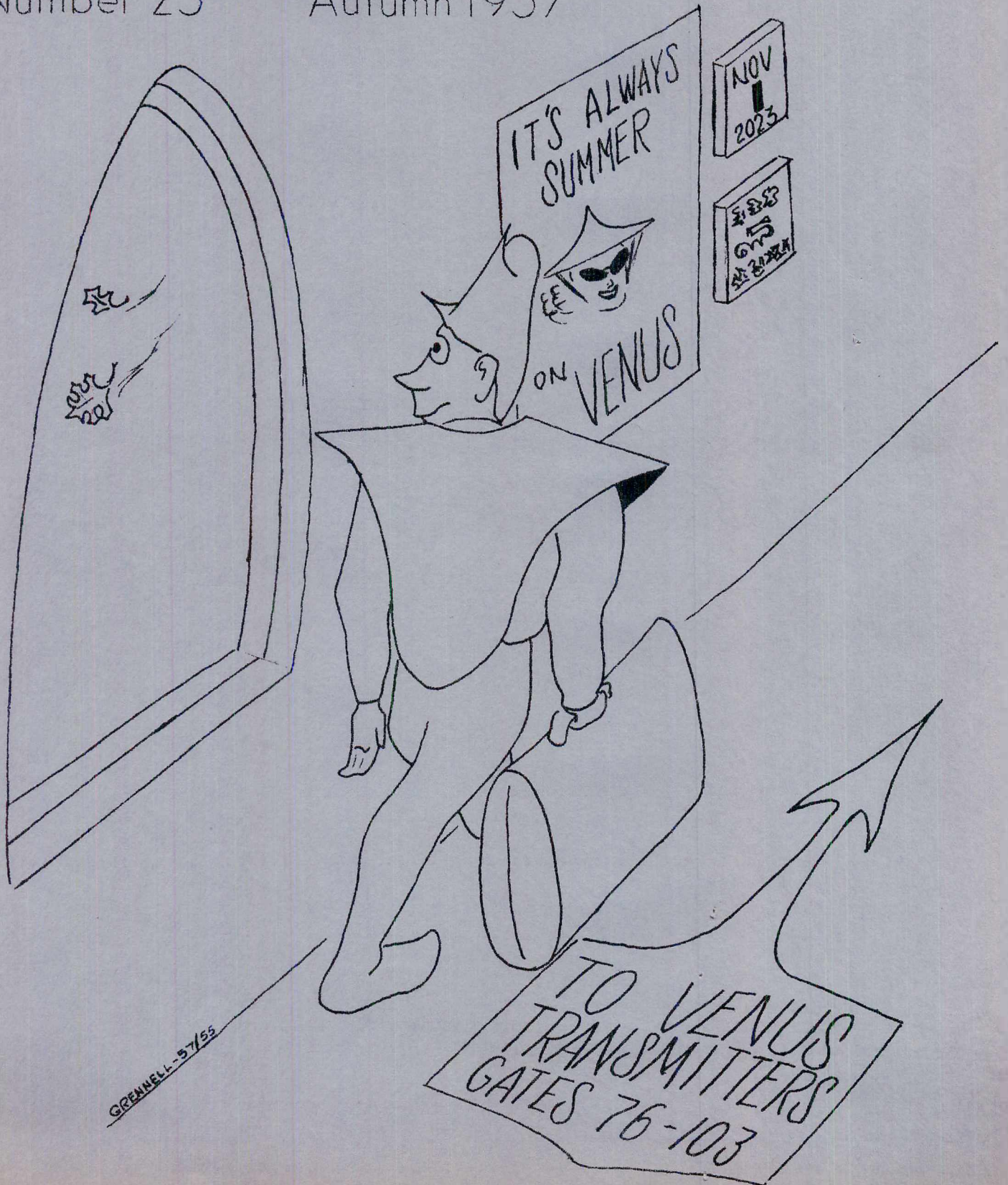


SKYMOCK

Number 25

Autumn 1957





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ARTICLES

| | | |
|------------------|----|-----------------------------------|
| ARTHUR JEAN COX | 8 | Harry Bates: A Matter of Identity |
| DEAN A. GRENNELL | 16 | Confessions of a Bentlam-Eater |
| FRED CHAPPELL | 20 | Null-A is for Adam |

SKYHOOK BOOKSHELF

| | | |
|-----------------------|----|-----------------------------|
| MARION ZIMMER BRADLEY | 31 | Spaceship's Boss Makes Good |
| FRED CHAPPELL | 34 | Ego in the Sky |
| DON H. NABOURS | 36 | Three Castaways |

POETRY

| | | |
|------------|----|------------------|
| JEAN YOUNG | 38 | The Flutter Bird |
|------------|----|------------------|

DEPARTMENTS

| | | |
|-------------|----|------------------------------|
| THE EDITOR | 3 | Twippledop |
| JIM HARMON | 25 | Science Fiction Reading Room |
| THE EDITOR | 41 | Fanzine Chronicle |
| THE READERS | 43 | The Captured Cross-Section |

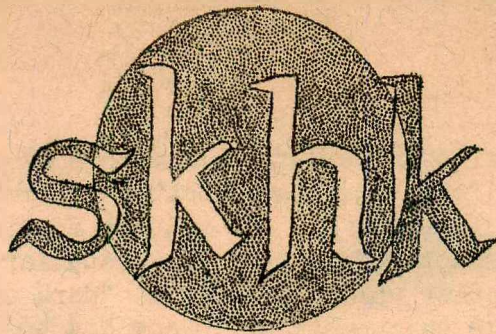
Front cover by Dean A. Grennell; artwork credits - page 19

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SKYHOOK, a quarterly review of science fiction, is edited and published by Redd Boggs, 2209 Highland place N. E., Minneapolis 21, Minnesota, in the months of January, April, July, and October. This is number 25, dated autumn 1957. Tenth year of publication. Skyhook is combined with Chronoscope (1948) and Bob Silverberg's Spaceship (1949-55). Subscriptions: six issues \$1. Single copies 20¢. Opinions expressed by contributors are not necessarily those of the editor; however, all unsigned material is editorially written and reflects the viewpoint and opinions of the editor 1957. A Gafia Press publication.

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TWIPPLEDOP

"ALL THE WONDER THAT WOULD BE"

Hear about the mad scientist who (sit down, you haven't heard this one) invented a time machine? It was so unreliable and dangerous that the only volunteer he could find willing to risk his life in the contraption was a little moron (sit down, I told you!) we'll call Kleinkopf.

The time machine could transport a person only 42 years into the future even when it was working perfectly, and hold him there only 17 hours, 19 minutes.

But Professor P. P. Putterfuss -- that was the mad scientist's name, Prof. P. P. Putterfuss -- carefully briefed Kleinkopf to learn as much as he could about 1999 in a few hours. Even a little moron, he thought, could learn a little lesson and make a good observer in 1999.

Kleinkopf returned from the brink of 2000 making loud noises of satisfaction that sounded like a Reader's Digest condensation of a spindizzy going sour. The mad scientist faunched visibly.

"Duh you asked," Kleinkopf finally wheezed between satisfied chortles and the strangling sounds he made because of Putterfuss' eager grasp on his collar, "me to find duh difference between duh our period and duh period of 19hunner'99, professor."

The scientist faunched visibly. He had used those very words in giving the

man his final instructions. "Well? Well? What did you find out? Yes? YesYes?"

"Duh. I can tell you, professor, that there ain't no differ'nce at all between 'em -- our period and duh period of 1999. Nope. None atall."

"What! In 42 years? No change?"

"Duh. No," said Kleinkopf, "and I done some innerpendent research" -- he preened himself invisibly -- "you didn't ask me to do, professor. And I can tell you for sure that there ain't no change in the semicolon, either."

AS OTHERS SEE US

John Donne, "from a fairly early age, was interested in getting to another planet much as the kids are nowadays," writes British critic William Empson in the summer 1957 Kenyon Review.

His essay, "Donne the Space Man," concerns itself mainly with a reading of Donne's love poetry wherein, Empson says, the idea is advanced that the lovers exist on a separate "secret planet." This conceit is so difficult to discover in the lines he quotes that one suspects that Mr Empson is just being playful.

However, the essay deals interestingly with the Ptolemaic/Copernican controversy in Donne's time (Donne was quite capable of paying lip service to both views in a single poem), and shows that the "plurality of worlds" theory was cur-

rent at the end of the sixteenth century. Bruno was burned alive for this "new heresy" by the Inquisition in 1600.

In this connection Empson points out that a belief in life on other worlds almost inevitably "denies the uniqueness of Jesus," unless extra-terrestrials are excluded from salvation. He mentions C. S. Lewis' Out of the Silent Planet as the only treatment he knows of this theme by a "space-writer." He could not know, of course, of such stories as Blish's "Case of Conscience" or Bradbury's "The Man."

