndrews from Andromeda to the alien star systems lying beyond the reach of the young galaxy as it spread from eon to eon throughout the vast unexplored regions of the outermost extragalactic nebulae and even beyond these to the hyper-dimensional planets of the dark spinster suns whose quantized time fields had made navigation difficult by throwing ships back to times before they had taken on fuel so they drifted fuelless in outer space and were often attacked by the energy-eating monsters of the void which came rushing in on their biologically generated gravity beams and bored through the hulls of the ships and made life hard on the long-suffering spacemen, it occurred to him that perhaps it would be advisable to cause an infiltration of the energy-eating monsters into the home systems of the Eddorian Empire which had by now spread over several million megaparsecs and dominated even the strategic system of MacBurnie where the greatest electronic wizards of the universe lived, and no sooner had the thought come to him than he similarized several quadrillion such monsters into the enemy empire and waited for them to destroy the dark planet with their ravenous fangs of pure energy, but it didn't work quite the way Old Josh had anticipated because of the macrocosmic influence of the infiltration from the Lobby Stars several million years before, which produced a space warp that caused a reflex energy flow and deviated several million begavolts into the Lochinvar system, thus wiping out quite a few galaxies.

"Oh hell," said Old Josh. "The universe wasn't worth saving anyway."

She made a noise like a spindizzy going sour.

DEPARTMENT OF LOATHSOME NOTIONS

"The world of tomorrow toady!"

-- Masthead motto,
Fantasy Times #166

YOUR FATE IS IN YOUR HANDS

BY NOEL LOOMIS

THE KIND OF FICTION the reader gets depends on the reader himself. This has been graphically demonstrated in recent years, first by science fiction and more recently by the western pulps and the love pulps. Of course editors have temporary effects on the menus offered readers, but this is a relative thing, for I do not consider ten years a very long time in the writing business. To flatten out the curve, then, and speak from the long-run point of view, readers themselves determine what kind of material they will read. If they do not like a certain kind of material, they do not buy that magazine or that book and soon, by a process of natural selection, only those magazines or books that the readers like will continue in existence.

You will notice that my statements about writing are hedged with qualifications. This is absolutely necessary, for few persons understand the writing business thoroughly enough to take an overall view and recognize the exceptions for what they are. It is similar to Heisenberg's probability principle: no one piece of writing ever exactly represents the perfect piece of writing or even the norm. Speaking professionally, you cannot take From Here to Eternity and consider it a norm or a mean or an average. Many people do, but the professional writer and the professional reader (do not confuse him with book reviewers) have only to take a second look at such a book to realize its sensation value is considerably higher than its literature value. In this article, therefore, to forestall the loss of prospective readers, I insist on pointing out that, in writing as in everything, there are always exceptions. To carp just a little, that which is not an exception really is the exception.

With the acknowledgement that a reader can get the kind of fiction he wants goes a corollary: the reader not only has the privilege of accepting or rejecting stories, but he has also a very definite responsibility. This, I think, applies particularly to science fiction readers because (1) they are, on the whole, fairly intelligent readers; (2) they are formally or self-educated a little more than most other groups of readers; and (3) science fiction itself has led the way out of the mass of crud and corruption that has descended on us starting about 1940.

The intelligent reader does not have to know very much about the technical angles of fiction, but he must understand what a story is for, and learn to relax and let the story do to him what it is supposed to do. About this there is a great deal of misunderstanding, for the non-technically trained reader has come to rely on the leadership of various persons who have assumed rather lofty pedestals in the arts, and it is unfortunately true that many of these self-appointed critics have not the faintest idea as to what it is all about. There are many theories as to what a story should do to a reader, but I submit there is one basic function that every story must exhibit in some fashion: it must move the reader. This can be subtle or it can be primitive, but it must be there or you do not have a story.

As I pointed out in the Saturday Review last spring, every "normal" person is compounded of the same basic emotions, and when a person no longer has emotions he is no longer a person. Let us not be confused by the red herring labelled "sentiment"; sentiment is an essential part of living. Most of the great social reforms would not have come about but for sentiment. Let us know that sentiment is not a thing to avoid but rather to be cultivated. Overdone, of course, it becomes sentimentalism, and that is something else.

Where does that leave the intelligent reader? If he is really intelligent, he is probably introspective, and, having examined his emotions at more or less length, he is aware of them. Being self-conscious, he finds it not always easy to be guided by his "normal" reactions. Having observed sentimentalism, he is inclined to distrust sentiment and to rely on cold logic. This cannot be done, for "cold logic," being man's most recent acquisition, is not as well grounded as emotion and therefore varies astonishingly. My conclusion, which undoubtedly you have seen coming for the last page, is that the only reliable reference-frame is that of "normal" emotional reaction. (You will notice I keep quoting the word normal, because I want to make my broad points here without getting tangled up in a quibble over the definition of a word. Unless you do want to quibble, I think you will understand what I mean. If you want to quibble, well, that is your privilege, but I must point out that is strictly an emotional reaction.)

So, then, it is the responsibility of the intelligent reader to learn to do consciously what the "normal," uninhibited, unintellectual reader, who grabs up a magazine between the dentist's chair and the bowling alley, does by instinct. This means the intellectual reader has to cultivate consciously a "normal" play of emotions, a sound sense of judgment and good taste, and the habit of exercising the discrimination thus acquired, without being influenced by the writer's reputation or a critic's verdict -- in other words, to judge a piece of writing by its influence on his "normal" emotions, and not by what he thinks it should do to him. There are writers today getting by with murder, not because the writers themselves are at fault, but because the readers have not had the courage to brave the caustic comments of self-professed intellectuals -- to put it succinctly, to be themselves.

Don't feel stigmatized by the charge that readers have lacked courage. Life is a constant struggle of choices between what is right and what is supposed to be right, and none of us are above it. You may well ask, then, "Why bring it up, if everybody is afflicted?" The answer is that it is a matter of degree. Even in the face of the great vogue for the "common man" which I hope ended last November -- for I see no inherent virtue in being a common man -- it is desirable for each reader to improve his own judgment of fiction. It is a seeming paradox that he must try to approximate the reaction of the common man, but it is a false paradox, because, like the individual atom that you cannot put your finger on, the common man does not exist. The two words constituted a catch-phrase that once drew a lot of votes.

What is desirable, then, is a raising of the level of reader's choices, if only by a small degree. And just as we blamed editors for contributing to a lower standard, we now give some of them credit for a big assist in setting higher standards. These higher standards have arisen in the science fiction field, and also in the western pulp and love pulp fields. Sad to relate, pocketbook originals have nobly contributed to the downswing on the alternate cycle.

In the early 1940s the fiction field became somewhat crowded with eager experimenters who, without too much background, thought there was great money to be made in writing. After all, didn't Collier's pay $400 a story, and a man could write two stories a month, and there are 12 months a year, and -- arithmetic is a wonderful thing. They did not see that anything was needed to write but a typewriter and some white paper. These would-be writers were abetted by editors whose knowledge of the business was equivalent to that of the writers. Fiction -- to put it briefly -- got lousy. Here I think we have to give science fiction credit for pointing the way out of the woods.

Science fiction improved. The improvement was ragged. There were some extremely soft spots, especially in the venerable Astounding Science Fiction (which should have led all the way), but the trend was up. In other fields the trend was in all directions at once. In desperate efforts to save their markets, untutored writers gave us the field of erotic literature now known as Sex and Sadism. The Naked and the Dead and From Here to Eternity capped an era of writing that was intended to shock, to captivate big audiences by its use of unpleasant and distasteful subjects treated in a throw-it-in-your-face manner -- all in the name of realism.

If you are old enough to have been a reader in the 1930s, you will remember the sex books and the sex magazines. They were poor reading and poor markets, but they did not pretend to be anything but what they were. They did titillate. The cycle has now completed itself and we are back to sex writing. The difference is that it is more attractively packaged and that it makes a little more money for the writer. For with innovations in manufacturing the pocketbooks appeared, and, having reperpetuated in type some very poor stuff, they ran short of usable reprints and turned to originals. This is where the formula went back to Sex and Sadism. It was nothing new, but rather the traditional resort of editors who either have lost the power of discrimination or are unable to pay enough money to attract good writers.

It is now popular to put a picture of an old-style locomotive on the cover as background to a girl -- well, let's not fuss over a technical point -- background to a female, and call it historical fiction. I recently read an article by a writer who sounds off at some length on how to write historical fiction. This writer had three pocketbooks published, and I bought one.

In the book I bought, if I remember correctly, there is in the first 20 pages a rather extended scene of naked women, torture, and horror, and a subsequent mass rape by a "cage" of "degraded" men with "loose-lipped faces." Presently there is another mass rape -- a different female this time. This one had previously been pulling a strip tease in a rather low dive, according to my judgment of dives, which may not be entirely up to date. This time the faces are "slavering-lipped." Then there is another rape that turns into simple seduction, another seduction without fruition, and a third -- well, shall we just quit bandying words and call it fornication? I have now reached page 120 or so. And this is history?

Mind you, I don't mind your reading this stuff if you like it. But I think it was a lot more honest when it appeared in Horror Stories, Terror Tales, The Octopus,

the old Thrilling Mystery, Dr Skull, etc. I don't like its parading under the label of historical fiction. To borrow a manner of expression from such stuff itself, let it foul its own bed.

I think we are approaching the height -- or the depth, if you prefer -- of the Sex and Sadism cycle. I am rather hoping it will not swing too far the other way, for there is no doubt in my mind that biology is here to stay, and I don't like to see it unduly repressed. (Some writers apparently do not have my conviction, for they are trying frenziedly to re-create it on paper lest it be forever lost to humanity.)

Which brings us back to science fiction. Science fiction has played very prudently with sex, and to its own betterment. Science fiction has had its own flights of fancy, and some editors have suffered for failing to keep sound story values in mind. Book publishers of sf have made the same discovery. Some of the big publishers have looked on science fiction with awe, seeing in it mostly dollar marks -- and sometimes the more esoteric it has been, the more impressive it has been to the publisher. The reading public has not been so easily bowled over. Readers have a disgusting habit of declining to buy stuff that is dull or confused or boringly artistic. Sometimes it takes a while to exercise this democratic privilege, but it comes eventually. This sort of situation has happened in other fields also, for the public is just a mass of people with the same basic emotional equipment, and if something doesn't interest them, they don't read.

One of the great pitfalls of science fiction, to my notion, is that a lot of readers have turned to sf because they think it's intellectual to do so. (I hasten to use the word "intellectual" before it becomes a term of opprobrium, as it very likely will within ten years or so.) Now here is a peculiar circumstance. Science fiction is really the only fiction that makes a mental appeal, and so the danger is very real that many readers embrace it because they want to be intellectual. However, too much intellectuality is enough.

Many people think they are exercising their minds when they read Harper's or The Atlantic and try to digest an incredibly obtruse, involved piece about a padlock, with paragraphs anywhere up to two columns long, and sentences anywhere up to a paragraph in length. Nine times out of ten they read that stuff the way they take castor oil -- because they think it's good for them. Some of the purest, most unadulterated crud ever printed has appeared in the literary magazines, and a great many persons honestly trying to understand the intellectual appeal have read those magazines, or tried to, and wondered at the same time if they would ever understand them. They won't, my friend, and for a rather simple reason: most of the time there is nothing there to understand.

A story is a story. Granted that a "sophisticated" reader does not need the raw impact that it takes to move a more primitive reader. Nevertheless he's still human — or should be -- and has the same basic emotions as anybody else. He may have better control of them, and his emotions may be more complex, but essentially he's a human being, and normally he will react to a fairly standard pattern. Therefore it will take the same basic things to interest him.

As I've insisted throughout this article, the basic appeal of any fiction must be emotional. Once an editor forgets that, he is headed for the skids, and so is the writer. So, perhaps, may be the whole field. Therefore, even a science fiction story must first do something to your feelings. Invariably the stories you like best do just that.

There is only one plot, actually: the story of a person who wants something and tries to get it, against odds. There are forty million or so variations, but this is the plot of all fiction. Every story has or should have a good human problem. Though there are five or six types of problems, the personal problem is very hard to dispense with. The thing science fiction has that makes it different is that a real example of science fiction has a science problem as well.

A great many tricks and age-old devices and worn-out gadgets have had their fling in the science fiction field, but they presently lose their novelty and the writer has to fall back on his basic understanding of story-telling as a craft. A trick ending will get by even in the slicks about once in ten years. Irvin S. Cobb's story that ends by revealing the protagonist is blind was first printed in 1923, I believe, and that trick ending has been used hundreds of times since, but with each usage it becomes increasingly harder to sell. All of which serves to illustrate that gimmicks may have their day, but in the end fiction must always come back to the sound basis of story-telling which has been in sway ten thousand years.