Perhaps Empson's most interesting passage, to us as science fictionists, is an introductory one: "No reasonable man ... would want space travel as such; because he wants to know, in any proposal for travel, whether he would go farther and fare worse. A son of my own at about the age of twelve, keen on space travel like the rest of them, saw the goat having kids and was enough impressed to say 'It's better than space travel.'"

"It is indeed absolutely or metaphysically better, because it is coming out of the nowhere into here; and I was so pleased to see the human mind beginning its work that I felt as much impressed as he had done at seeing the birth of the kids."

Science fiction figures in two articles published in New World Writing #11 (Mentor, 1957). Horace Gregory's "H. G. Wells: A Wreath for the Liberal Tradition" says little new about Wells but restates the situation for us of 1957, 11 years after Wells' death. Gregory feels that only The Time Machine, The First Men in the Moon and Tono-Bungay, among Wells' books, will survive.

Science fiction as a genre, says Mr Gregory, is dominated today by a fear of the future. Sf writers of the 1950s face "a more explosive, more lethal, darker future than Wells had in mind," and writers today aren't so confident as Wells that "their warnings can clear, if not purify, the air."

Gregory mentions the science fiction of Arthur C. Clarke, "the youngest, and certainly the best" of sf writers. (Such noises, though they sound like wise words,

make one suspect that this critic is no better informed than most about current science fiction.) He finds even Clarke's "interstellar space romances" encircled by a "dark aura." "Human loyalties to place and to other human creatures vanish" in Clarke's tales. His "mad, power-driven scientists are successful; while Wells's devotees of science, equally mad, pay the price for their logical deductions with their lives."

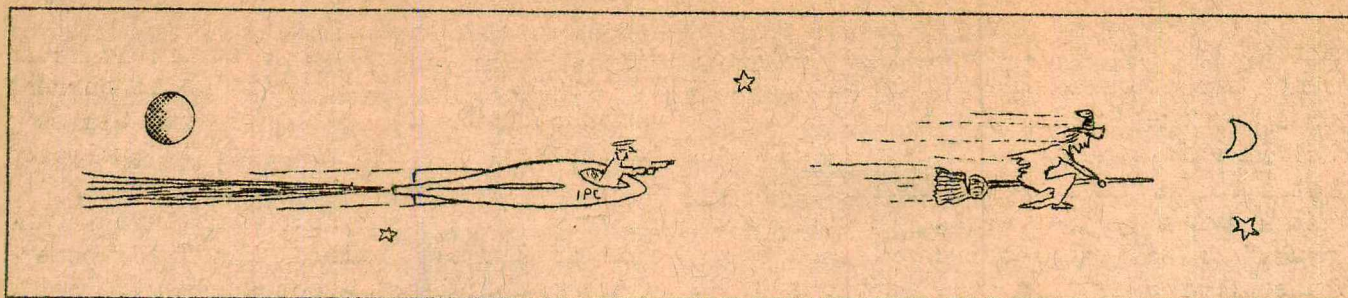
He says that Wells' science fiction was "a protest against darkness -- intellectual darkness" and "to the young H. G. Wells scientific knowledge and inventiveness were the means of leaving Victorian darkness -- or any other darkness -- in the shadows behind him." This conviction gives Wells' sf a "resounding note," Gregory concludes.

Kenneth Rexroth's engaging "Disengagement: The Art of the Beat Generation" in the same New World Writing is a tour of contemporary fine and coarse art, with frequent layovers to deliver blows at his pet peeves and hates. Among those bludgeoned are "that ignoramus, the intellectual jitterbug, the jazz aficionado" (!) and Judith Merrill.

The passage about Judy is worth quoting. Rexroth says "escapist literature" is popular partly because of its "refusal to accept the mythology of press and pulpit as a medium for artistic creation, or even enjoyable reading matter." He adds, "Westerns, detective stories and science fiction are all situated beyond the pale of normal living. The slick magazines are only too aware of this, and in these three fields especially exert steady pressure on their authors to accentuate the up-beat."

"The most shocking example of this forced perversion," Rexroth says, "is the homey science fiction story, usually written by a woman, in which a one-to-one correlation has been made for the commodity-ridden tale of domestic whimsey, the standby of magazines given away in the chain groceries."

"In writers like Judith Merrill [sic] the space pilot and his bride bat the badinage back and forth while the ro-



bot maid makes breakfast in the jet-propelled lucite orange squeezer and the electronic bacon rotobroiler, dropping pearls of dry assembly plant wisdom (like plantation wisdom but drier) the whilst."

This is a pretty exact description of a whole area of Galaxy fiction and of much F&SF fiction, though -- to be fair -- the "homey science fiction story" is a more characteristic product of Margaret St Clair and others than of Judy.

Judy (with "Merril" spelled correctly this time) also took it in the neck from another source for her anthologizing. Reviewing her The Year's Greatest Science Fiction and Fantasy (second annual volume), Time magazine of August 5, 1957 compared "1957's S.-F." unfavorably with Jules Verne because current sf deals with "inhuman humans" who "as characters...are deader than the planets they visit and as explorers...are about as intrepid as a pack of apartment-house janitors."

Time's reviewer damned Daley's "The Man Who Liked Lions," Knight's "Stranger Station," and other stories in the anthology, and praised Kornbluth's "The Cosmic Expense Account" because the author "knows perfectly well that he is talking nonsense."

The review quoted from Judy's notes on "The Far Look": "To be good science fiction, a story must contain a rare blend of intellection and emotion; puzzle and plot must be integrally related in such a way that the human problem arises out of the idea-extrapolation, and the resolution of the one is impossible without the solution to the other."

The reviewer declares, "No horror in this anthology is so appalling as the fact that at this very moment there is a mind-matrix around that is capable of

writing such sentences in the belief that they mean something."

To my mind-matrix the passage seems to mean something, though it is rather woolly stuff. It seems to mean little as an analysis of Thomas' "The Far Look" -- hardly a happy blend of "intellection and emotion" -- but as an ideal stands out as sharply as the Time reviewer's ennui.

I can't blame the reviewer for his remarks, however. I dislike Miss Merrill's kindergarten - teacher attitude: "Isn't everything just too chummy for words," she seems to say, "and isn't everybody so glad he came?" Surely Judy more than almost anyone realizes that science fiction is really in a bad way, that everything is corrupt to the toenails, and that nobody is very happy with "1957's S.-F."

But she has a contract to fulfill, and has to sell her "Best" collection to the public somehow. She thinks she can foist it onto them most easily by insisting that it's wonderful stuff. No doubt she knows that sf specialists realize the truth. But the Time review may prove that even non-specialists find her attitude as infuriating as I do, and aren't fooled.

AMID THE ALIEN LOVELORN

"And Jacob served seven years for Rachel; and they seemed unto him but a few days, for the love he had to her." (Genesis 29:20). Billy Graham could probably make a solemn sermon out of that text, and probably has. But has anyone ever written a fanzine article on the subject?

Here is this strange fellow Jacob, who had to serve seven long years before he won Rachel's hand, and these seven long years "seemed unto him but a few

days." To most of us seven years waiting for the girl we wanted to marry would be seven centuries. It is when we dread an impending event that waiting seems short.

Jacob's reaction may prove that love is after all (as John Barrymore said) the delightful interval between meeting a girl and discovering she looks like a haddock.

More likely Jacob's eccentric behavior is evidence that he was a Martian in disguise, like Dr Bjornsen whose palms didn't sweat. Or perhaps it indicates that human nature has, after all, changed in the centuries since the time of Genesis 29.

OF BOORS AND BOOKS

Dealers in secondhand books and magazines have always struck me as an especially unpleasant breed. A few of them look like card-carrying members of the Mafia or Murder Inc. and probably peddle dope to schoolchildren during their lunch hour.

I don't mind this so much; I don't begrudge a man a living. But I find it hard to forgive the loutish behavior of many secondhand book dealers. Nearly all of them are the most boorish salespeople outside of the TV pitchman. I have been insulted, cursed, and even threatened by such fine upstanding businessmen, and I suspect my experiences have been shared by most fans who visit such stores.

I suppose one can't blame such dealers too much for becoming the surly, uncivil, and lubberly breed they are. The product they sell is itself vulgar, for the most part, untidy and grubby; and their customers are often bums, delinquents, sf fans, and other unsavory types. Such stores are usually located in slummy districts. But one wonders how such dealers manage to make a living at all when they are so hard on their customers. They wouldn't last an hour in any other business using such tactics.

Luckily, in Minneapolis, the best store (though it is owned by the same people that own the others) for sf magazines is clerked by a pleasant gentleman named Herman, and the clerk at the other

store in the same block has usually been at least unexceptionable.

Lately, however, a new clerk has been given charge of the store down the block, and as I discovered while preparing this issue of Skyhook, this fellow is bent upon upholding the great traditions of the secondhand book business.

I went into the book and magazine exchange at 322 Hennepin to find a copy of Silverberg's The 13th Immortal to send to Marion Z. Bradley for review (see page 31), the book having gone off the newsstands before I decided it should be reviewed in this issue. I found a slightly beat-up copy of the book, but when I went to pay for it, I was grotched to discover that they wanted cover price for this secondhand copy.

I knew that the book was still available from Ace Books at cover price, plus 5¢ handling charge, and I also knew I might be able to wheedle a review copy out of Agberg (if he wasn't in Europe at the moment) or Wollheim. But I wanted the book to be in Marion's hands as soon as possible, so I grudgingly shelled out 35¢. I could not refrain from declaring, however, that I didn't consider even an Agberg book worth cover price in secondhand condition.

The clerk remarked surlily, "Who's making you buy it? Take it or leave it." He pointed out that there was a sign on the sf rack that said all sf paperbacks were cover price. I admitted that there was a "crude and ambiguously worded sign" back there (this may have hurt his pride, for perhaps he lettered the sign with his own little hands) but the sign didn't prove that the prices were fair prices.

At this point he decided to go all the way in improving relations with his customers and snarled, "Get out of here and stop arguing." So of course I decided to stay; I dislike being shoved.

He added, "Get out before I throw you out," and amended that to, "Get out or I'll get somebody to throw you out!"

Not aware that in his fumbling way he had at last flattered me, he continued to snarl at me, while I marveled that he had the effrontery -- or the courage -- to treat an old customer so insultingly.

"Never argue with a proprietor," he ended up with a smile or a scowl.

"I've heard it said that a customer is always right," I ventured.

"Not here, buddy, not here," he said, uttering this verity triumphantly, with the air of a Flem Snopes discovering male hormone tablets.

"Caveat emptor, huh?" I said. From his expression I could see that he was mistranslating that to mean what "filius nullius" actually means; I suddenly felt cheerful again and walked out into the sunshine with Agberg's Immortal book under my arm.

But, dear FooFoo, the things one must endure in order to do a conscientious job as an editor! As a fan editor, at any rate. Campbell must have to endure worse things, but I'll bet he doesn't have to patronize untidy secondhand stores and argue with churlish misanthropes in order to obtain books for P. Schuyler Miller to review. And I'll bet he doesn't have to pay cover prices for beat-up secondhand copies.

I'll bet he doesn't, else he'd have written an editorial about it, just as I have done.

THIS CORNER OF THE UNIVERSE

Speaking of Ace books by Silverberg, Ace will publish their third Agberg novel in February. Tentative title: Invaders from Earth. Lowndes will print the magazine version in the February 1958 Science Fiction Quarterly under the title "We, the Marauders"....

Noel Loomis' non-fiction work, The Texas Santa Fe Expedition, will be published by the University of Oklahoma press in February. The Loomises, formerly of Minneapolis, now live in southern California, and -- according to a note from Mrs Loomis -- "think it is the only place to live"....

Bob Tucker's The Lincoln Hunters will be published by Rinehart late next spring. He says he's especially proud of this novel. His mystery yarn, The Hired Target, is out from Ace....

SAM "can shout loudly enough to be understood at least $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles away," and will someday "make the voice carry at least four miles." Lest you misunderstand: SAM is a mechanical contrivance at the Stanford Research institute at Menlo Park, Calif. "SAM" is short for Stanford Airstream Modulator....

Mistaking an instalment of a science fiction story in a newspaper for news, hundreds of residents of Tuapse, Russia, fled to the countryside to escape "a fiery mass rushing to destroy the earth." This clipping is dated 16 September 1957. Author of this terrifying tale was one I. Kris. Not Kris peKym, I hope....

Arkham House will publish Always Comes Evening, a collection of poetry by Robert E. Howard, in December. In 1958 a new collection of poetry by Clark Ashton Smith, Spells and Philtres, will appear, followed by The Mask of Cthulhu, a book of horror stories by August Derleth....

Prophet Without Honor: In the "Keeping Posted" column of Saturday Evening Post for 3 May 1947 Robert Heinlein predicted that unmanned rockets would reach the moon in five years, and manned rockets in ten years, and that in 15 years a permanent lunar base would be built....

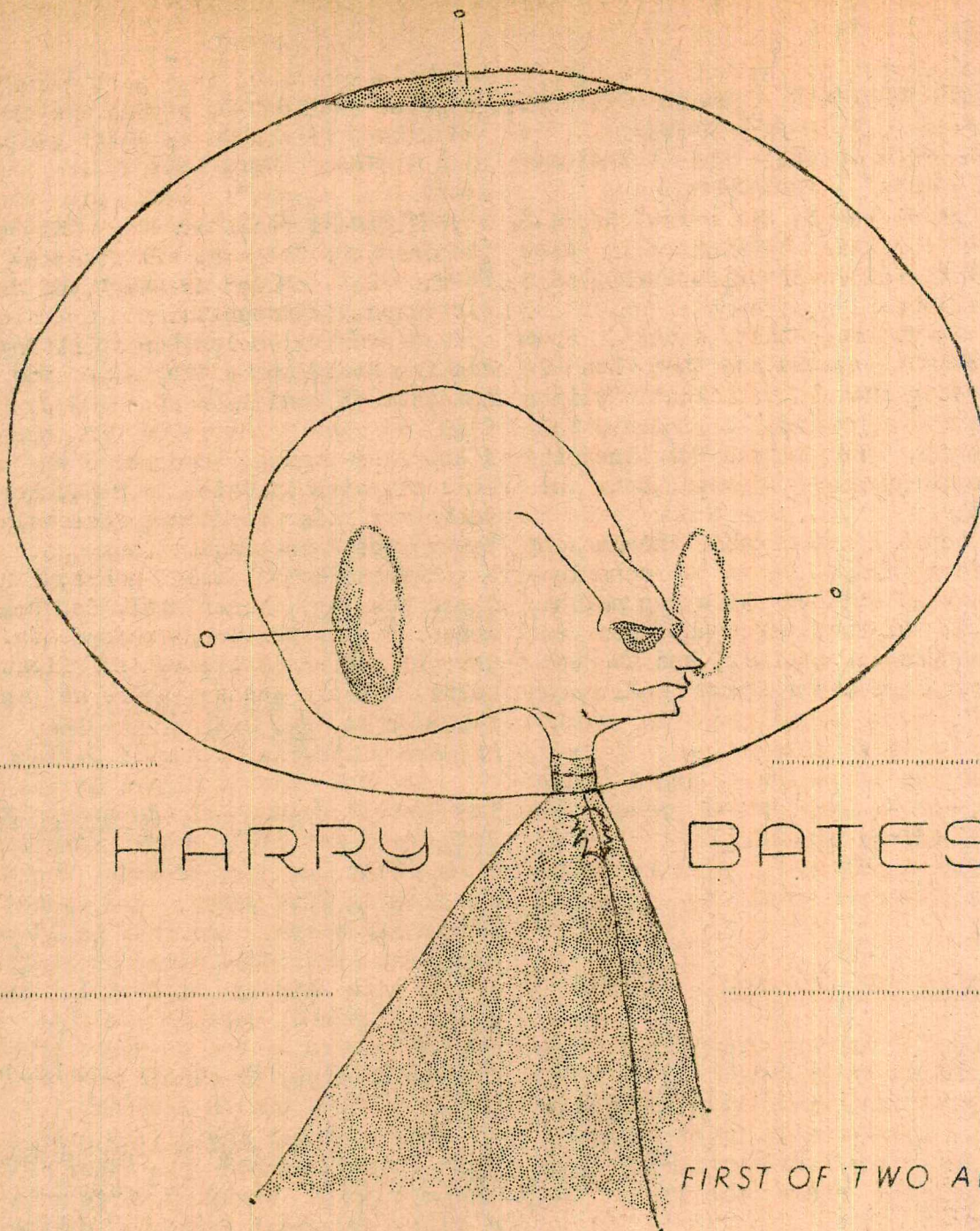
I can hardly wait till the next spell of unusual weather so that I can hear it blamed -- not on radio broadcasting, television, or atomic bomb tests, as in the past -- but on Sputnik....

Recommended: The Silver Anthology of Light Verse, edited by Oscar Williams (Mentor, 50¢). Contains verse written by Williams and other poets he admires....

Recommended: New Poems by American Poets #2, edited by Rolfe Humphries (Ballantine, 35¢). Unfortunately it does not contain any poetry by Humphries himself, a poet I admire....

"God's morals are perfect," according to a radio preacher. But as John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester, wrote, "'Tis the Arabian bird alone / Lives chaste, because there is but one"....

"Horatius singlehandedly defended the bridge at Thermopylae..." -- Myron F. Boyd, "Light and Life Hour," 21 July....



HARRY

BATES :

FIRST OF TWO ARTICLES

AFTER A LONG ABSENCE Harry Bates returned to the science fiction field in early 1953 with a novelet, published in Science-Fiction Plus, entitled "Death of a Sensitive." It proved to be a remarkable piece of writing -- one of those few science fiction stories which genuinely deserve to be called tours de force. Some months later another and longer story by Bates, "The Triggered Dimension," appeared in the same magazine. This second story was severely disappointing. Its subject matter was as startling and unusual as that of the first, but it seemed to be completely pointless and incoherent.