Science fiction today probably stands at the top. It has come out of the rut; it has largely avoided the sensational; it has kept the strictly experimental to a reasonable minimum; it has gone through the long category of tricks on the reader; and it seems to me, at least, to be aiming at a very high level. But its future is up to you, the reader. If science fiction readers want good fiction, then they will have to be good readers. They must learn to distinguish the sound emotional appeal from the false intellectual appeal (which, analyzed, becomes an emotional appeal after all, because it's an appeal to the ego). This takes discipline, for none of us are selfless.

Remember, this does not imply a categorical condemnation any more than it implies a categorical approval, but rather an honest appraisal of each story as a story, no matter who writes it, who prints it, and who reviews it. It implies too, I think, appraisal by optimistic and interested readers. Fiction -- or any other art -- can be completely killed off if its appraisal follows a cue given by readers without interest. For my money, a person without interest is without vitality, and I consider vitality an essential part of living. If this be facetious, make the most of it!

Many fields of fiction have bloomed in the past, and then suddenly wilted and died, because editors and readers failed to see the true appeal in the first stories printed, and tried to inject into them something that wasn't there and that wouldn't attract anybody if it could be isolated. It is up to you, and you, and you. Science fiction can take many directions in the future.

Science fiction readers are stubborn. There is a hard core of them that will read almost anything in the science fiction line if it kills them. Therefore the science fiction field will keep going, regardless. But if it is to keep improving, to present stories that interest you, to keep pace with the general fiction field when that field advances, to at least hold its position when other fields fall back, readers must read emotionally and not intellectually. The mental appeal is always there, but on the whole it must remain subsidiary -- as long as the bulk of the readership is human and not Martian.

ARTWORK CREDITS. Cover by Richard Bergeron. Interior illustrations: page 7 by William Rotsler; page 9 by Bergeron; page 15 by Bergeron; page 21 by Bergeron; page 31 by Terry Carr; page 35 by Rotsler; page 39 by Rotsler.

FROM AN OBSERVATORY

BY H. G. WELLS

IT WILL BE SOME TIME YET before the rising of the moon. Looking down from the observatory one can see the pathways across the park dotted out in yellow lamps, each with a fringe of dim green, and further off, hot and bright, is the tracery of the illuminated streets, through which the people go to and fro. Save for an occasional stirring, or a passing voice speaking out of the dimness beneath me, the night is very still. Not a cloud is to be seen in the dark mid-winter sky to hide one speck of its broad smears of star dust and its shining constellations.

As the moon rises heaven will be flooded with blue light, and one after another the stars will be submerged and lost, until only a solitary shining pinnacle of brightness will here and there remain out of the whole host of them. It is curious to think that, were the moon but a little brighter and truly the ruler of the night, rising to its empire with the setting of the sun, we should never dream of the great stellar universe in which our little solar system swims -- or know it only as a traveller's tale, a strange thing to be seen at times in the Arctic circle.

Nay, if the earth's atmosphere were some few score miles higher, a night-long twilight would be drawn like an inpenetrable veil across the stars. By a mere accident of our existence we see their multitude ever and again, when the curtains of the daylight and moonlight, and of our own narrow pressing necessities, are for a little drawn back. Then for an interval we look, as if out of a window, into the great deep of heaven. So far as physical science goes, there is nothing in the essential conditions of our existence to necessitate that we should have these transitory glimpses of infinite space. We can imagine men just like ourselves without such an outlook. But it happens that we have it.

If we had not this vision, if we had always so much light in the sky that we could not perceive the stars, our lives, as far as we can infer, would be very much as they are now; there would still be the same needs and desires, the same appliances for our safety and satisfaction; this little gas-lit world below would scarcely miss the stars now, if they were blotted out for ever. But our science would be different in some respects had we never seen them. We should still have good reason, in Foucault's pendulum experiment, for supposing that the world rotated upon its axis and that the sun was so far relatively fixed; but we should have no suspicion of the orbital revolution of the world. Instead we should ascribe the seasonal differences to a meridional movement of the sun. Our spectroscopic astronomy -- so far as it refers to the composition of the sun and moon -- would stand precisely where it does, but the bulk of our mathematical astronomy would not exist.

Our calendar would still be in all essential respects as it is now; our year with the solstices and equinoxes as its cardinal points. The texture of our poetry might conçeivably be the poorer without its star spangles; our philosophy, for want of a nebular hypothesis. These would be the main differences. Yet, to those who indulge in speculative dreaming, how much smaller life would be with a sun and a moon and a blue beyond for the only visible, the only thinkable universe. And it is, we repeat, from the scientific standpoint a mere accident that the present -- the daylight -- world periodically opens, as it were, and gives us this inspiring glimpse of the remoteness of space.

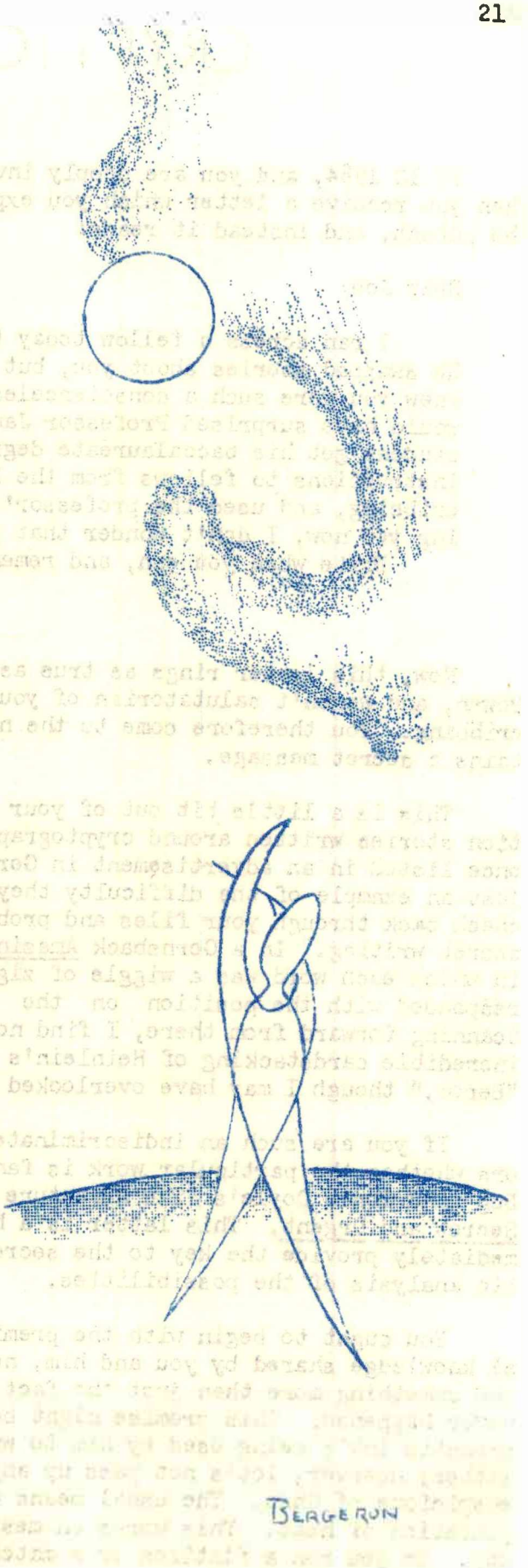
One may imagine countless meteors and comets streaming through the solar system unobserved by those who dwelt under such conditions as have just been suggested, or

or some huge dark body from the outer depths sweeping straight at that little visible universe, and all unsuspected by the inhabitants. One may imagine the scientific people of such a world, calm in their assurance of the permanence of things, incapable almost of conceiving any disturbing cause.

One may imagine how an imaginative writer who doubted that permanence would be pooh-poohed. "Cannot we see to the uttermost limits of space?" they might argue, "and is it not altogether blue and void?" Then, as the unseen visitor draws near, begin the most extraordinary perturbations. The two known heavenly bodies suddenly fail from their accustomed routine. The moon, hitherto invariably full, changes toward its last quarter -- and then, behold! for the first time the rays of the greater stars visibly pierce the blue canopy of the sky. How suddenly -- painfully almost -- the minds of thinking men would be enlarged when this rash of the stars appeared.

And what then if our heavens were to open? Very thin indeed is the curtain between us and the unknown. There is a fear of the night that is begotten of ignorance and superstition, a nightmare fear, the fear of the impossible; and there is another fear of the night -- of the starlit night -- that comes with knowledge, when we see in its true proportion this little life of ours with all its phantasmal environment of cities and stores and arsenals, and the habits, prejudices, and promises of men. Down there in the gaslit street such things are real and solid enough, the only real things, perhaps; but not up here, not under the midnight sky. Here for a space, standing silently upon the dim, grey tower of the old observatory, we may clear our minds of instincts and illusions, and look out upon the real.

And now to the eastward the stars are no longer innumerable, and the sky grows wan. Then a faint silvery mist appears above the housetops, and at last in the midst of this there comes a brilliantly shining line, the upper edge of the rising moon.



THE END

CRYPTIC COMMUNICATION

IT IS 1984, and you are deeply involved in a plot to overthrow Big Brother. Then you receive a letter which you expect to contain instructions on your part in the putsch, and instead it reads:

Dear Joe:

I ran across a fellow today that you knew in college, Edgar Bowen. We swapped stories about you, but he topped every one of mine. I never knew you were such a conscienceless character in your salad days. It would have surprised Professor Jameson, who, I am sure, watched every last student get his baccalaureate degree, to know that the salutatorian gave instructions to fellows from the Blue Bulldog club on the gentle art of cribbing, and used the professor's own worksheets in preparing them! Knowing you now, I don't wonder that you've never told us about this.

Write when you can, and remember you owe me a letter.

/Chan/

Now, this letter rings as true as a lump of lead. You never heard of Edgar Bowen, and weren't salutatorian of your class, and would never think of encouraging cribbing. You therefore come to the not unnatural conclusion that the letter contains a secret message.

This is a little bit out of your line, since there have been few science fiction stories written around cryptography. It's true that Poe's "The Gold Bug" was once listed in an advertisement in Gernsback Amazing as scientifiction, but this is just an example of the difficulty they had in defining science fiction. You can check back through your files and probably not find half a dozen stories utilizing secret writing. In a Gernsback Amazing was one called "Buried Treasure," I believe, in which each word was a wiggle of zigzag lines, and the position of each angle corresponded with the position on the typewriter keyboard of the letter intended. Scanning forward from there, I find nothing till relatively recent times, with the incredible cardstacking of Heinlein's "Gulf" and the wireless code of Berryman's "Berom," though I may have overlooked a couple of cases.

If you are such an indiscriminate collector that you buy books by fantasy authors whether the particular work is fantasy or not, you may have not only "The Gold Bug" and Conan Doyle's "The Adventure of the Dancing Men," but also Fletcher Pratt's Secret and Urgent. This latter is a highpowered history which, while it doesn't immediately provide the key to the secret message from Chan, may lead you to systematic analysis of the possibilities.

You ought to begin with the premise that Chan hopes to take advantage of special knowledge shared by you and him, not likely to be known to Big Brother's agents, and something more than just the fact that the incidents referred to in the letter never happened. This premise might be enough to rule out the possibility of a sympathetic ink's being used by him to write another message on the paper bearing this letter; however, let's not pass up any possibilities -- maybe the NKVD weren't that suspicious of Chan. The usual means of bringing out secret ink writing is the application of heat. This works on messages written with milk, lemon juice, saliva, ktp. So you run a flatiron or a match flame across portions of the letter, enough

FOR THE COGNOSCENTI

to brown the paper. And nothing happens. You are entitled to assume that no invisible ink has been used which requires the application of another chemical to bring it out; the loose-jointed conspiracy you belong to has no explicit understandings about secret inks. And we will not imagine that you have the universal agent for revealing writing wherever the fibers of the paper have been disturbed with a wet pen, iodine vapor.

The message, then, is in the words before you. Turn to Secret and Urgent. It distinguishes two broad groups, codes and ciphers.

Codes depend on sender and receiver having access to the same codebook, in which one word or letter-group invariably stands for another word or word-group. The code immortalized in "Berom" is of this class. Any book in which words are easily located, such as an alphabetical wordlist or a thesaurus, can serve as a codebook, and one can transmit a set of figures giving page, line, and word, or he can adopt a more sophisticated formula for letting one word stand for another. Anything like this, however, requires previous arrangements between the communicants, and is not well adapted for a loosely articulated conspiracy in a police state. Obviously your message from Chan does not belong in this classification.

Pratt mentions jargon as the origin of codes, and those who overemphasize the extent of fannish slanguage might think that secrecy could be obtained simply by writing in stefnese. However, when I note that after 50 years we can still understand O. Henry's "His nibs skedaddled yesterday with all the coin in the kitty," and one can follow his explanation of Calloway's Code, I am not disposed to rely on jargon. Particularly since fandom is no longer the small group with a large common tradition that it once was. As we shall see, however, what remains of the common heritage can be put to good use in fooling the dictator.