A correspondent of mine had what is perhaps the typical reaction to it:

The story...is probably as silly as anything to see print in a science fiction magazine -- it seems to have been written primarily to rid

Bates of what may have been a conceptual obsession based on a particularly vivid nightmare. Certainly there is no point to the tale beyond the presentation of the rather stupid -- but to Bates intensely significant -- phenomena which take place -- nothing is explained or resolved.

A rough sketch of the events of the story might show what aroused this puzzled irritation. The narrator and two friends, Tom and Mary Sellars, are standing in the experimental grounds of Wilson Laboratories, where he and Tom are employed as electricians. There is some sort of brief domestic quarrel between the man and his wife. She walks away, looks back, waves an arm; there is an explosion or splitting sound -- and her body disappears. Her head is seen floating in the air, some nine or ten feet off the ground. It floats away into the distance, and is lost.

The two men are the only witnesses of this "new thing," and no one believes their account of what happened until the same event occurs again, doubled: Two workmen lose their bodies, and their heads behave in a similar fashion. Scientists arrive to study this remarkable phenomenon. They locate the exact spot where "the dimension triggers." An experiment is arranged with Tom's beloved horse, Pluto, as the guinea pig. Unknown to everyone, Tom also enters the danger area, determined to sacrifice himself because he holds himself responsible for his wife's death. The splitting sound comes again, and the two heads, a horse's and a man's, float away. The narrator runs after them, follows the heads through scenes where he and Tom

A MATTER OF IDENTITY

BY ARTHUR JEAN COX

spent their boyhood together until they reach a familiar lake. There the heads sink below the surface, and the story ends.

The question is, why did the author of "Alas, All Thinking!" and "Farewell to the Master" write something like this? Bill Blackbeard, in a letter to me dated 11-10-53 (from which the above quotation was taken), offers a shrewd suggestion:

...note the implication in the tale, by the way, that the heads thus sundered from their bodies are sublimely free, happy. This might imply that Bates now views the victory of rationality subconsciously with greater favor than before -- in contrast with his attitude in "Alas, All Thinking!", with its hideous depiction of swollen monstrous heads covered with the dust of inaction attached to tiny shrunken bodies.

This provides us with our first clue: The heads are certainly the most important single element in the story. If they have some special meaning to the author, and if we can determine that meaning, we will grasp what is central to the story and perhaps have the solution to our mystery.

My idea is that we should trace out this clue in the following fashion: Let us go through all of Bates' fiction and note the circumstances and associations which

occur whenever the word "head," or any term similar to it, is used. By that means we may be able to determine the exact meaning the word had for Bates.

To anticipate some objections, this method may seem too meager to result in anything substantial, but it has been used by several critics with unmistakable success. Then, too, it will not be as laborious as it sounds. Although Harry Bates is one of the better known science fiction writers, he is the sole author of only ten stories published over a period of 20 years. He has written in collaboration with D. W. Hall a dozen other stories, including the famous Hawk Carse stories, but these we will not consider as we have no way of knowing, particularly at this point, which of the ideas in these stories are his and which are Hall's.

2

We encounter a reference to heads in Bates' first science fiction story, "Slave Ship from Space," published under the pseudonym of A. R. Holmes in Astounding Stories, which he was then editing. He describes how two men, camping in the wilds, are captured by an invisible slaver from another planet. After various efforts and complications, the two manage to render their captor both unconscious and visible; pages 86-7:

The clothes were odd; the figure was much like that of a normal man, though the shoulders were more sloped and the head much larger; but it was the face, its expression, that held him.

Unhealthy, leprous white was the skin and there was not one hair, eyelash or eyebrow on the whole head. The closed eyes lay in deep caverns surrounded by a thousand fine wrinkles, which criss-crossed all over his face in every direction. The face and head were freakish -- monstrous; and yet, somehow, over it rested an expression of infinite wisdom and calm. He lay bound and still and unconscious, at the mercy of men far below him intellectually, this man from another planet....

"We'll have to keep him unconscious with the anaesthetic," he said at length, "he's too dangerous to monkey with."

In his second story, "A Matter of Size," Bates introduces a character named "Jones," who also comes from another planet and is physically similar to the first; page 39: "(His) head was massive, the cranium oval, and not one hair adorned its smooth and shining surface." Jones is friendly, but he emphasizes to our hero that he could, if he wished, destroy or enslave the entire Earth without effort, so great is his knowledge.

Bates' third story was "Alas, All Thinking!" Its thesis is pretty much what the title implies. The story is his most direct expression of that suspicious distrust of intellect which has already appeared in his first two stories. Here the author makes it clear that he not only regards intellect as dangerous when possessed by others, but also as not being conducive to happiness when possessed by oneself.

We encounter the subject of heads directly. In describing the protagonist, Charles Frick, the narrator says of him, page 11: "...tense, serious lines appeared in his rugged face; his great head lowered with the struggle to arrange thoughts that were difficult, and perhaps painful, to him." We are explicitly told two pages later that Frick's head is larger than the average.

Frick, who "once" had an IQ of 248, declares to his friends, page 9, that he is "dumb...normally, contentedly dumb...Because Humpty Dumpty had a great fall. Be-

cause thought is withering and sensation sweet. Because I've recovered my sense of humor. Because 'why' is a dangerous word and makes people unhappy. Because I have had a glimpse of a most horrible cerebral future...." He goes on to say that intelligence, like the great size of the dinosaurs, was a dead end for Mother Nature and that he thinks she will next feature instinct.

The story tells what brought him to this bitter philosophy: While working in his laboratory, he was contacted by a girl with a large head and a time machine, who introduced herself as an "atavism" from the future. She invited him with her to her own time, the far future. He went, and found that the human race then consisted of a few grotesque creatures -- "human baroques" -- with heads larger than their bodies. Sitting motionless, covered with dust, "looking like monstrous three-legged spiders," they spend their lives meditating on the ultimate paradoxes. Horrified and revolted, he destroyed these last few, fragile representatives of mankind by breaking their necks.

By this time we know what to look for. Picking up Bates' next story, "The Experiment of Dr Sarconi," we turn directly to the scene in which the scientist Sarconi makes his initial appearance, page 94: "He was about forty five, tall and thin, with a large head.... The dark, deep-set eyes glittered with facile intelligence." (*Italics mine.*)

The fifth story, "Farewell to the Master," causes us some embarrassment at first. A wonderful stranger, "godlike in appearance and form," closely attended by a giant robot, arrives from space; but, although there is pointed reference to the stranger's face ("which radiated kindness, wisdom, the purest nobility," page 62), there is no indication that his head is larger than the average Earthman's -- which is surprising, since he is obviously the possessor of a super-science. However, Bates does mention the robot's "great head" (page 62) -- the same words he used to describe Frick; and we must remember that it is the robot, not the man, who is the "Master" mentioned in the title. He is the superior of the two because he has the greater intelligence. (And we might remark that the machine is the perfect expression of the rational ideal.)

We draw a blank with the next story, "A Matter of Speed." There are no great heads in it, but they reappear in the following story, "The Mystery of the Blue God." Here is a description of a busload of ordinary citizens of the future, page 55: "Within, seven large-headed, totally bald and quite skinny passengers of both sexes sat quietly..." Our hero, Mickey, has a present-day-sized head, but he is "an imbecile," who "hardly got through relativity."

Bates is the sole author of "The Return of Hawk Carse" (which, unfortunately, lacks the very real charm of the older stories in the series, which he co-authored with Desmond W. Hall). All the standard characters of the series have regular-sized heads, but Bates introduces a new character in this story. Ku Sui has created "The Unborn Q," a creature which is a composite of all the other characters -- Hawk Carse, Elliot Leithgow, the Sensitive Meeker, Ku Sui himself, and others. "His head was well-shaped and unusually large..." (page 206). "The Unborn Q" has hair: all the persons of whom he is composed have hair. Need I mention that he also has a vast intellect?

This story is followed (eleven years later) by "Death of a Sensitive." The author spends two or three paragraphs on page 7 describing the Sensitive, John Inglis: "Anyone seeing him for the first time would likely notice only his head. It was

a striking head -- large and broad, with hair a mass of coarse black ringlets." Once again, we have reason to be surprised. Inglis has a large head, but is not depicted as a genius. I think I see the reason for it. He continues, same paragraph: "...He did not have the thin-skinned esthetic face usually associated with sensitiveness... But for his head and his eyes and the relaxed way he stood there, he might have been a truck driver." What Bates is telling us is that Inglis does not have the appearance of intellectuality. His large head denotes his incredible super-sensory powers, not his intellect. In his previous stories, Bates has associated such powers with great intelligence; in this story he separates them.

And, lastly, here is a paragraph from "The Triggered Dimension" itself -- a description of the brilliant mathematical physicist, Herzog, page 46:

....This was the famous head and face, different, pictured thousands of times in the newspapers of the world. As in the pictures, both head and face were covered by an even mat of cinnamon-colored bristles half an inch long. The eyebrows were other bristles to match. The all-over fur made his head seem even larger than it was, and it completely hid the expression of his face.

Note the last sentence, in particular: "...seem even larger than it was." This is a reflection of the most reiterated thesis in the story, "Science knows a great deal...but not as much as it would seem to know." The other phrase, "...and it completely hid the expression of his face," means, "Science is inscrutable."

(Ever notice how large Albert Einstein's head appeared in his photographs because of his great mass of hair? Probably this was Bates' inspiration for the description of Inglis. The scientist portrayed by Sam Jaffe in the movie "The Day the Earth Stood Still," based on "Farewell to the Master," most likely represented Einstein.)

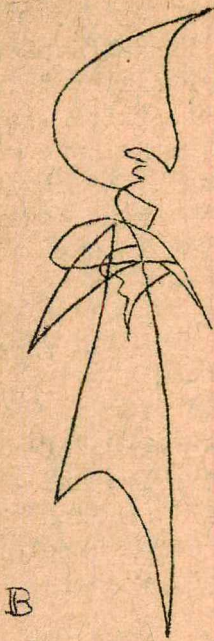
The reader has probably already recognized the fact that these quotes invalidate rather than substantiate Blackbeard's suggestion that the detached heads in "The Triggered Dimension" denote rationality. It is not heads that Bates associates with rationality (great intellect, knowledge) but large heads. And there is absolutely no indication in the story that these heads are larger than the average, or that the people who possessed them were more intelligent than the average. In one case, just the contrary: Tom Sellars is presented as an impetuous, emotional fellow who dislikes study and abstract thought. And, of course, there is the horse. Surely a horse's head wouldn't represent rationality or intelligence.

No, the heads must mean something else. The only question is -- what?

3

There is a certain persistent, inescapable word in these stories we have just examined which has a very literal connection with "head," and that is -- "face."

The hero of "A Matter of Size" is approached by an extra-terrestrial human who offers him fabulous rewards to stay a few months on a mysterious planet -- actually, an asteroid. The people on the asteroid are only a few inches tall. Physically small, they are intellectual giants, but have inbred so long that they have lost the ability to reproduce. Our hero is imported to take care of this end of things: he is to inject fresh blood into the lifestream of the race. Of course, the dispro-



portion in height between him and the girls is a problem, but this is solved by splitting him into hundreds of small replicas of himself which are the same size as the inhabitants of the asteroid -- a doubly neat solution since it is also a step toward cutting down the disproportion in numbers between him and the girls. But our hero -- or the fraction of our hero upon which the author now focusses our sympathy -- is not informed of what has been done to him and is startled when he encounters one of his doubles, although he does have a vague memory of "interminable rows of doll faces. Each face his own face and each one, somehow, himself." (Page 46)

In "Alas, All Thinking!" the same idea appears in a different form. Frick asks the girl from the future to prove to him that the mechanism she calls a time machine really works by taking him back a week in time. They are in his laboratory. She consents; he gets into the machine, and they move invisibly back into the past. A man is lying on the floor, working on a machine, page 14: "The man on the floor rolled over, sat up, turned his face -- my face -- towards us and, deep in thought, gently fingered a sore place on his head...."

"The Experiment of Dr Sarconi" is about a scientist who invents a machine which can duplicate people. He reproduces our hero, Shallcross, the hero's girl friend, Diana, and himself; in fact, there are finally five of each, resulting in some peculiar legal and amorous confusions -- and, again, we have the scene in which the hero encounters his own face.

There is a similar scene in "Farewell to the Master." The giant robot Gnut experiments with a method of reproducing bodies from voice recordings. He duplicates twice the body of one speaker and there is a strange scene in which one of these bodies, becoming conscious, discovers the other.

Once again, "A Matter of Speed" proves an exception to Bates' customary themes. Just as there were no great heads, there are also no duplicate faces. They reappear, however, in the next story, "The Mystery of the Blue God." Our hero's "godfather," Talbert, produces an individual identical in appearance with our hero, except that he is blue, by experimenting with gene development.

In "The Return of Hawk Carse" Bates repeats the idea of reproducing bodies from voice recordings. I will say more about this story in a moment, but first we might conclude the tracing of this theme by noting the brief presence of Robert Inglis, John's identical twin brother, in "Death of a Sensitive." The idea does not appear at all in "The Triggered Dimension."

Now, stories about identical twins, doubles, doppelgangers, are not uncommon -- but we must notice that there is a basic difference between the majority of these stories and those by Bates. In the former, the duplicate persons represent antagonistic motives or embody contradictory attitudes. One of the identical twins is Good, the other is Evil; one of the doppelgangers is Alpha, the other Omega. The plots of these stories invariably revolve around confusions occasioned by the identical external appearance of these twins, or doubles. The Bates stories do not follow this pattern, with the dubious exception of "The Mystery of the Blue God," which might be seen as a variation on the good-son, bad-son theme; and even here the plot isn't

motivated by confusions between them. Bates' duplicates usually have the same motives -- in fact, they're the same person, not two different persons who look alike. Bates delights in juxtaposing love and reason, but our hero and the hero's double do not separately embody these different qualities.

It is my suspicion that Bates is so interested in this story situation -- a person meeting himself -- because he is concerned with the question of what constitutes identity, a concern which becomes explicit in "The Return of Hawk Carse." The reader may recall that in the previous story, "The Passing of Ku Sui" (written in collaboration with D. W. Hall), Hawk Carse forced the insidious Dr Ku Sui to surgically transplant the five isolated brains (who played the title role in "The Affair of the Brains") back into bodies, but the only bodies available were those of a Chinese coolie and four drug-and-disease-scarred white men. In this story, Carse decides that it will be best for society in general and the men's wives in particular if he kills them and reproduces their old selves from recordings of their previous voices. He does so, permitting the coolie and the others to live long enough to meet themselves in their new-old bodies. There is quite a bit of space devoted to their reactions:

"Oh, the 'I!'," mused the yellow man. "Tough old problem. What is it? I remember as a boy coming up sharp one day with the thought: I am the center of the whole world. Everywhere I go I am the center of all I see, all I experience. I am different from everybody else because I am I. I am most immensely important.

"Later, I reasoned that my feelings of 'I' was not a unique thing. Other people had it too. But where did all these 'I's come from? And if I had not been born, where would I be at that moment? Were 'I's interchangeable? Indestructible? Were they all drops of one thing? Could my own 'I' exist in some other body?" (Page 176)

Many writers are interested in "identity": A. E. van Vogt and Jack Vance might serve as two examples from science fiction. But, with them, this interest is usually limited to changes in a particular person's ideals, loyalties, purposes, and so forth, whereas Bates' interest is more general. He is interested in the question of what constitutes identity itself -- and his favorite story idea of bringing a person face to face with himself confronts in the simplest, most direct way possible the question of what constitutes that person's identity. His repeated use of the idea is a repeated attempt to come to grips with the problem, to answer the question.

We should notice that Bates invests nearly all the qualities of his characters in their heads and faces. Necessarily, he has to mention physiques, clothes, and manners, but he emphasizes faces. It is as if faces had the most vital or intimate connection with a person's identity. Here is a striking sentence from "Farewell to the Master," page 83. Gnut is trying to reproduce Klaatu; Cliff, not knowing what is happening, looks on: "There was a man in the box. The man stirred and sat up and Cliff saw the living face of Klaatu!" And here is an interesting sentence from "The Triggered Dimension," page 54: "Two new faces joined us." This mention of faces only -- as if they were detached from the bodies -- affects us oddly, coming as it does in the midst of a story concerning heads floating in the air. With this thought, we experience that intuitive thrill of anticipation which tells us that we have touched upon the solution to our mystery.

Briefly, then: Bates invests his characters' identities in their faces. Speaking pragmatically, we would say that they are identified by their faces; speaking

dramatically, we could say that their faces represent their identities -- or are their identities. His purpose, therefore, in reducing certain characters to heads alone is to present them as pure identities. He wishes to isolate their identities and show them floating free, uninvolved with the material world. To do this he has to use whole heads rather than configurations of features (faces) because he wishes to indicate them by visible objects. (Besides, he wishes to include an animal, Tom's horse, and it wouldn't be practical to distinguish a horse's face from its head.) The Christian says, "Destroy the body and there will still be an Essential left: the soul." Here, Bates destroys the bodies of his characters, but leaves what is essential to their identities: their faces, substituting disembodied heads for disembodied souls.

If we have any lingering doubts as to the plausibility of this conclusion, "Death of a Sensitive" provides a remarkable substantiation of it. The protagonist of this brilliant story kills himself as an act of cosmic compassion. He hypnotizes the narrator and another friend and commits suicide by opening a vein in his arm (all of which is convincing in the story). As his life drains away, he soliloquizes that he is about to make the Great Change and sink back into that great Ocean which is the origin and goal of all life. An equivalent event takes place at the end of "The Triggered Dimension": The heads float swiftly across the countryside at Big Pond and, pausing, sink below the surface of a lake.