Of ciphers there are three general classifications, transposition, substitution, and padded, although Pratt does not give separate recognition to the padded cipher.

Transposition ciphers scramble the letters of the original clear text according to a prearranged plan. A general plan may be agreed on, and the ciphered message can begin with a word which gives the tipoff on the particular scramble pattern. Thus one reading TAINEIHSAETTARMME might be decoded by someone who remembers Taine's "Twelve Eighty-Seven" by dividing the letters after TAINE into four groups, numbered first with the digits of 1 2 8 and 7 in that order (1. IHS; 2. AET; 8. TAR; 7. MME), and rearranging them in columns in the normal numerical order of those digits,

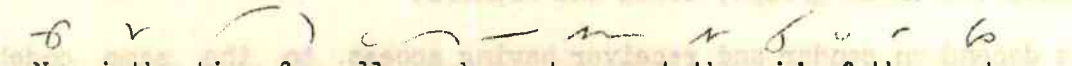
1 2 7 8
I A M T
H E M A
S T E R

where IAMTHEMASTER immediately appears.

BY JACK SPEER

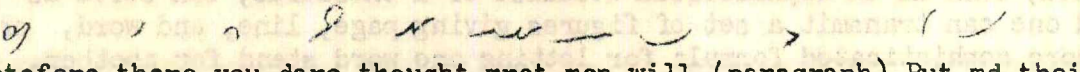
An expert cryptanalyst can read this simple type of transposition cipher in his sleep, with or without the key, but when this operation is applied to a message already enciphered once, by this or another method, it can make things very tough for the enemy. Incidentally, Pratt does not subscribe to the dictum of Poe and others that a cipher cannot be designed which cannot be unraveled without the key. However, considerations of practical utility rule out the ideal ciphers for most purposes.

Before we leave transposition ciphers, there is a favorite invention of mine which falls into this classification as well as any other, and which I want to inflict on you. It requires acquaintance with Gregg shorthand, the commonest type nowadays, and a willingness to stick to the standard version of it. One simply writes the message in shorthand:



Now isthe time for all good men tocome tothe aid of the party,

turns the line or lines of shorthand over, and reads off the message to be sent:



Heretofore there you dare thought mrot men will (paragraph) Put md theirs can

Now we come to the most important classification of ciphers, substitution. The simple form of this is used in "The Gold Bug" and "The Adventure of the Dancing Men" as well as "A Buried Treasure." Whether the symbol which stands for a given letter of the alphabet is another letter, or a pair of letters, or a word or phrase, or a number, or a punctuation mark, or a musical note, or a portion of a diagram comprising the whole alphabet, or any other symbol, as long as there is a one-to-one correspondence between parts of the enciphered message and letters of the clear, a simple substitution cipher can be very quickly broken down after the enemy attacks it as a cipher.

Means of keeping the enemy from suspecting that a cipher is being used are too cumbersome to meet the requirements of most uses of cryptography, secret and urgent, and transmission of a large volume of material. However, they may have some uses in assembling a conspiracy under the eyes of the GPU. I have something a little more elaborate than simple substitution to suggest as a means of communication between a freedom-loving editor and his ditto readers. It is inspired by the Bacon-Shakespeare cipher. If some scientifictionist squeals to Big Brother (which of course would never happen), the editor can always blame the message on the author, who no longer lives at the address given. Then all he has to do is convince the gestapo, who are cultural clods anyway, that the story was worth publishing on its merits. The idea is to use, as names of characters and ships, names already identified among true lovers of the literature with one or the other of two prolific authors, Burroughs and Smith, say. Skylarkian names like Richard, Ballinger, Seaton, Kimball, Kinnison, and Valeron would represent dots, and names such as Greystoke, Jane, Innes, Carson, Carter, and Padwar would represent dashes. Each paragraph would represent a letter, and all the writer would have to do is find excuses for using the right number of dot and dash names in the right order in each paragraph. Anyone who could identify the names could get hold of a Morse code and read the message. In a story of novelet length, there should be ample room to say, "Stefnists of the world, unite! You have nothing to lose but your brains," and then tell how to get in touch.

A frequency table is the weapon most employed against a substitution cipher, and it may be outwitted to some extent by providing several alternative symbols for

the most frequent letters. Thus in a cipher where bigrams represent single letters of the clear, E might be represented by CH, IC, or ON, sometimes one and sometimes another.

But we are not into really difficult territory until we have a cipher in which the same character of the message may mean sometimes one and sometimes another letter of the clear. Back in First Fandom times, when I was corresponding with Edgar A. Hirdler of the OSA, I wanted to discuss atheistic ideas with someone, and enciphered an impious message from Tennyson in a letter to him. We didn't talk about atheism much, but we really got into ciphers. The one he was proudest of is mentioned in Secret and Urgent as a common type. A codeword is chosen, Lazarus, say, and written over the clear:

LAZARUSLAZARUSLAZARUSLAZARUSLAZARUSLAZARUSLAZARUSLAZARUSL
REMEMBERNOWTHYCREATORINTHEYEARSOFTHYYOUTHWHILETHEEVILDAYSCOMENOT

Not to make it unnecessarily difficult (though a different order would make the probable-word method of cryptanalysis more difficult), we will use the alphabet in its normal order, with A given the value of 1, N 14, and so on to Z 26. We encipher the above text by simply adding to the value of a given letter in the clear, the value of the letter of "Lazarus" written directly above it. L + R = 30; dropping 26, 4 = D. Arithmetic can be shorted out by constructing a table like the mileage table on many road maps, or by constructing a gadget to work like a slide rule, of two strips of cardboard, one twice the length of the other, with the alphabet evenly lettered twice on the long one and once on the short one. As you work, you will be pleased to learn that S + E = X. The above clear is rendered thus:

DFMFEWXDOOXLCROSEBKJKUOTIWTXMSSPXOAKZOVLCPTJLFLCXQVIMVVREDONWIHFLONG

The word Long is thrown in to guide the cognoscente to the keyword Lazarus.

Strange as it seems, this type of cipher can also be broken by experts. Since the Prophet's dictatorship had the use of the best brains of its day, we must assume that Big Brother has crack cryptanalysts. They would be equipped with tables of bigram frequency, and in analyzing a message like the foregoing would mark the threefold repetition of LC (which corresponds to the bigram TH in the clear, enciphered as it happens with the same part of the codeword, RU). The position of the three LCs would show them that the codeword is probably seven letters long, and they could divide the enciphered message into seven separate ones, each to be attacked with a letter-frequency table. Given a somewhat longer message, solving it would be a cinch.

You may by now have thought of using the same method of enciphering, but instead of repeating one word like Lazarus, taking the entire text of an easily available book, or as much as you need of it. Let us adopt something with famous opening words, such as, "The creation of dianetics is a milestone for Man comparable to his discovery of fire and," give a hint to it with a word, Elron, lay the clear message under the text of the book, and add the parallel letter values. We would have to be sure that your correspondent has access to the work we are using, and that he will recognize your clue-word or -words. Also, watch out for variant editions -- "World of A" doesn't read quite the same in magazine and book form. Neither does "Final Blackout." With these caveats, this should prove a pretty dependable means of communication comes the revolution. The police may have their attention specially directed to science fiction, and still not know what text is indicated by the phrase MYDAUGHTER.

I tested this type of cryptogram by enciphering in Synapse an article, entitled "A Buried Treasure," with no accompanying hints, except that I had recently discussed this method elsewhere in the magazine, and I gave the title of the article on the contents page in the clear. Art Widner used the probable-word method of cryptanalysis, reasoning that the first words of my cipher message probably stood for "A Buried Treasure." He thus determined that my enciphering text began ANDMYMINDGOESSO-, and being a faithful bible reader, recognized this as the beginning of a quatrain quoted in Fancyclopedia.

A simple cipher almost invulnerable to the enemy can be written by enciphering the first letter of the clear with a code letter, the second letter of the clear with the first letter of the clear, the third with the second,. (On second thought, I'm not sure this is such a good method. It would produce repetitions.)

K B M X H J O B L I L P E E P U L A A I M X D A B X

The inserted "li'l peepul" gives a clue to the first letter of the enciphering text, and you can unroll it from there.

K B M X H J O B A A I M X D A B X
Subtract Q T
equals T/

Similarly, LASF could be used at the beginning, leading to S, the letter that now naturally follows LASF, and the letter with which the first letter of the clear is enciphered.

This method can be made more difficult for the totalitarians by enciphering the first seven letters of the clear with QUANDRY, and enciphering the eighth letter thereof with the first:

Q U A N D R Y T H E S O U T H S H
T H E S O U T H S H A L L R I S E
K C F G S M S B A M T A G L Q L M S W A M P Z I N E

This variation reduces one of the greatest dangers of this self-encipherment method; one mistake in encipherment leaves the reader completely at sea. Mistakes are made, frequently. Widner says I made a couple in "A Buried Treasure"; I know that I made one in the first draft of the Lazarus line for this article; and there were a couple in a cryptogram in Quandry.

Several of the foregoing ideas seem OK for routine communication among stefnisticonspirators, where the most important thing is to keep the enemy from reading any messages it may intercept. But they do not meet the problem of getting a message across when every piece of mail is examined by the dictator's men, and anything that looks like cryptography will not be delivered.

For this purpose, I think we must look to a third type of cryptogram distinguished by my original mentor in this field, the Hood Rubber company booklet of 1931. The padded cipher is not suited for routine use, since you don't want to have to transmit a message several times the length of what you're trying to say. But different desiderata may dominate sometimes.

In the simplest padded cipher every third, tenth., word is a word of the secret message. Example: I went down to Newark with Pohl and Wollheim.

(Concluded on page 43)

PRO-PHILE

BY WILLIAM ATHELING JR

IF IT'S DECENT CRITICISM of science fiction that we're looking for, there is at the moment only one place to find it within our own microcosmos: in the book reviews of damon knight. The book review columns of most of the professional magazines are seldom better, and usually worse, than the little ghettoes reserved for the medium in the Sunday book sections of daily newspapers. The advantages they possess, in more intimate knowledge of what ideas are old and what automatic gestures are no longer to be tolerated, are usually obliterated by a really towering ignorance of the craft of fiction, plus a crippling desire not to hurt anyone's feelings. Anyone who used these reviews as a guide to science fiction books would wind up owning everything.

"...writing is an art to be acquired through discipline and devotion.... Sherwood Anderson set too much store by courage and too little by craft. HPL never made that mistake." Thus Boggs, quasi-quoting as he goes; the points I think admit of no argument. No writer or reader would be likely to encounter them in the book reviews printed in current science fiction magazines, except for the scattered contributions which knight has made over the past few years, entirely in his book reviews.

They belong collected into one easily-accessible place in your library if the problem interests you at all. The knight reviews appear in the issues of his aborted Hillman magazine, Worlds Beyond; in Science Fiction Adventures; and in Science Fiction Quarterly beginning with the February 1953 issue. Their principal virtue is that they are utterly merciless -- a quality which, of course, is not of much use if it is not implemented by the sharpest kind of perception; luckily knight has both.

If you would like to read precise estimates of van Vogt, of Hubbard, of Kuttner, almost completely unfogged by the partisanship for any science fiction author which is the disease of other reviewers, knight is your man. If Kinsmen of the Dragon struck you as an incredibly bad novel from any point of view -- and if you are a little tired of people who are gentle with Stanley Mullen because he belonged to the fan fraternity -- you'll find in knight the only critic who has spoken up so far who has nailed Mullen to the ground with his own stone-age sentences. If you are interested in the intensively recomplicated story as a technique of fiction -- only incidentally because such men as van Vogt, Schmitz, Harness, Blish, and even knight himself have written science fiction by this method -- you'll find in knight's reviews a more specific account, even down to the asides, of the technique as a technique than you are likely to find anywhere else. And if you are looking for a set of standards by which to judge any science fiction story, a set which allows you to

look at science fiction as if it were written rather than just excreted, you'll find such a set formulated at the head of one knight column, and amplified trenchantly in the others.

Memo to a publisher: These reviews deserve collection in a book. Memo to any science fiction writer: If you get a review from knight, no matter how belated, read it.

* * *

...I implied above that criticism, if it is to be of any use at all, must among other things be merciless. It can hardly matter what the author thought or hoped he was doing if the printed story fails to show the objective, or shows it only partially realized. To be kind to a bad piece of writing is not a kindness.

I say this to preface the announcement that I am genuinely pleased by the response my first column seems to have provoked, especially from those people whose work I discussed. I am not pleased because I enjoy flaying other people, or because I enjoy hearing strong men weep. As a matter of fact, such responses rather frighten me. But the fact of the matter is that, in a field which has almost never had serious criticism before, one is going to find a high proportion of writers with virgin toes — and the first man to trample them, however judiciously, must expect cries of anguish out of all proportion to the grievousness of the pain.