What Bates has done in "this very human and moving story" has been to take his earlier, more abstract notions of the oneness of all life and of the Psychic Ocean and translate them into rustic-boyhood images: the girl, the boy and the horse, the farm, the woodland, and the lake.

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- "The Experiment of Dr Sarconi," Thrilling Wonder Stories, July 1940
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(This is the first of two articles on Harry Bates by Arthur Jean Cox; the second will appear next issue.)

DEPARTMENT OF INSCRUTABLE FATE

(from Lyrics of Joy, Tears, and Reminiscence, by Frank Lynn Lewis; Minneapolis, n/d)

O destiny! I am convinced!
 And my words are not minced,
 That a bard I'm fated to be
 And rime my lines with glee...

CONFESSIONS OF A BENTHAM- EATER



by DEAN A. GRENELL

EVEN THE STAUCHEST SCIENCE FICTION FAN must sometimes, half wistfully, yearn a little for the red-carpet treatment accorded various other sorts of fans. Certain species of aficionados have their merest whims catered to in the most extravagant fashion imaginable. Elvis Presley maniacs, for instance, can purchase wallets with their hero's picture stamped on both sides. But can you or I find wallets with, say, Anthony Boucher's portrait at the neighborhood five-and-dime? No.

Sports fans find several pages of most newspapers devoted to matters of interest to them. There are professional fan magazines beyond count devoted to purveying data of dubious authenticity about movie and television stars to their panting public, but how many magazines does your local newsstand carry which make even the most cursory attempt to keep their readers au courant with the romantic interlinkage of, say, the Hydra club? Damn few.

Have you ever paused to consider the situation of a really rabid Erle Stanley Gardner fan? Gardner, with the aid of his fiction factory, turns out books about as fast or a bit faster than most readers can turn the pages, let alone skim an eye across them. But does Sturgeon, Heinlein, or Knight turn out two or three hardcover books a day? Rarely.

Even Sherlock Holmes fans have it easier in some respects. For one thing, they can buy all the Sherlock there is -- all the genuine, at least -- under a single cover, complete with introductory comments by Christopher Morley. All of the science fiction extant, under a single cover, would be over-bulky to handle, I ween.

Morley, in the preface to The Complete Sherlock Holmes, writes:

One of the blissful ways of passing an evening, when you encounter another dyed-in-the-blood addict, is to embark on the happy discussion of minor

details of Holmesiana. "Whose gold watch was it that had been so mis-handled?" one may ask; and the other counters with "What was the book that Joseph Stangerson carried in his pocket?" Endless delicious minutiae to consider!

Of course we have something which, as far as is known, none of the other fan-clumps possess. Only science fiction fandom has the well-developed network of amateur journals for "considering the endless delicious minutiae" pertaining to their common interest. Sometimes, though, it seems that we neglect the simple and harmless pleasure afforded by this particular pursuit. The fan press sometimes seems to lean a shade heavily to discussions of conventions, feuds, fannish projects, polls, and power politics, with relatively little discussion of science fiction itself.

This can hardly come as a startling observation or even an original one. There is a relentless periodicity to the appearance in the fan press of solemn admonitory articles to "Put the SF Back in SF Fandom!" -- with a virtue-for-its-own-sake implicit in the theme. I say there is excellent reason to discuss science fiction in magazines such as this: not because it is the Fitting and Proper Thing to Do, but because it is rather good fun. Let us consider a few scraps of minutiae.

Science fiction of the 1940s still seems a vintage not quite sufficiently ripened for nostalgizing about, although the oldest of it may be several years senior to some of the readers of this article. Certainly if we were to discuss the postwar product as "old-time science fiction," the result would inescapably remind one of the youthful disk jockey who "Wanders Down Memory Lane" all the way back to the records of 1951.

And yet the primeest slice of the whole science-fictional roast, in the opinion of many, including this writer, is the four-year output of Astounding spanning the years 1938 to 1942, with the tacit inclusion of Unknown over the span of its too-brief existence. This was the golden age of science fiction, in the years before the medium was so heavily hag-ridden with crackpot cults, before the cliches became cliches, before the involuted and skilfully-handled cliché became, itself, a cliché. It was a time when most of the best-regarded names in the field today were building their reputations and, therefore, turning out some of the finest work of which they were capable.

Campbell seemed, in those days, to be turning up exciting new talent with nearly every issue: Heinlein, van Vogt, Gold, Asimov, de Camp, Boucher, Clement, and a chap named Hubbard. One might have thought he was finding them under flat rocks, from their profusion if not from their output. And then there were Leiber and del Rey and Jameson, and Moore and Kuttner of the myriad pseudonyms, whose nom-de-plumes even had pen-names.

Those were the days when Campbell, not content with a July issue featuring, among other stories, "Black Destroyer" by van Vogt, "Greater Than Gods" by C. L. Moore, "Trends" by Asimov, and an article titled "Geography for Time Travellers" by Willy Ley, hauled off and gave us an August issue containing the first Heinlein story, "Lifeline" -- not to mention Lee Gregor's all-time classic, "Heavy Planet," de Camp's "The Blue Giraffe," and P. Schuyler Miller's "Pleasure Trove." The September issue was something of a letdown, though it did feature Sturgeon's first story, "Ether Breather." The October issue, fronted by the portrait of an heroic chap in a gray uniform poised at the airlock of a spaceship, featured the first instalment of Doc Smith's gigantic space epic, "Gray Lensman."

Campbell was just getting warmed up in 1939. Two summers later Astounding was starring such first-magnitude stories as Heinlein's "Methuselah's Children," Alfred Bester's "The Probable Man," van Vogt's "The Seesaw," Asimov's "Nightfall," and Anson MacDonald's (Heinlein's) "By His Bootstraps." As Tony Boucher observed in a letter to Skyhook recently, whole issues of ASF in those days were crammed to the margins with all-time classics, and the contents pages read like the contents pages of all the anthologies of the next dozen years.

But mingled with the all-time great yarns were occasional stories, by famous and not-so-famous writers, that have been overlooked or more probably rejected by all the anthologists that I know about. It is one of the special delights of owning a goodly file of Astounding to be able to go back and reread some of those half-forgotten tales. Nobody who is familiar with the golden age only through the medium of Adventures in Time and Space and the Conklin anthologies can know the thrill of reading such wonderful contes as Simak's "Sunspot Purge," John Berryman's "Special Flight," Paul Ernst's "Nothing Happens on the Moon," Nat Schachner's "Worlds Don't Care," Eando Binder's "Rope Trick," Raymond Z. Gallun's "Masson's Secret," or del Rey's "Lunar Landing."

Although I am sure I've missed a few anthologies, I don't believe such stories as "Rust" by Joseph Kelleam, "The Morons" by Harl Vincent, or "The Push of a Finger" by Alfred Bester have so far been dipped up by such expert skimmers of the ASF stew as Groff Conklin or Judith Merril. Yet how much better these stories were, and are, than many others that have been anthologized long since, and how much better than most of the stories being printed today, with all due respect to Galaxy, F&SF, and the current Astounding. Thus it was in the golden age!

And the illustrations -- ! The Isip brothers, with their delicate line-work; the slit-eyed, high-cheekboned characters of Charles Schneeman; the incomparable artistry of Edd Cartier; and the indefinable, somehow just-right atmosphere that Hubert Rogers infused in his work. Of course there was another side to the artwork coin. A fellow named Kolliker appeared in Astounding with a nauseous, quasi-woodcut style which he also used in illustrating columnar bits for the American Weekly, the Sunday supplement of the Hearst chain which gave the term "Sunday supplement" most if not all its odious connotations. Sometimes he signed his things as Kolliker and sometimes as just Koll, but they were unmistakably his.

Another titan of incompetence, whose very inadequacy had a nearly heroic stature to it, was Kramer. His utter innocence of any taint of knowledge as to how the human body is put together has yet to see an equal, although currently van Dongen sometimes approaches him. Kramer's technique was haphazard and muddy; his imagination less than embryonic. But he was prolific and, as so often happened in that era, when better men went off to participate in some aspect of the war effort he remained available. So it was that certain otherwise excellent pieces of writing which deserved the best work of Rogers or Schneeman were fobbed off with Kramer illustrations and indefinably ruined for all time, like notable dishes scorched in the oven.

The work of certain writers seemed made for the work of certain illustrators. Wordage by Heinlein, for example, fairly bleeds for pictures by Hubert Rogers. No true purist can ever be quite content with a Heinlein narrative acted out by Freas people (and especially not by van Dongen people, as in the current serial "Citizen of the Galaxy") when he recalls the earlier Heinlein stories, performed by Rogers

characters. It will be seventeen years come warm weather since I last saw the issues of Astounding featuring "Methuselah's Children," and yet Lazarus Long's face is as familiar to my memory today, if not more so, than the face of most flesh-and-blood persons I met then and have not seen since. People like Lazarus Long really lived and I lived with them.

By the same token, stories by L. Sprague de Camp require Cartier illustrations. When del Rey's Fantasy Fiction published the last of the Harold Shea stories -- the last, alas, that can ever be -- Cartier was no longer available, and the substitute artist del Rey used did not manage to jell the story for me, somehow. Even the gorgeous Belphebe seemed to move listlessly through her lines.

Precisely how much of the rosy haze of nostalgia rises from the fact that, in those days, any single story represented a much greater percentage of my total experience with science fiction is hard to say. A drop of water, flicked onto your dry skin, will make a much more memorable impression than will any single drop when you are totally immersed. I think that somewhere in this aspect of things may lie the often-mourned "sense of wonder" that one hears so much about these days. It is well known that there is a considerable acceleration in the apparent rate of subjective time flow, due to the fact that any single day or other unit of time represents a much greater percentage of a child's total experience in time than it does to an adult.

As for the minutiae previously mentioned, it really isn't cricket to comb back through your old files for things to discuss, although it is a pleasant way to pass a rainy day. Rightly, a person should depend on those items which have remained in his memory by their own virtues.

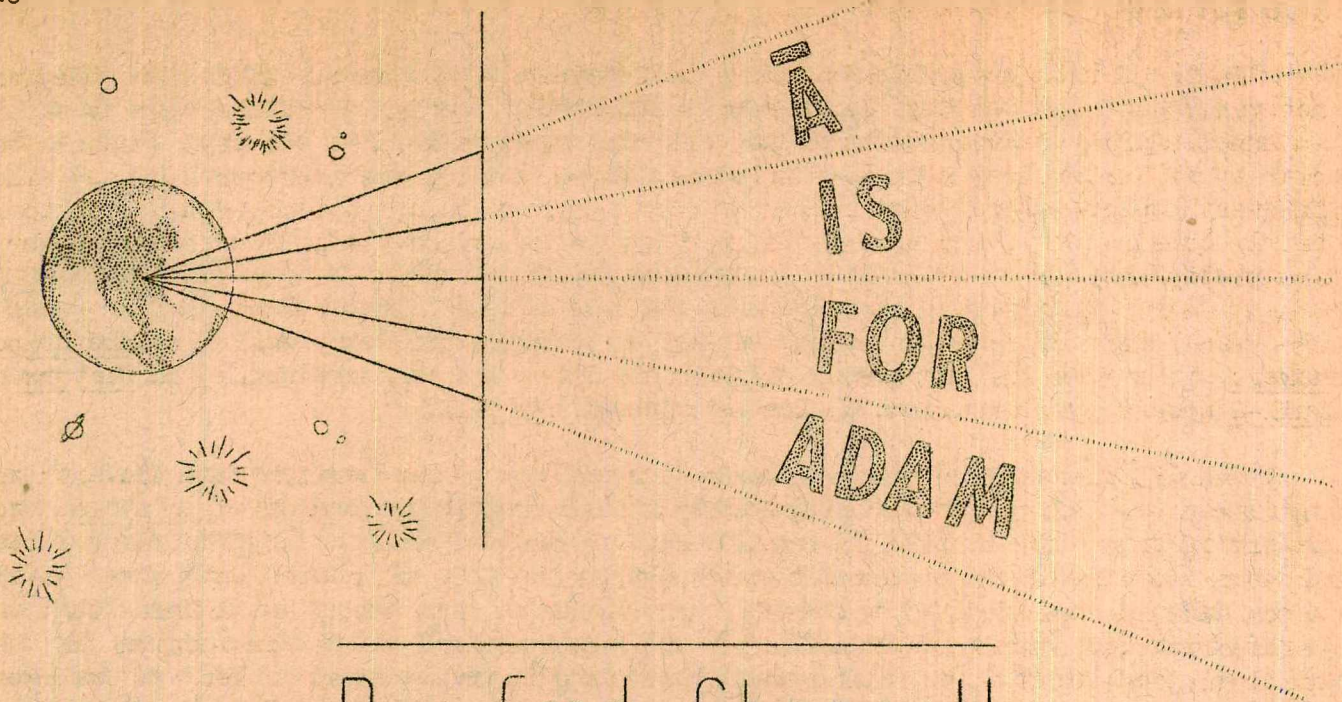
Do you remember, just offhand, what colors were on the spines of Astounding in the interlude before they went to the horse-blanket size of the early 1940s? Who was Johnny Black and what was the relationship between him and Professor Methuen? What was the story, and who wrote it, which ended with the sentence, "Sam woke -- "? Who -- or what -- was Snarly Seibel, and what ever happened to him? What was the real name of the spaceship nicknamed Upsydaisy, and who was her most famous crew member? How did Professor Arthur Frost disappear from the Black Maria?

What was Rule 18, in the story by Clifford D. Simak of that name? What was the fatal mistake made by the leading character in Sturgeon's "Biddiver," and what happened to him as a result? What was the perfect "Piggy Bank" that Bruce Ballard had built to safeguard his fortune in diamonds?

Which one of the Kinnison girls was "a shade smaller in gluteal measurements" and what was the nickname it earned her? What was the name of the fan who wrote the review of the stories in ASF a year-from-then and what was the date of the issue when Campbell, unexpectedly going along with the gag, soberly filled out the contents page almost exactly as the reader had predicted? What, for that matter, was bentlam?

It's your turn....

ARTWORK CREDITS. Cover by Dean A. Grennell (stencil by Stenafax). Interiors: p 2, insignia by Howard Miller; p 3, lettering by William Rotsler; p 5, by Jack Wiedenbeck; p 8, by Richard Bergeron; p 13, by Bergeron; p 16, by George E. Metzger; p 22, by Rotsler; p 25, by Metzger; p 27, by Rotsler; p 33, by Rotsler; p 41, by Metzger, lettering by Howard Miller. Page 25 is not supposed to resemble Jim Harmon.



By Fred Chappell

I WAS READING Jack Vance's To Live Forever and came to the realization that the thing is not much more than a heavily populated edition of the mood of The Dying Earth. I'm not going to enter into this aspect too much, saving the latter work for a later article on "Forgotten Fantasy Books" or some such thing, but I remembered that when it was first published a couple of pro reviewers -- P. Schuyler Miller among them -- called the book van Vogtian. It's not at all van Vogtian.

The reason I mentioned The Dying Earth was to reinforce a point, viz., that actually the chief distinction between fantasy and science fiction is one of atmosphere or mood, rather than of supposedly scientific bases or gadgetry. If you want to, you can call almost any fantasy story science fiction by giving it a parallel-world basis, or a laws-of-probability gimmick at the outset. (Much in the manner you have to assume that Macbeth was possessed of a pristine character before the play begins.) This has been done with What Mad Universe, Leinster's Laws of Chance, Vance's "Telek," etc. And who the hell knows for certain whether Sinister Barrier, Darker Than You Think, Journey to Barkut, and so forth, are fantasies or sf stories? I'm willing to bet that a goodly percentage of the stories originally submitted to Galaxy were stuck in Beyond. T. L. Sherred's "Eye for Iniquity" strikes me as a very likely case-in-point.

But when a reviewer calls a novel van Vogtian he usually means that it is complicated in plot. Philip K. Dick's Solar Lottery and Vance's To Live Forever have been called van Vogtian, and so have a number of others, but I'm not going to bring out my collection just to prove my point. There's no use in documenting this part of an article when it's going to get wild and woolly in a few paragraphs anyway. All I intend to do is to suggest that the pro reviewers undertake a new evaluation of van Vogt's contribution to science fiction: and while they're about it, to take a new evaluation of science fiction, too.

In the first place, Dick's and Vance's novels may be complicated, but they are not van Vogtian. Van Vogt isn't complicated; he's complex. He uses, to my taste, an unnecessarily overburdening method of writing which doesn't exactly enhance the clarity of his stuff. He writes in scenes of 800 words, and introduces a new idea in every scene. This is of course no hard and fast rule, but he does stick to it fairly consistently, and it's not a good way to write. Novels in scenes of 800 words are pretty choppy.

Van Vogt's prose is not good, either. It comes off very well in The Weapon Makers, it serves its purpose in Slan, and hits its tombmost depth in Players of Null-A (recently paperbacked by Ace as Pawns of Null-A).

The difference between van Vogt and almost every other writer that prevents application of the adjective "van Vogtian" to the latter is one of conception, not merely of treatment. The world of null-A is a truly complex society, but when I read the book, I can't find a single "set" speech or passage of omniscient prose at all which explains the structure of that society. Maybe I'm wrong, but I think that van Vogt's plot complexity serves a useful purpose: it gives you an intimation of the complexity of the society within which the story is set. These other writers work differently: after the narrative is started and you're pretty well hooked, they give you a pat explanation of the society and then they let the story go on. After that, it's the story that's complicated, not the setup.