It seems to me, therefore, that the letters printed elsewhere in this issue can be taken primarily as indicating that the topics discussed in the previous column were and are live topics. Such men as Boucher, Bradbury, and Gold are busy people, and would hardly bother to take issue with a column in a fan-magazine -- let alone to do so in such passionate terms -- if they were mildly pleased with what I had to say, or did not care one way or the other.

I am going to reply briefly here, since up to now no policy on replying to letters has been stated, and I would think it unfair to ignore a protest without a prior warning. Hereafter, however, I am not going to devote space in this column to letters; that is not what the column's for, and above all I want to avoid initiating in science fiction that species of inter-critic hassel which has marked some other departments of American criticism -- the kind of thing which made Stanley Edgar Hyman call it "the mating combats of bull elks." What we are supposed to be discussing here is magazine science fiction, not each other's wounded egos.

The replies, then: I accept Mr Bradbury's statement that he is not Charles E. Fritch. Possibly it is a new Standard house-name which got attached to one Bradbury story; or perhaps the story in question is not, despite all the internal signs, Mr Bradbury's. As I said in the column where this question came up, the point was not at all germane.... Mr Boucher is right about the Vance "novel," technically.... Let Mr Gold be calm; he does not need to be acquitted of complicity in the present plague of Deep Purple Prose, since I've already said very plainly that he buys very little of it, whereas John Campbell buys a great deal. Nevertheless it is perfectly plain despite any amount of diversionary action that no market existed in science fiction, before Galaxy came into being, which young writers might mistake for an outlet for "fine" writing. Similarly, I doubt that Campbell himself would have fallen into this particular trap had not he himself believed the success of Galaxy to be due to a hidden demand for "fine" writing, and thus begin to buy it where Mr Gold pretty consistently refused it. I did not say, therefore, that Galaxy was the "culprit" in the present deluge of tosh; I merely pointed out that the deluge was allowed into Astounding as a direct result of the competitive pressure of Galaxy. I

should have thought Mr Gold would have regarded this as something of a compliment. In essence I said that Mr Campbell seemed to be buying Mr Gold's rejects.... As for my characterizing the tone of Galaxy as "slick, Ladies Home Journal," I believe I will stand by it, with the undamaging qualification that three of the six exceptions which he lists are -- exceptions. The phrase with which he chooses to hit off the characteristic obstetrical preoccupation of the Journal ("hot water and lots of it") was certainly ill-chosen by his unconscious, for it can only bring vividly back to our minds that wild and wonderful issue of Galaxy in which at least half of the women in the stories were pregnant, and one piece -- by Ross Rocklynne -- was centered upon the supposed dangers of toxemic eclampsia during spaceflight.

* * *

...I took time out this trip to make a detour through the Fall 1952 issue of Fantastic, despite a bias against it which I had better confess before I begin to discuss the magazine proper. The bias consisted, very briefly, in the suspicion that no man capable of operating so degraded a magazine as Amazing Stories over a long period had the discrimination necessary to run an "adult" magazine. In this confession Mr Browne may take refuge if he chooses, for I'm sorry to say that the "adult" magazine seems to bear out these suspicions.

"Man in the Dark," by Roy Huggins, is another exhibit in our catalog of private eye yarns masquerading as science fiction stories, except that in this case there is not even any attempt at disguise. The piece is a routine detective story. It's all there: the glamor-profession background which takes the story out of the reader's realm of experience; the easy lay that the hero just hasn't time to stop for; the boubon routine; the cigaret routine; and finally, the inevitable pair of remarks which are supposed to snatch the reader's objections right out of his mouth -- (a) "I'm not making much sense, am I?" and (b) "It sounded like a bad movie." The answers, of course, are (a) No, and (b) Yes.

Dean Evans' "Beatrice" belongs to the same canon. It is, technically, a sample of the biter-bit plot, with the obvious technical defect that Mr Fransic is not a strong enough character to make the reader want to see him rewarded for his evils. As science fiction it can probably be summarized in the statement on page 104: "Cyanogen...is commercial potassium cyanide." The statement which immediately follows that beauty shows that Mr Evans knows even less about the pharmacology of cyanide than he knows about its chemistry. As fiction of any kind, the story is in a state of utter collapse from the start, because it contains no characters -- a fault which is considerably less excusable than a few technical bobbles. Instead, it contains an Unfaithful Wife and a Turning Worm, both so grossly exaggerated as to be comic-strip figures. There is the usual complete lack of explanation for the presence of these two in the same house for two seconds, let alone under contract to each other. The lack is usual because the writer who uses types instead of characters knows that his readers will produce all the proper reactions without his having to exert any effort; they have met the types so often before that they've become quite numb.

Russian roulette, anyone?

The succeeding issue of Fantastic is by now sufficiently notorious as the one which carried the Mickey Spillane story "The Veiled Woman," again a routine detective story, with the added touches which have made Spillane the most popular paranoid currently uncommitted, and again a fantasy only by fiat. In the issue under consideration, however, Fritz Leiber's "I'm Looking for 'Jeff'" went all-out to cap-

ture the Spillane crown -- and as far as I'm concerned is welcome to it. Admittedly Leiber is usually a sensitive and skilful writer and it is difficult to imagine him even breathing the same air Spillane uses; the comparison shocked me as deeply as I suppose it shocks others of Leiber's admirers. Yet it is clearly unavoidable. Martin Bellows is Mike Hammer to the life, a man whose sole positive action in the story is the commission of a revolting crime which he can justify only by the argument that his victim may himself have committed a crime. The motive -- as distinguished from the rationalization -- is again the mechanical appearance of the easy lay, couched in a style it is difficult to believe could have come from Leiber's pen. (Can it be, for instance, that the man who wrote "Coming Attraction" with its acid contempt for the current American sweater-cult, is now asking us to breathe heavily over such lines as "He could see her small breasts"?)

In short, out of the seven original stories in this issue, no less than three belong to the crime-story category which is already evident in other, more important science fiction outlets; and to the phony-realism which has become even more pervasive, and much harder to counter because science fiction editors haven't previously been so thoroughly exposed to it as have such experienced Mystery Writers of America as Mr Boucher, or, for that matter, Mr Leiber.

Of those that remain, none are outstanding. Two attain the signal distinction of being reasonably competent and craftsmanlike, these being the stories by Theodore Sturgeon and Eric Frank Russell. The Russell is frankly kitchen-cookery, or what we used to call hackwork before we were inundated with the writings of people who couldn't write their way out of an essay on Why My Daddy Buys Life Insurance. These days we are beginning, belatedly, to realize that even the hack -- who at least knows how to corset a story so that it won't faint of chlorosis on page 2 -- may be preferable to the utterly incompetent: in the present case, for instance, Russell's story is at least smooth, deft, and mildly witty, which is in such great contrast to most of the rest of the issue as to make the editor compare it with Balzac. This is ridiculous; if one must compare Russell's yarn to the work of better-known writers, then the most immediate comparison would have to be to Tiffany Thayer's highly synthetic versions of Rabelais. Even that suggestion is possibly a little needlessly exalted.

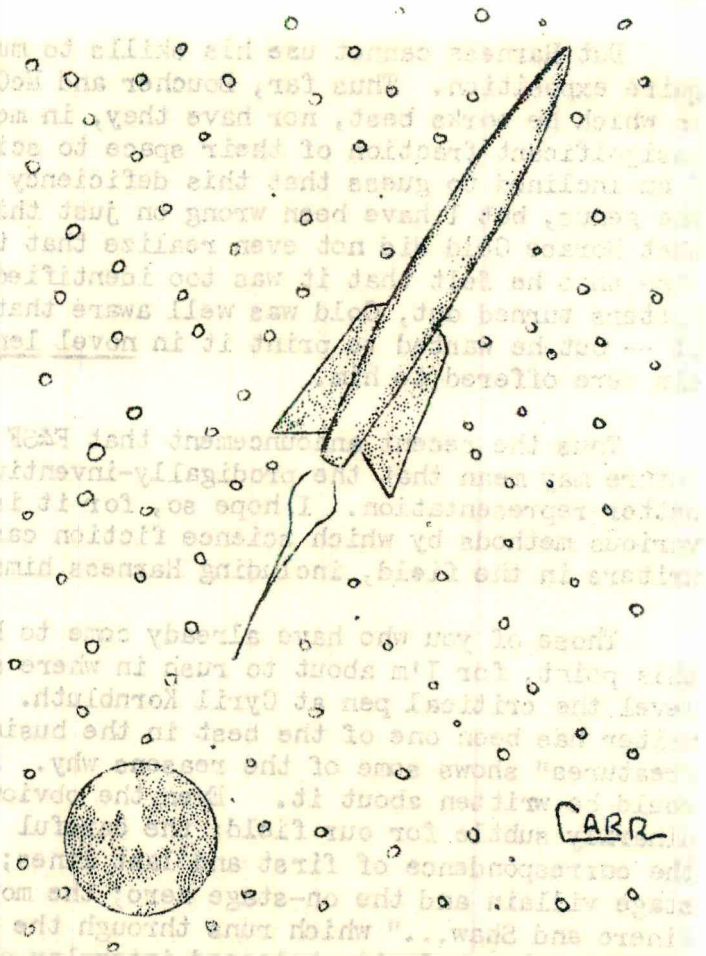
The Sturgeon story, certainly the best in the book, is not quite hackwork. No Sturgeon story is, in part because of the author's extraordinary ear for nuances in dialog, in part too because of wonderfully fertile internal details -- sometimes just sophisticated sentimentalities, but more often genuine intuitions -- which can be found in every Sturgeon story. These are gifts which come after competence, which is the basic ability which any writer needs, and Sturgeon has many other gifts which hardly need to be mentioned at this late date.

The two gifts which I have mentioned in the previous paragraph were also obvious a long time ago, and I mentioned them only because they are the only two which are visible in the present story. I wonder, for instance, what has happened to Sturgeon's gift of invention. Every story which he has contributed to the field over the past two years has dealt in one way or another with syzygy, which, to be sure, is a fascinating biological arrangement with a (limited) number of symbolic overtones for a fiction writer, but which Sturgeon himself handled definitively in a yarn called "The Perfect Host" which appeared long ago in Weird Tales. Evidently the subject has a special significance for him, for he has been worrying it ever since, and not, it seems to me, to nearly as good a purpose.

Nevertheless, "The Sex Opposite" is worth reading for itself, and takes on added stature by being in such bad company.

* * *

In contrast, the December 1952 issue of The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction -- a magazine as pretentious as Fantastic, but more quietly and certainly so, and with better reason -- is remarkably good even by the toughest standards which I think fair to apply at this juncture. This is the usual level of performance of these two editors who, like Browne, are operating in the face of one of my strongest prejudices, but who manage to overcome it with great regularity. The bias of mine which is operating here is the conviction that straight fantasy needs no special outlets at this very late date, and that those who complain that there is no real, essential distinction between science fiction and fantasy -- and their respective audiences -- probably are encouraging bad stories in both sub-idioms.



I doubt, however, that Boucher and McComas could operate as well as they do without their highly selective receptiveness to straight fantasy, and their instinctive rejection of the purely technological science fiction story. These biases on their part do tend to eliminate one of the most exciting kinds of science fiction, the story in which the writer exploits special technological knowledge to create a situation of continuous surprise and excitement, not through tricks of plotting such as those van Vogt usually grinds through, but instead through intensive study of what a given idea might mean in terms of other ideas.

"The Poisoner," Charles Harness' story in this issue, seems to me to represent about the ultimate in what these two editors are willing to accept from a writer who works with ideas primarily. Although it is a tight enough story in some respects, it is not nearly as good for Harness as was "Time Trap" or a number of other Harness pieces which other magazines found themselves able to accept. Harness' style is generally stodgy, and his handling of conversation is particularly leaden. His primary gift is invention; every thought that he has seems to lead to at least six others. He is, in addition, one of the best -- and I think the best -- exponents of the extensively recomplicated plot. Unlike van Vogt, Harness' packed plots contain no loose ends and work out to rounded wholes which the reader and the student writer can study with confidence. In addition, Harness often invokes fragments of our cultural history to justify quiet and telling imitations of past masters in the mainstream of literature: for instance, his invocation of the Ballad of the Sword in Rostand's "Cyrano," through a striking parallel between fencing and formal logic (v. Harness' novel, "Flight into Yesterday").

But Harness cannot use his skills to much purpose in a short story. They require exposition. Thus far, Boucher and McComas have not given Harness the length in which he works best, nor have they, in more general terms, devoted more than an insignificant fraction of their space to science fiction of this kind. At present I am inclined to guess that this deficiency springs from an inherent distaste for the genus, but I have been wrong on just this point before: it was once my feeling that Horace Gold did not even realize that this kind of science fiction existed, or else that he felt that it was too identified with Campbell for him to touch it. As matters turned out, Gold was well aware that the genus existed, and wanted to print it -- but he wanted to print it in novel lengths, and did, as soon as two such novels were offered to him.

Thus the recent announcement that F&SF will be printing longer stories in the future may mean that the prodigally-inventive kind of science fiction story may get better representation. I hope so, for it is one of the most exciting of all the various methods by which science fiction can be written, and several of the very top writers in the field, including Harness himself, write nothing else.

Those of you who have already come to hate me fondly should gather round at this point, for I'm about to rush in where angels fear to tread. I propose now to level the critical pen at Cyril Kornbluth. As most everybody knows by now, this writer has been one of the best in the business for a long time, and "The Goodly Creatures" shows some of the reasons why. As a study in construction alone a book could be written about it. Even the obvious rhetorical devices in it are extraordinarily subtle for our field: the careful "circularity" of the story played up by the correspondence of first and last lines; the switching of the names of the offstage villain and the on-stage hero; the motto, "...really creative synthesis of Pinero and Shaw..." which runs through the yarn like a Wagnerian motif labelled "Guilt"; the perfectly balanced interplay of many personalities split up among only a few characters; and so on, for miles.

And those who complain, of such writers as Ray Bradbury, that much recent science fiction isn't sufficiently realistic should have found their champion in Kornbluth. When he sets out to give you a public relations firm, its operations, and the kind of men who gravitate toward such forms of organized lying, he does so. As a matter of fact, he does something more: he apotheosizes it. Greenhough and Brady is all PR companies rolled into one jittering package.

But is "The Goodly Creatures" science fiction? I depose that it is not. One need perform only one simple operation on the story to establish this: simply move the date back to the present. This action, perforce, has to turn Libonari's union into, let's say, the Brotherhood of Railway Trainmen, and the Kumfyseets account into an outfit supplying Pullman cushions. Would the story be changed? Nope. Let's bear in mind the Sturgeon criterion quoted last issue: A science fiction story is a human story, with a human problem, and a human solution, which would not have happened at all without its scientific content.

That last clause is the clincher. "The Goodly Creatures," plainly, is a human story, with a human problem, and a human solution, but it could happen very easily without its scientific content. As a matter of fact, it happens almost daily along Madison avenue and other seats of American culture.

In short, what Messrs Kornbluth, Boucher, and McComas have here is a space-opera. A highly sophisticated one, but space-opera all the same. I for one wish Kornbluth had set it in the present, and sold it for two million dollars and a ham

sandwich to a top slick; it's a fine job and deserves to be read for what it actually is: a brilliantly acid piece of social satire, with no science fiction content whatsoever.

This particular yarn epitomizes F&SF. It is wonderfully written, but it is also something of a sell. Most of Boucher and McComas' magazine thus far could be described without undue harshness in the same terms. Because these two editors like fantasy (not just raw weird tales), they begin with a taste for decent writing shared by few other editors in the field. Fantasy is, after all, several thousand years old in its fully-developed, mature form, which cannot be said for science-fiction. Asking that science fiction stories be as well written and as sophisticated as most good fantasies is bound to mean that the overall average of F&SF in these categories is going to be high -- higher, say, than a magazine edited by someone who burns to print nothing but the best, but doesn't know it when he sees it, or mistakes some palpable amateur for a genius. But in this case it has also meant that good writing and a reasonable degree of sophistication may be all a story needs to pass Boucher and McComas. This results in disappointments in a specialized audience which, among other things, has shown itself willing to put up with a good deal of crudity in technique for the sake of freshness of ideas.

* * *

Finally (and in the hope that Redd Boggs will let us run on this much farther), there are some items in the December aSF which demand attention. The conclusion of "The Currents of Space" leaves us with another reasonable but dull Asimov novel on our hands, the three instalments of which coincided with the three months under review here. If the comments of my immediate acquaintances don't mislead me, all of Isaac's recent work has left many readers feeling, "Yes, it's good all right -- but somehow it doesn't hit me." Or: "It let down at the end." (Almost as frequent a comment.) What, specifically, is the matter? Certainly these yarns don't in actuality let down at the end; as a matter of fact, "The Currents of Space," in particular, ends with a series of beautifully planted surprises and a neat touch of pure sentiment to cap them. This is what we should expect to get from Isaac, and it is just what he gives us. Why do we feel let down?

The main reason, I believe, is stylistic. Asimov is a highly circumstantial writer, sharing with Heinlein and with Norman L. Knight the ability to visualize his imagined world in great detail, so that it seems lived-in and perfectly believable. He does not, however, share Heinlein's lightness of touch; instead, he more greatly resembles Knight in writing everything with considerable weight and solidity, turning each sentence into a proposition, a sort of lawyer's prose which is clear without at any time becoming pellucid.

This kind of style is perfectly suited for a story which is primarily reflective in character, such as Asimov's recent robot yarns. It is also just what is required for a story in which history is the hero and the fate of empires is under debate. What Asimov has been writing lately, however, beginning with "Tyrann," has been the action story, to which he seems to have turned more or less at random after his long "Foundation" project reached its culmination. And the action story simply cannot be written in that kind of style. Why? Because a style that ponderous, that portentous, constantly promises to the reader much more than even the most complex action story can deliver. The tone of "The Currents of Space" justified any reader in expecting that in the last instalment Asimov would at the very least rend the heavens in twain. The plot provided no such encouragement, but the style did. Instead, Asimov blew up one sun under circumstances which could hurt no one but one

man who wanted to die, and we are left wondering why this very workmanlike novel "somehow" didn't satisfy us, why it "let down at the end."

The lead novelette in this issue of aSF offers us another example of the phenomenal speed with which Raymond F. Jones can beat his fellow writers to the punch with a story based on a Campbell editorial. In this instance the result is by no means to be despised. Like almost all Jones stories, its center of being is theoretical, but unlike many of them, it makes a special study of the personalities which might become involved in this kind of problem and thus comes off rather well. The concept itself is fascinating, and precisely the kind of idea I would like to see Boucher and McComas, or Gold for that matter, recognize as a genuine source of excitement for many -- if not most -- science fiction enthusiasts. There is really no good reason why this kind of story must continue to appear almost solely in aSF. If other editors were to encourage it, they would almost certainly get work of this kind from better writers than Jones, who -- perhaps because he is in too much of a hurry to get there first -- rarely writes as meaty and satisfying an idea-story as "Noise Level."

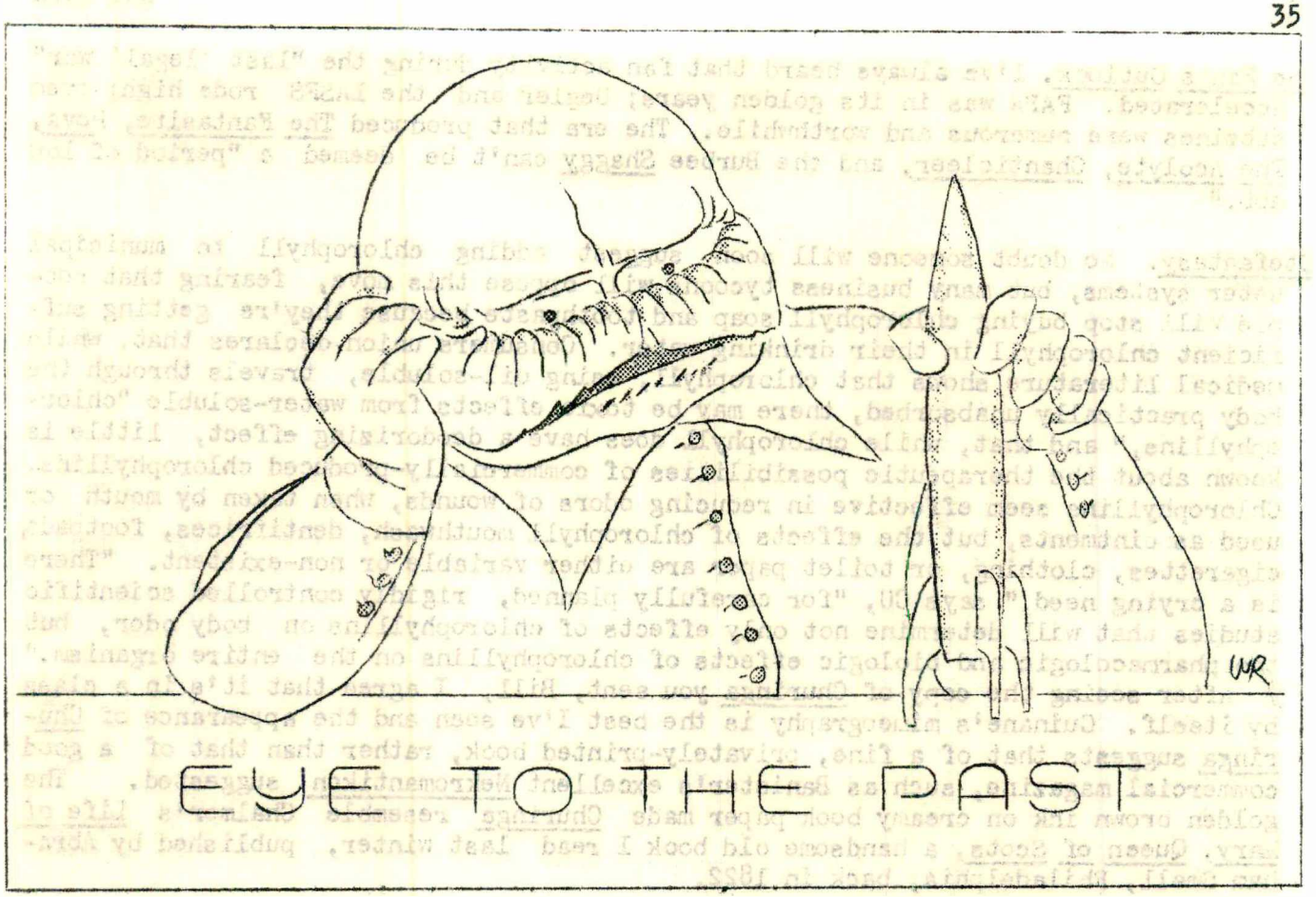
This issue also offers a nice question: Why does it now take two writers to do badly what one writer did well years ago? Why, specifically, do two men who seem to know something about the craft of fiction, Mack Reynolds and Fredric Brown, waste their time on "Me and Flapjack and the Martians," a coy and heavy-footed imitation of "Homo Saps," and why does Campbell waste his money printing it -- especially since his magazine was responsible for the appearance of "Homo Saps" in the first place? (If you don't remember "Homo Saps," I suggest you look it up. I don't now remember the author, though for some reason I seem to remember that Elton Fax was the illustrator.) As for "Pest," the story by Randall Garrett and Lou Tabakow, with its cuddly animals with the telepathic ears, nausea is not enough. I can only suggest that both authors -- not their story, but the authors themselves -- be piled in the middle of the floor and set fire to. The man who should apply the match is Stanley G. Weinbaum.

THE PTERODACTYL

Far pre-father of feathers, you are flying
Through cerebral Jurassics in a spasm
Of leathery vanes, afraid to sound the chasm
Where saurian trades of tooth and loin are plying.
Wing-fingered feeder on metaphysics, sighing
From withering bowels denotes enthusiasm
Wasted chasing toothsome ectoplasm
And omens a skeleton decease while trying.

Saw-beaked epitome of bodiless
Idea, tossed by gusts of ether, dive
Through abstract mists and plumb the sea of fact.
Eat rich strange fish, grow long bright feathers, press
Form's flesh around thought's rib, and so derive
From the act of beauty, beauty of the act.

—PHILIP JOSÉ FARMER



Comments on the sixtieth FAPA mailing, summer 1952

(Concluded from Sky Hook #15)

Ye Cats. I agree that discussion of religion and politics has a place in fanzines, but a discussion "as to whether religion is myth or reality" isn't likely to wax very interesting till you clarify the point of issue. Religion, defined as a system of faith and worship or as the practice of worship of a divine being, is a universal culture trait, found among all peoples of the earth and traceable as far back as the middle paleolithic age. In that sense religion is "real" (i.e., existent). What you undoubtedly mean is "real" in the sense of "corresponding to what is." Therefore, the question is, what religion, and what aspect or tenet of this religion do you refer to? Since various religions conflict on such points as the nature of the divine being or essence, the concept of the soul, the belief in life after death, the structure of the cosmos, the degree of divinity manifest among priests, etc., all religions and all religious beliefs cannot "correspond to what is." If it's Christianity you mean, what tenet of faith do you want us to grapple with, a la Gorgeous St George?

Science Fiction Apologizer. Noted.

Report on Westercon 5. It's very doubtful whether "most science fiction and fantasy writers are West Coasters." Maybe more sf writers live on the west coast than in any other single section, but surely not more sf writers than in all other sections of the country.

One Fan's Outlook. I've always heard that fan activity during the "last 'legal' war" accelerated. FAPA was in its golden years; Degler and the LASFS rode high; even subzines were numerous and worthwhile. The era that produced The Fantasite, Nova, The Acolyte, Chanticleer, and the Burbee Shaggy can't be deemed a "period of low ebb."

Stefantasy. No doubt someone will soon suggest adding chlorophyll to municipal water systems, but many business tycoons will oppose this move, fearing that people will stop buying chlorophyll soap and toothpaste because they're getting sufficient chlorophyll in their drinking water. Consumers union declares that, while medical literature shows that chlorophyll, being oil-soluble, travels through the body practically unabsorbed, there may be toxic effects from water-soluble "chlorophyllins," and that, while chlorophyll does have a deodorizing effect, little is known about the therapeutic possibilities of commercially-produced chlorophyllins. Chlorophyllins seem effective in reducing odors of wounds, when taken by mouth or used as ointments, but the effects of chlorophyll mouthwash, dentifrices, footpads, cigarettes, clothing, or toilet paper are either variable or non-existent. "There is a crying need," says CU, "for carefully planned, rigidly controlled scientific studies that will determine not only effects of chlorophyllins on body odor, but the pharmacologic and biologic effects of chlorophyllins on the entire organism." # After seeing the copy of Churinga you sent, Bill, I agree that it's in a class by itself. Guinane's mimeography is the best I've seen and the appearance of Churinga suggests that of a fine, privately-printed book, rather than that of a good commercial magazine, such as Banister's excellent Nekromantikon suggested. The golden brown ink on creamy book paper made Churinga resemble Chalmer's Life of Mary, Queen of Scots, a handsome old book I read last winter, published by Abraham Small, Philadelphia, back in 1822.

Visitor's Day at GMC's. In "The Glow," what does "Where dew a sparkled in the glow" mean? And what's the significance of "forevermore" in the lines "And the moon did rise forevermore,/Till sunrise meet"?

Looking Backward. Leeh contributed quite a few definitions to Fanspeak, but since the "eyetracks" definition was in the original Rapp edition, I assume Art wrote it himself. Burbee and Laney were of course popularizers, if not the originators, of the term. # C. Stewart Metchette, contributor to the original Fanspeak, was often called Steve. He lived in Frisco awhile, later returned to Michigan, and is now in the U. S. army overseas. You mention Bob Dougherty. He was discovered for fandom by Don Wilson and lives in San Lorenzo. He's staff artist on some Bay Area newspaper.

Booful. Boo.

Snulbug. Is Hadacol sold in this part of the country? I would never have heard of it except for such gag advertisements such as the one you quote from Leonard Lyons. # Pamphrey, which reminds you of Old Mother Hubbard, reminds me of Lauren Bacall's husband. Pamphrey Bogart. # Kenny Gray is definitely an authority on Inner Mongolia. Once we had a small argument about the Kazaks of central Asia; I had just read a book on the subject, but he soon convinced me that my ideas about them were all wrong -- and they were! # "Another Day, Another Dullard" perfectly evokes the skid-row atmosphere of Washington avenue, but I hope it doesn't give everybody the wrong idea about Minneapolis. On your visit to the skid - row, you saw more activity than on an average Saturday eve; it's really a pretty dull place compared with, let's say, Newport, Ky., Canton, Ohio, or Juarez, Mexico. But this was a fine piece of writing; I shudder to think what you might accomplish if you

seriously tried your hand at writing. As I remember, you said you wrote "Another Day, Another Dullard" on a whim, just because you felt like writing something. # Frank Gruber's redoubtable detectives, Johnny Fletcher and Sam Cragg, once wandered through Minneapolis' skid-row, the only other time (to my knowledge) this miserable district ever appeared in "literature." Gruber says, in The Talking Clock, that it "looked exactly like Market street in St Louis, West Madison in Chicago, and the Bowery in New York. The bums and hoboes congregated here by the hundreds and the thousands. They gathered around the signs put out by the employment agencies, sat on the curb soaking up the sun and perhaps thinking of their lost years."

Comments on the sixty-first FAPA mailing, autumn 1952

Tielchen. I liked both political conventions on TV too, Bill, and I agree that a greater degree of dignity would have spoiled them. But I don't think we need worry that the 1956 conventions will have dignity and decorum. The American public prefers corn to dignity (ask Thomas E. Dewey) and the trend is likely to be in the direction of spectacle and hucksterized "production." Despite such things as the incredible synthetic demonstration for MacArthur at the Republican convention, I thought there was still a lot of real spontaneity and enthusiasm apparent in the 1952 affairs, and I hope the politicos won't let it get commercialized right out of sight in 1956. With 50 million eyes watching, the temptation to put on a show instead of a big wild party may be too strong for the Jake Arveys to resist. # As I remember Laney's article and Hal Curtis' "Letter to Jesus," they didn't condemn "the basic nature of religion as a worthwhile thing," but only certain aspects of one religion, Christianity. Danner satirized Perry Mason without alienating detective story writer Tucker; Speer criticized the Republican party without alienating at least one person who likes Ike (namely, me). Why can't somebody remark unfavorably about religion without incurring the wrath of All Good Christians? Why can't one point out a wormy apple on an airy branch without somebody thinking he wants to chop the tree down?

Lark. Gad, your reading tastes are nothing if not distinctive: in one place you say you want to read the hoax book written about Hagerstown, and in another, you want "to read about Motor Matt"! With such exotic and catholic preferences, would you be satisfied with the usual allotment of just five books for a desert island? If so, what books would they be? # I believe February did once have 30 days; the original cycle of months alternated the 31- and 30-day months. Augustus Caesar stole one day from February to add to August, so his month would be just as long as Julius Caesar's (July). I forget where the other day disappeared to, but presumably it was subtracted in the adjustments that gave us leap year.

Revoltin' Development (both issues). It would be obliging of you if you'd date and/or number issues of this fanzine, especially when two appear in the same mailing. # I guess I'd never heard of the "dago bomb" that exploded on Kossuth's lawn; in fact, I'd never heard of a "dago bomb," period. Strange thing, too: Michifen always take me for an inside authority on Michigan affairs, so that letters from various fans there often contain cryptic references I'm apparently supposed to decipher. I've got the Michigan codices in my possession, but nobody ever thought to provide a translation. # I disagree that Ben Singer beat Art Rapp in selling a story because Ben is "creative" while Art is not. When Art was trying to sell, there weren't rafts of prozines as there are today. I've no doubt that Art could sell quite a bit of stuff now, if he put the effort into it that he expended in Spacewarp days. # If Rapp's pro rejects were "good fan fiction," they were mark-

edly better than Ben's acceptance. To illustrate: I sent a Future containing a Singer yarn to Walt Willis last summer and he's never acknowledged receiving it!

Horizons. I was flabbergasted to note that an old intellectual like Robert Lowndes evidently follows big league baseball. At least I infer that the "Campanella-Dascoli incident" which he mentions has something to do with baseball. Campanella is a catcher with the Brooklyns, isn't he? Who's Dascoli? # The storm over the new revision of the Bible is brewing, but hasn't yet grown as violent as one would expect. Fundamentalism must be deader than I thought. What an uproar there would have been in 1852 if revisionists had changed that one reference from "virgin" to "young woman," even though, far as I can see, it makes little difference. I heard a radio minister the other day talking about virgin birth. Said he, "Christ must have been born of a virgin, else Joseph was his father and he would have been born a sinner." If a mortal man was his father, Christ would have been born a sinner, according to the doctrine of original sin, but couldn't he have been of divine origin in the womb of a non-virgin? # According to Fantasy Times F. Orlin Tremaine is editing a flock of movie and "true" detective magazines for Biltmore Magazines, Inc. # You're right that no Walter Scott novels other than "Ivanhoe" have been filmed -- in the modern era, that is. In the early days Scott yarns were favorite vehicles for the flickers. Vitagraph filmed "The Bride of Lammermoor" in 1909, and "The Lady of the Lake" in 1912; Hepworth of Britain made "Heart of Midlothian" in 1914, and the same year Famous Players filmed "A Woman's Triumph," based on that novel. "Rob Roy" was an Eclair picture of 1913; "Lochinvar" was an Edison movie of 1909 and a Thanhauser film of 1911. Didn't you catch any of these classics?

Light. Maybe the "bold knight of old" who actually slept with a few wenches would be carefully painted with a "virginal whitewash" by historians, but his private life wouldn't escape the attention of our scandalmongering historical novelists. Captain John Smith's chaste relationship with Pocahontas is well-known, but novelist Edison Marshall, in Great Smith, gives a bed-to-bed account of Smith's travels from King's Lynn to Constantinople, and restores his reputation as a bold knight. # I don't remember offhand where Socrates is reported as saying those hard words about politicians, but it's difficult to imagine even Socrates discoursing upon "the political and economic life of Athens in the year 353 B. C." After all, "old friend Socrates" died in 399 B. C.

The Tucker Hotel. Would that every convention hotel were so well-arranged!

Unasked Opinion. Only 18 fapans contributed magazines to the sixtieth mailing, but there were more than that represented in the bundle, and one legally contributes, remember, if his work appears in any fapazine. A rough count shows that at least 25 members contributed to #60 -- something to yell rather than shout about, I'll admit, but let's not exaggerate. Moskowitz had an article almost eight pages long in Sky Hook; Speer had a six-page article in FAPA Nonesuch -- both bigger contributions than some you counted. # John Peale (not Beale) Cardinal is a very good friend of mine indeed, being mine own pename. I deny that the "mammalian poetry" in Compact of Fire was "due to the fad for bottle feeding"; I was not a bottle baby. Anyway, despite the fact that some psychologists declare that the center of sexual attraction has shifted from the hips to the breasts, you can find voluminous "mammalian poetry" in almost any age. In fact, the poem "Bosom of Beauty" was nothing more than a rhapsody on themes from poets of the past: white mountains, pomegranates, beehives, orioles' nests, and so on. I've no doubt that the female breast has aroused the ardor of men since love began. # You subscribe to those resounding principles of Senator Cain just as they stand, without any clari-

fication or definition of terms? For instance: "You CANNOT help the poor by destroying the rich." Don't you think it helped the poor a little when the Russian government in the 1860s took half the land away from the feudal landowners and sold it to the peasants? # Hugo Gernsback must have widely circulated copies of that Chicon speech; even I received a copy, though I don't know where he got my address. His notion that sf authors should receive "provisional patents" for the crazy machines they describe in their yarns sounds like something some bright-eyed neofan might dream up. # If there is one thing that Adlai Stevenson does well it is to speak clearly, forcefully, intelligently. Though I like Ike, I thought the only event that matched Stevenson's acceptance speech on the Republican side was Ike's TV appearance on 1 November 1952 where his cogency and poise put to shame the panel of professional politicians. # Here we go 'round the mulberry bush. You claim that nobody understood your discussion of sex, and that we thought you were condemning "erotic gratification" when you were merely saying that marriage isn't the right word for an "ephemeral relationship." But obviously you didn't understand your critics' "inane" and "downright stupid" comments, either, else you wouldn't have found it necessary to repeat your argument wherein you deny condemning eroticism and then slyly end up condemning eroticism. # As I said before, G. M., we aren't required by the nature of things to accept your dictum that "There is no reason for sex -- i.e., the division into male and female -- except for the purpose of procreation." I remarked before upon your teleological approach to the subject (you need only substitute "function" for "reason" in your proposition to show how fallacious it is -- obviously sex has other functions besides procreation and you are merely emphasizing one). But even aside from that point, your statement can be challenged. Consider: sex is not necessary to the reproductive process; there are asexual means. Why did nature or God or whatever you choose to call it bestow sex upon us when another reproductive process might be more efficient? Someone could justifiably argue from this point that "There is no reason for sex -- i.e., the division into male and female -- except for the purpose of balanced economy." He could explain that without both men and women in the world certain tasks demanding skills peculiar to one of the sexes would not get done or would be done inefficiently; and he could add that without sexual pleasure there would be no passionate attachments between humans, which society utilizes as a fundamental means of providing for the economic needs of an individual. You couldn't prove him wrong. Nor could you prove someone wrong who stated, "There is no reason for feet except for the purpose of kicking footballs" -- even though you may believe that feet are for walking. In rebuttal to these people, you are free to declare that "The only reason for sex should be for procreation" or "The only reason for feet should be for walking," but this ethical approach must be properly defended before it will carry any weight.

Stefantasy. Your "What's in a Name?" about Pennsylvania place-names of course invites companion pieces about other states. Minnesota shows the influence of Eng-

lish place-names in such towns as London, New London, Lancaster, Kensington, York, Cambridge, and New Brighton, though we don't have as many such places as you have. To balance off the foreign influences, Minnesota boasts towns named America and Young America. There are countless duplications among the names of Minnesota's ten thousand lakes; government bureaus work endlessly to keep straight their records of the many Round lakes, Mud lakes, Sandy lakes, etc. But as far as I know there are no exact duplications in Minnesota town-names. Nevertheless, the post office must often get confused differentiating among towns like Deer, Deer Creek, Deerfield, Deer River, and Deerwood; Beaver, Beaver Bay, and Beaver Creek; Moose, Moose Island, and Moose Lake; Maplebay, Maple Lake, Maple Plain, and Mapleton; Greenbush, Green Isle, Greenlake, and Green Valley; Pine City, Pinecreek, Pine Island, Pine Knoll, and Pine River; Oaklake, Oakland, Oak Park, and Oakwood; Springfield, Spring Grove, Spring Hill, Springvale, and Spring Valley. Some of my favorite Minnesota place-names are Ballpark, Tenstrike, Bowstring, Rail Prairie, Nary, Pickwick, Plato, Moonlight, Sunrise, Embarrass, Bungo, Climax (that'll match Intercourse, Pa.), Flaming, Triumph, Rollingstone, Goos, Oye, Zippel, Good Thunder, and Ude. # H. G. Wells believed "the multitude, when it is suitably aroused, can upset anything," but did not believe "that it can create anything whatever," according to your quotable quote. I believe that the creative force only resides in the multitude, but I think Wells isn't suggesting this, but instead is declaring in favor of the great man theory. Does the rest of The World of William Clissold bear this out, Bill?

Short Circuit. "Campbell killed forever the validity of citing 'authority'"? I seem to have overlooked Campbell's epoch-making coup de grace. How does his contribution compare with Galileo's work in discrediting Aristotle's theory of natural motion? More important in the context of your remarks, how does the lack of validity of citing authority in a scientific matter connect with the alleged lack of validity of doing so in matters of art? # The forthcoming Unknown-type magazines from Gold and del Rey ought to indicate whether pure fantasy will sell these days. Evidently Street and Smith doesn't think it will, else they would have refloated Unknown on the crest of the sf wave. The title change and the increasing stress on sf in Boucher's magazine seems to indicate that it's the "SF" that sells F&SF. # Your belief, with Jefferson, that "the least governed are the best governed" and that any governmental action is bad which is "above the minimum necessary to maintain law and order" seems ill-adapted for present-day conditions. We of 1952 demand educational facilities, fair employment practices, social security, safe working conditions, to name a few basic things, and the government seems the best means of providing them. If the government were barred from these fields private means would be used to make possible similar benefits, and to obtain your share you would inevitably find your actions "governed" by a board of directors or some such body over which you could have little influence.

Trouble's Child. Lee says she wrote this poem mentally while in the shower, but I don't think it's all wet. The first two lines are the lines which make the poem; the rest is elaboration and justification for the statement in the opening couplet -- and isn't completely successful. The meter is perhaps the poem's most distinctive aspect: "In the concise time and precise rhyme of the ticking clock-days/And the measured beat of the plodding feet in the regulated life-ways." Excellent.

Matter of No Moment. I enjoyed the brief and pungent report on your four weeks on maneuvers, but I'm still puzzled whether you're regularly stationed in Germany or were merely sent there for training. Your address, with those cryptic initials like PCLU and BAOR, doesn't give much clue, at least to me. # I had figured out most of your puzzle once, but I didn't write down the answers and they got away.

Pottery Leaflet. The lines of "Jabberwocky" as Old English verse by a callow dodgson lose the wonder lent by the dream language of a liddell daughter. "Kool in the salg and ees."

Flook. But not a fluke. I could say this is a fine first issue, but this is feeble praise indeed for an issue which would be an uncommon achievement even for a sixteenth attempt. To quote Emerson's 1855 letter to Whitman, "I greet you at the beginning of a great career, which must have had a long foreground somewhere, for such a start." Qui vive? # I hardly see how you could improve an article like the one on Forever Amber, which in both writing and incredibility made "The Cole War with the Galaxy" sound like a schoolboy skirmish. # Yes, I'm sorry to say I didn't try to resign from the NFFF till my fifth year in that puissant organization; it was too easy to drift along in that sea of apathy and inefficiency as one of the weedy crew. # As I remember, I'd remarked to Eva Firestone that I was no longer an N3F member; whereupon she wrote back, "We can't let you go now; you just won another laureate award." What award? I don't know; I don't believe anybody ever told me. # I believe I gave the Rapp administration credit; if I didn't, I do so now. But I'd also like to point out that Art personally edited and published most of the club benefits you list; in fact, I wouldn't doubt that he paid the publishing costs out of his own pocket. The NFFF deserves about as much credit for such activity as FAPA deserves credit for the appearance of Flook. How much has the NFFF done that individual fans or local clubs haven't accomplished singlehandedly? The Day index, Burwell's edition of The Immortal Storm, A Checklist of Fantastic Magazines -- to name several important projects of the past year -- did the NFFF have a hand in any of them? One lone girl, Lee Hoffman, carried on more fan activity in 1952 than the rest of the NFFF as a group ever thought of. Is the NFFF reprint of Astounding Story-Key really out? As I stencil this, I haven't heard from the supposed publisher in more than five months. Typical NFFF efficiency! # Nobody in FAPA complained about the child labor laws, but some have criticized government inspection of factories, which was a feature of the British law of 1832. # Come across with the non-fantasy material; after all, some FAPA members will read nothing else!

Tambor-hi. More interesting than English translations of the French dialog added to American movies would be English translations of the original dialog from foreign movies. In French or Italian films a character turns to another, waving his arms and flooding the soundtrack with a Niagara of words; the English subtitle is simply "No." # I'm glad to hear that Elsberry is "a swell chap and has a big heart." Others have declared that he is a rather bitter young man.

FAPA File. Eney protests that this publication is merely a department of Oblast, but I am unable to regard a paperclip as a permanent binding uniting two items (a) separately stapled; and (b) carrying separate "Operation Crifanac" numbers, especially without any evidence of continuity such as continuous pagination. # I wondered what I was doing on 8 (or 9) June 1950, the day Lee Hoffman first heard about fandom, but checking my files I find I didn't write any letters either day. I did write three letters that week, however. From a letter to Burbee (6 June 50) I note that I was intending to buy a wirecorder; had just seen "The Red Shoes" and "The Bicycle Thief" for the first time; and that I was glad Burbee was moving away from Riverton avenue, Sun Valley, Calif., because "I keep getting your address... mixed up with Virginia Blish's on Rivington street." A letter to Laney the same day revealed that I'd recently received a card from Claude Degler, in which he stated, "This is to inform you that the advertised book, CULT OF THE COSMIC CIRCLE WILL NOT BE PUBLISHED. Due to illness, & a pressing nature of other work & publishing, & a desire not to offend anyone." From a letter to Don Wilson (10 June

50) I find that "Dimension X" was to broadcast "The Green Hills of Earth" that same evening; that I had just read "Kuttner's amusing 'As You Were' in the new TWS"; and that I had been over to Elsberry's that week (probably for the first time). # Where did "Error in Judgement" (sic), your favorite sf yarn, appear, Ehey? I don't remember it in Galaxy or aSF, and Day's index doesn't list it. In a book? A slick? A fanzine?

Oblast. What meant you by "handicapped by having to use printing" in reference to the amateur publishing career of Lewis Carroll? Perhaps you meant "hand-lettering" instead of "printing"? It's interesting to note that both The Comet and Rosebud have been used as fanzine titles. Another Carroll title, Will-o-the-Wisp, would fit the fannish pattern, but I don't remember its being used. # Matter of fact, I was somewhat dismayed to find so much of my old poetry showing up in one mailing (the same mailing in which I published three of my newer poems). The one in Astra's Tower Leaflet was over a year old; the one in Light at least five years old, and the one you refer to in Soma, almost ten years old, though first published in 1946. Nevertheless, with allowance for its age and its specialized genre, I thought "The Dwilla Trees" quite good as a ballad of the future. # Tsk, Laeh's "Philosopher" was one of the best poems she's done. The alleged "confusion" in it had a function, just as it does in a football play; the result was not obscured but rather revealed by the method employed. # I figured you were only mock-serious in your incessant re-echoes of that remark about Washington D. C. fanzines being "chaotic in format." But the three-year persistency of the remark convinces me that there's more than facetiousness involved. I think you're still trying to come to terms with an observation that stung you deeply. Stop worrying; Oblast's format no longer is chaotic. Vade in pace.... # You say, "Failures to reach optimum rationality (are) due to faulty information." I dissent. Irrationality in man results from the fact that decision-making actually occurs below the level of rationality, in the realm of the unconscious. You think that "better education" will remedy this? The educational system is itself a victim of irrationality, and it is hard to imagine how it can train students in a rationality its own personnel does not possess, even if you can imagine rationality to be teachable. # Your examples of men who "struggle victoriously against evil" do not convince me. Your choices can be challenged: Danner points out facts to the discredit of Asoka; Socrates was accused of corrupting the young; Ikhnaton was called by Budge "a religious fanatic, intolerant, arrogant and obstinate...a half-insane man" -- and in any case he is nothing more than a half-fictional character. Nor would I grant that a "struggle against natural handicaps" is a struggle against evil. But even granting these men were victors, it's little comfort to consider that their struggles were only feeble stirrings in the web of fate: Socrates quaffed the hemlock; Ikhnaton's empire fell into chaos and his name was hacked from the monuments; etc. We hunt the white whale and die in the attempt, and "the great shroud of the sea rolls on as it rolled five thousand years ago." Men are not defeated, but man is. # A better argument for the triumph over evil is that man today has more respect for the individual than ever before; the civilized man cannot slay or enslave any human being (to some degree not even when there is a moral sanction, as in war or on the gallows) without answering to his own conscience. Unfortunately, there are serious exceptions to this statement: we remember the people of Belsen who lived within earshot of the death chambers without pretending to know what was happening behind the grim walls; and we remember the fine, morally upright, Christian folk depicted in Huckleberry Finn who thought nothing of penning N----- Jim in a shed, feeding him like a dog. ("Good gracious! anybody hurt?" "No'm. Killed a n-----.") # I think radicals/1852/ were just as dangerous to the established order as radicals/1952/, who might be "secret agents for the world's most powerful military force"; nevertheless, "radical" has never become a scare-word in Britain. Anyway,

it's all the more reason to doubt Bester's thesis that "If you're a reactionary today, the same opinions would make you a dangerous radical 100 years ago."

Crifapac. Let's see. The hundredth FAPA mailing will come out in 1962. I hope I won't be gray quite so prematurely! I'm glad to see so many of today's fapans are to remain members for the next ten years. # "Twippledop" was never patterned after "Talk of the Town." This is the basic difference: "Talk of the Town" is primarily concerned with people; "Twippledop" is mostly concerned with ideas, trends, and abstract things.

Fair Hair was pretty fair. The set of gaglines was best, and I see you liked "Astra's Towner" so well you used it twice. Where's the takeoff on Mickey Spillane you put on the Fair Hair spool?

Drill Press Style Sheet. Ah, another foe of nonstoparagraphing. Pretty soon we'll have a majority.

Looking Backward. "Eyestrain Mimeo" is a nice publishing house name, but I hope it will soon become inapplicable. # I read the mailings in much the same fashion as you do, though now when I'm official editor I make my first quick perusal "to see what's there" as each magazine arrives in the mail. # The unmailable word Leeh found in Vulcan and in Unasked Opinion was probably "sex." After Leeh had innocently used the word somewhere, I self-righteously sent her a clipping from the paper in which a letter to the editor insisted that "decent people don't use the word 'sex' in public." I guess she's learned her lesson; I hope you have.

Oh L, drop ded.

CRYPTIC COMMUNICATION FOR THE COGNOSCENTI (concluded)

Considerable skill is sometimes necessary to make the covering message sound so natural that a censor to whom the tongue is native will not suspect anything. Once suspicion is aroused, a padded cipher of this sort collapses. A few years ago in "Wash Tubbs," I suspected a cipher in a letter reproduced in the strip, and with a little examination saw that the cipher was every fourth word.

If the spacing is varied, it is not so easy to confirm a suspicion that the message includes a cipher. This may be done by a rule such as, every second word after a punctuation mark. A hoary means to the same end is a mask, called a grill, which fits over the message sheet, with the clear showing through holes previously cut in it at various places. Pratt classes this as a variant of the transposition cipher; I disagree. But anyway, it does not meet our needs in 1984.

Suppose, though, the spacing between the words of the clear were varied according to some number which can be suggested in the body of the letter. Suppose your correspondent referred to Ralph and you have no mutual friend of that name. What number does the name suggest? 124C41+, of course. Drop everything but the numbers, 1.2.4.4.1., and you get a spacing of one null word between the word Ralph and the beginning of the clear, two words between the first word of the clear and the second, then four nulls to the next, four to the next, one to the next, one to the next, two to the next, four, four, one, and repeat. Where all the digits are less than five, as here, it might make innocent-sounding prose easier if all numbers were doubled. To indicate this, I would use the word Ralph twice.

With the foregoing in mind, look at your letter from Chan again, and the number 21MM392 should jump from your standard banks. The clear then stands revealed: "Am watched. Get instructions from Bulldog."

QUOTE - UNQUOTE

ANTHONY BOUCHER airmails: Thanks for Sky Hook #15. I'd never seen it before (benighted!) and enjoyed it -- especially Blish's interesting analysis of series. # Atheling seems promising, though I can foresee that I'm going to have violent disagreements with him. (One to start with, factual rather than critical: Jack Vance's The Dying Earth is not a novel, but a book of shorts and novelets.) But I was disappointed in his saying that the column would be devoted "for the most part" to GSF, aSF, and F&SF, and then never mentioning F&SF again. Curious to see what happens when he gets around to us. # Principal purpose of this note however was to answer your query on p 20. J. Wellington Wells wasn't Boucher; he was L. Sprague de Camp, as you could easily find out in Don Day's index. I think Mr Atheling would say "it should have been immediately evident"; Sprague and I don't sound very much alike. (2643 Dana street, Berkeley 4, California)

H. L. GOLD rhetorically asks: Is Galaxy responsible for "phony realism" and "deep purple" in today's science fiction? Mr Atheling will please take the stand. "Both trends," he states, "seem to have emerged as a direct result of the competitive pressure of Galaxy, and both actually are the same trend in different lights." But Mr Atheling further deposeth: "Young men trying to crack Gold's citadel, and incapable, at least thus far, of distinguishing between the artistic and the arty, are producing most of it. Gold buys very little of it." # I buy very little of it and yet Galaxy is the culprit? Is that logic? But I'll be obliging and confess not only to those supposed crimes, but to these as well: Women's hemlines and the Korean war made news while Galaxy was being born. Notice the connection? It escaped most people, but there are the facts -- hemlines went up and South Korea was attacked as a direct result of Galaxy's birth. This is certainly evidence and guilt enough, yet let's not forget the simultaneous onset of Cheyne-Stokes breathing in the detective field. There can be no doubt that Galaxy was the fiendish strangler. The proof is there. Galaxy can no longer deny its culpability. # My alleged preference for slick Ladies Home Journal copy (evidently Mr Atheling's ultimate epiphet) is, as M. Voltaire said of a considerably more important thesis, contradicted only by the facts. I would love to have seen "Coming Attraction," "The Fireman," "Dark Interlude," "The Puppet Masters," "The Demolished Man," "Gravy Planet," and a good many others appear in ("hot water and lots of it!") the Ladies Home Journal. # Mr Atheling's spatulas for mixing energetic metaphors and wild reasoning based on one of the merriest cases of boiling inattentiveness should be put on the market. They have more spring and boomerang backlash than any I've encountered. Meretricious, gentlemen, and a Happy New Year! (421 Hudson street, New York 14, New York)

RAY BRADBURY declares: No, I'm not Charles E. Fritch. You'll probably discover, if you write Sam Mines and ask him, that Charles E. Fritch is just plain old Chuck Fritch of Missoula or Sweetwater, going along his little old way, not bothering nobody. And more power to him! You have probably insulted him by inferring I write anything like him. Good writers can be lost that way, Boggs; better watch out. Addendum: I also am not Bryan Berry in the January 1953 Planet. I haven't sold to either magazine in years, but hope to late in '53.

It was William Atheling Jr, not me, who suggested that Fritch was a Bradbury pename. Thanks for the information.

JACK VANCE types: A few remarks on Mr Atheling's article, which was read with wry amusement: (1) "Big Planet" was suggested, not by Beowulf, not by the Odyssey, but by a short story by the author of Beau Geste, whose name temporarily escapes me --

Percival Wren, something like that. [Percival Christopher Wren, right. Ed.] A dozen men desert the Foreign Legion; only one survives to reach Tangier. "Big Planet" naturally evolved considerably from this human-depletion idea; and in its original form -- 82,000 words -- it had an entirely different slant from the one it ended up with. Written originally two or three years ago, it is not, as Mr Atheling assumes, a sample of my latest work. In fact, many of Mr Atheling's assumptions and inductions do not completely hit the mark. For instance: (2) A person who, reading a collection of short stories while firmly convinced that he is reading a novel, cannot fail to put the book down with a trace of dissatisfaction. This is evidently what occurred when Mr Atheling read Dying Earth. I completely concur with his view that, as a novel, this collection of vaguely related short stories makes a "chaotic ...shapeless" whole. I believe the notation on the cover, "A Novel by Jack Vance," misled Mr Atheling. (3) Mr Kuttner I esteem highly as a man, a gentleman, a fellow citizen of the U. S., a prolific and talented author, but I must minimize the degree to which his works have influenced my own. There has been, I must assert categorically, absolutely none. (4) In the matter of "narrative technique" I find myself a little puzzled; in fact the sense of wry amusement grows. The subject is a little too big to enter into, but I'll gladly state my private formula for writing; it's deceptively simple: I write the kind of story I like to read. I rather wish I had time to study some of the classical traditions, but I'm too busy just plain writing. # Back to "Big Planet" -- as I mentioned, the original length was 82,000 words; first cut to 45,000, then expanded to its present length of 52,000. The first form had an entirely different slant than the one it has now -- one which I'd like to incorporate in another story sometime in the future. # Well, back to work; a dozen different things to take care of. We've just moved into an old ranch-house out in the hills -- fog, wet, no snow of course.

EDWARD WOOD postals: Atheling's "Pro-Phile" excellent, but I refuse to accept his acceptance of Sturgeon's "succinct and unbetterable" definition of science fiction. You've got to show me how this definition excludes the very fine Live With Lightning by Wilson or Arrowsmith by Lewis from science fiction. A good sharp meaningful definition of science fiction is so badly needed that it ceases to be funny. Now of course this is less important to the editors than the Kinsey-cum-Spillane approach to science fiction which is so profitable in money if not in intelligent stimulation. (31 North Aberdeen street, Chicago 7, Illinois)

SAM MOSKOWITZ reports: Sometimes Harry Warner makes a lot of sense, but in his Horizons commentary on my article "The Face of Facts," which appeared in Sky Hook #14, Harry attempts a logic so hollow and false that it must be exposed. # First he says, concerning my statement that F. Orlin Tremaine was promoted by Street and Smith, "If that big promotion had occurred, it seems unlikely that it would have gone unmentioned in the Astounding editorials, and such a promotion would also have tended to encourage publicity for the promotion of Campbell from author-status to editor-status." It would appear, beyond a shadow of doubt, that Harry Warner fits into the category of those readers which, I must assume, know absolutely nothing. How inappropriate Harry's statement becomes when it is explained that at no time (as all older readers can verify) while Tremaine was editor of Astounding did his name ever appear on the editorial page of the magazine. Except for fans who obtained their information from fan magazines, and astute readers who read the statement of ownership in the December 1933 issue of Astounding, the editor's identity was one of the best-kept secrets of the magazine game as far as the reader was concerned. Many letters to the readers' columns requested that information, and several times in his editorials Tremaine acknowledged such requests, but stated that the editor's name was not important. If Tremaine's name was never officially mentioned in Astounding, why does it seem "unlikely" that his promotion would be kept secret? Further, at no time was Campbell's position as editor officially revealed in the pages of Astound-

ing in the first few years after he was hired. # Second, Harry says, "Tremaine never did get very far up in the pulp world, to the best of my knowledge." Perhaps Redd sent out some lightly mimeographed pages, but on page 7 of Sky Hook #14 I made it a point to mention that Tremaine was editorial director of Clayton's entire pulp chain -- and I now add that he was made president of Clayton Publications before its collapse. (The collapse, by the way, was not connected with the sales of the magazine.) In my article I also stated that Tremaine was editorial director of half of Street and Smith's pulp chain. How far can you go in pulps? I also pointed out Tremaine's reputation in the slicks, which is not inconsiderable. For a complete rundown of Tremaine's editorial positions I suggest that Harry refer to the Who's Who in America I previously indicated. As for Tremaine today, he is editorial director of six slicks for Biltmore Publications in New York. Poor fellow -- couldn't get very far in the pulps, had to start editing slicks out of desperation. (127 Shephard avenue, Newark 8, New Jersey)

PHIL RASCH remarks (in re Horizons #52's comments on "Lost World of Lemuria"): Harry Warner's point is important in that it represents a reaction characteristic of those whose lack of scientific training renders them susceptible to the blandishments of pseudo-science. # First, an anthropologist is not prejudiced against anything. Every item is regarded as a possible source of information, but its significance must be carefully evaluated. In one context bits of pottery and pieces of abalone shell may indicate a culture with a highly developed skill in making pottery and with abalone as a staple article of diet; in another context these same articles may represent trade goods obtained from distant tribes. # Second, myths generally represent unscientific attempts to explain something. As such, they usually contain a grain of truth. How big that grain may be is not always evident. How did the Hawaiian islands originate? Maui went fishing and hauled them out of the bottom of the sea. The grain is that the Hawaiian islands do exist. Who built the Menehune ditch on Kauai? The Menehunes, a race of dwarfs. The demonstrable grain is that the ditch exists. The builders may have been dwarfs, but in the absence of any suitable artifacts, skeletal remains, etc., it seems likely that the term is simply one by which the Polynesian invaders meant to disparage those whom they dispossessed, much as we speak of one man as being small-minded, or too small to fit another's shoes. In the absence of any definite proof one way or another, we accept the possibility that the Menehunes were dwarfs, unlikely as it now seems. It is only when some pseudo-scientist comes along and says the myth proves that the Menehunes were dwarfs that we object. # Third, every scientific statement is preceded by the expressed or implied phrase, "On the basis of our present knowledge." Pseudo-science characteristically starts out, "The truth is," based on Akashic records, personal revelations from Ascended Masters, petroglyphs which only the author concerned can decipher, etc. Now when we evaluate the south sea myths we find some of them seem to be traditions which may have preserved the history of actual happenings with a greater or lesser degree of fidelity. Some of them are so clearly in conflict with known fact that it is self-evident that they have no validity as history. When Spence says "The truth is that things happened in such and such a way because that is how the myths tell it," we are forced to point out that the premises do not justify the conclusion. # In the words of Katherine Luomala of the University of Hawaii, "Melanesian and Polynesian research would be farther along today if the myths and genealogies had never been used as a source of direct evidence about the large-scale movements of peoples, a method which has involved each theorist picking out from the narrative or genealogy which he considers 'fact' and throwing the rest away as 'myth' or later-day interpolation....far from elucidating history the myths need history to elucidate them..." (Journal of American Folklore, Jan-Mar 1952). (567 Erskine drive, Pacific Palisades, California)

ALL LETTERS ARE WELCOME!

"The urn shall never waken
But out of ruinous fire;
The jewel is never taken
But out of jewel desire.
As the cruel are best at love
The fierce are best at art;
All of rare and chaste design
Comes from the crucible heart."

-- Tom Boggs,
Arenas.

"Freud has not merely naturalized poetry; he has discovered its status as a pioneer settler, and he sees it as a method of thought. Often enough he tries to show how, as a method of thought, it is unreliable and ineffective for conquering reality; yet he himself is forced to use it in the very shaping of his own science, as when he speaks of the topography of the mind and tells us with a kind of defiant apology that the metaphors of space relationship which he is using are really most inexact since the mind is not a thing of space at all, but that there is no other way of conceiving the difficult idea except by metaphor. In the eighteenth century Vico spoke of the metaphorical, imagistic language of the early stages of culture; it was left to Freud to discover how, in a scientific age, we still feel and think in figurative formations, and to create, what psychoanalysis is, a science of tropes, of metaphor and its variants, synecdoche and metonymy."

-- Lionel Trilling,
"Freud and Literature."

"The effect of any writing on the public mind is mathematically measurable by its depth of thought. How much water does it draw? If it awaken to think, if it lifts you from your feet with the great voice of eloquence, then the effect is to be wide, slow, permanent, over the minds of men; if the pages instruct you not, they will die like flies in the hour. The way to speak and write what shall not go out of fashion is to speak and write sincerely. The argument which has not power to reach my own practice, I may well doubt will fail to reach yours. But take Sidney's maxim: 'Look in thy heart, and write.' He that writes to himself writes to an eternal public."

-- Ralph Waldo Emerson,
"Spiritual Laws."

"No one can approach through the winter darkness a house from whose windows light shines out on the snow without feeling quieted and heartened. Psychic subtleties may be active in such a response, but there is no need to invoke them; for the obvious facts provide all the explanation we require. A house means warmth and shelter, light means human society. Snow and the dark have simplified the detail of the picture and deadened sound -- they suggest tranquillity, which may mean much at the end of the day, and food or drink for restoration, and the talk of friends or family. The human mind is addicted to symbolism, and here is an image of ease, comfort and reassurance that speaks directly to us in the early childhood and from then on."

-- Bernard De Voto,
"Seed Corn and Mistletoe."