Van Vogt's characters get involved in complicated plots because they are hit by events evolved out of the complexity of the strawdummy society. What's more, you can discover exactly what kind of fictional universe contains the characters only by following the plot of the story. Thus it is the conception which governs the story-line, and not, as in the case of the others, a conception and then a story-line which uses salient aspects of the conception: something akin to a shoplifter in a department store, who picks and chooses.

If we need an analogy here, we'll take jazz. While a dixieland group will play a couple choruses of "Back Home in Indiana" and then take their rides, the Bird blows "Warmin' Up A Riff," keeping the melody line of the former tune in his head as he goes. Thus van Vogt: his stories happen, and you are to pick out the form of the society as best you can from the plot. And, in case you're wondering and just waiting for me to tell you, this means that van Vogt is a better novelist, for in his best work there is no fundamental division between his setup and his plot. With the others, the plot is often just frosting on the cake, and the worst of them use the conception as frosting and the plot as cake. Please note, however, the phrase "best work"; van Vogt turns out miserable work oftentimes, and the crudity of Players of Null-A is downright shymaking.

Van Vogt's work, as you no doubt know, is often called fantasy rather than science fiction by some reviewers (one hesitates, with good reason, to call anyone in the field a critic; Knight and Atheling may be critics, but to call Groff Conklin or Sam Moskowitz such is ludicrous). Again the distinction between fantasy and science fiction is more sensibly made by basing the decision on mood or atmosphere rather than on scientific framework; agreed: that scientology and semantics are rather unorthodox divisions of scientific labor, if indeed they can be called that at all; so for that matter are parallel-world concepts, ESP, theory of games, etc. The atmosphere of van Vogt's work is often dim, murky, medieval, and confused. This is mainly because of the plot-method mentioned above; his atmosphere is sort-of alien to the one with which we are familiar.

Robert Heinlein's work, however, usually breathes the sort of atmosphere we are most likely to label truly science-fictional. Heinlein's atmosphere is as bright and shiny as Easter Sunday in contrast to van Vogt's Dark Thursday mood. The reason is of course a technical one. We grasp Heinlein's characters and their motives easily -- probably too easily -- hence the plot, for Heinlein's ratio of character to plot is usually about one-to-one, while van Vogt's characters don't know what's happening to them about half the time and don't know, the rest of the time, what they're doing or why.

It's going too far to call Heinlein's characters active and van Vogt's passive, but one gets the impression that most characters in van Vogt are victims of their setups. (Wild notion: perhaps one reason for the failure of Players is that Gosseyn has been raised from his status as a pawn.) When Dan Davis in The Door into Summer feels like traveling to the future or the past, he goes out and does it. The only way Gosseyn could get there would be to fall into a timewarp on his way to the grocery store. (Not that a van Vogt character would be caught dead going to a grocery store.)

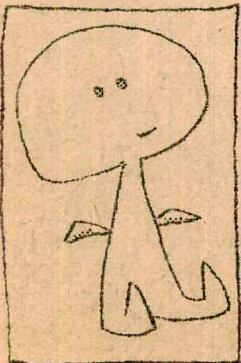
There's another difference too: ever notice how utilitarian everything is in Heinlein? Everything is of use, everything is nice and neat, everything comes out even. Heinlein is an incurable optimist. Hamilton Felix (Beyond This Horizon) is afflicted by the weakest case of nihilism this side of Existentialism and even the nihilism doesn't seem motivated. Of course it is cured at the end: these guys are building a fabulous IBM machine which answers all the philosophical problems of man. That's more than a bit thin. And ever notice the prevalence of Boy Scouts throughout Heinlein? In one story ("Lost Legacy," I think), they actually play an instrumental role in "saving the world." I find it fairly significant that Heinlein finds it so easy to write juveniles and that a couple of them appeared in Boy's Life.

Van Vogt isn't a ratridden pessimist, of course, but his clutching at such straws as scientism and Dianetics suggests a tortured sensibility and a raw sensitivity to evil. With these bits of aid, flimsy as they are, he is able to see -- though not as through a glass, darkly. Rather, as through the dark, glassily.

The identification of the "true" science fictional atmosphere with Heinlein's homogenized futures can be accredited, as usual, to John W. Campbell. Campbell's attitude toward politics has never changed to any considerable degree, and for one so monstrously intelligent his attitude seems curiously naive. The editorial sections of Astounding Science Fiction have often been used to publish poison pen letters to those in politics and other powerful places. ("Brash attacks" one might -- but probably wouldn't -- say.) Campbell's upholding of Albert Einstein as a political thinker (he has done this several times) is equally as illfounded as the attitude of those who attack Einstein as a political thinker. The truth is, Einstein

had no stable political philosophy other than a rather utopian socialism. Though some of his specific suggestions have been found to be valid, such as his advice that the United States turn away from isolationism, he had no overall scheme; and his political leanings seemed to shift rather rapidly. (Vide the stuff about the Bomb in Out of My Later Years.)

I called Campbell's attitude toward politics "curious" primarily because one knows the sort of flexible mind modern physics requires. It somehow seems that a person who is willing to accept the fact that an electron can occupy two positions in space simultaneously, or that



it is necessary to treat light as particles sometimes and as waves other times, would refrain from joining an absurd pseudo-Aristotelian valuation frame onto a complex area of human social endeavor and classifying events and parties as "progressive vs reactionary," "intelligent vs stupid," "right vs wrong," etc. It seems to me that one who so painstakingly examines the connotations of such timeworn phrases as "In vino veritas" would not swallow such phrases as Lord Acton's "Power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely." Yet Campbell does.

The reason for this may be simply the outsider's urge to simplify a field about which he knows very little. Now I will admit that my interest in science cannot be called pure by any means: my first purpose in reading books of science is to find metaphors for poetry. Consequently I am able to give you the essence of the Bohr theory of the atom, but am completely incapable of solving a simple problem involving multiplication or even addition of large sums. I suspect that most armchair physicists have similar blind spots, and that the same is true of armchair political analysts.

What is Campbell's deep dark motivation toward political theorizing. This is not merely a rhetorical question -- I confess I don't know the answer. I will, with your permission, hazard a guess: that John Campbell's unjustly thwarted desire to be a scientist takes itself out upon most of the things with which he comes in contact. He has always considered ASF as a laboratory. How many times have you read in the comments preceding the Analytical Laboratory (note!) ratings phrases like "this magazine is constantly experimenting with" or "we are always trying to find out"? And, in his contribution to Reginald Bretnor's Modern Science Fiction: Its Meaning and Its Future, he wrote that "Problems which can not be discussed in ordinary work can be brought forth in direct, clear consideration -- as problems of the Martians and the Saggitarians." The problems confronting the Saggitarians are our present problems, but carefully sealed away from the noise level of petty strife and conflict which now surround them.

In other words, in ASF certain contemporary problems are submitted to controlled experiments. The important word here is "controlled," and it answers Tim Howler's question in "Parables Are Pabulum" (Skyhook #23): "Would ASF dare to print a story which depicted a future Union of Colored People, an organization with principles like a labor union which struck against racial discrimination?" (The word "dare" of course unfairly loads the question; the reader would best substitute "care.") The answer is no, because the reader would be unable to evaluate the situation intellectually because of various prejudices -- the "noise level" mentioned above. The experiment would not, in other words, be controlled.

The point is that the problems which most concern us in the area of politics and human social behavior are rarely intellectual problems, and any intellectual solution of such problems is less a solution than a misunderstanding of the problem. (It is quite possibly an intentional misunderstanding, symbolizing a basic but unwritten Campbellian premiss that no problem is amenable to consideration unless it can be formulated in intellectual terms.) To return to Mr Howler's question: although I can't see the story idea he mentioned being printed in ASF using the setting he suggested, I can very easily see one with another setting, say Arcturus, with conflicting skin pigmentations of green and purple instead of black and white. Of course when this happens, the problem is presented to the intellect and becomes no problem. I'd feel no emotion at all if someone called me a dirty greenie, but I feel guilty as hell when in Invisible Man Ralph Ellison calls me an ofay.

The idea of ASF as a universe of an infinite number of controlled experiments explains one's prejudice for Heinlein's sweetness-and-light as the proper science-fictional atmosphere: it is a setup extremely friendly to experiments. It will be noted that Heinlein's protagonists face only intellectual problems, or behavioral problems presented in intellectual formulations, or fall back upon purely pragmatic motivations. Three respective examples: Dan Davis' problems concerning getting himself shuttled back through time; Hamilton Felix' problem concerning marriage; the Americans' pragmatic acceptance of patriotism as a worthwhile motivation in Sixth Column.

It seems to me that the only workable definition of science fiction is "Science fiction is science fiction when the author of any particular work had the intention of writing science fiction at the time of writing." Or with less verbiage: science fiction is that kind of literature which was written for the purpose of being science fiction. (This definition differs in degree, but not in kind, from the "when you point at it" definition.) Together with the preceding remarks about the atmosphere of stories, this definition makes a not-very-startling exclusion: science fiction cannot be good literature.

The "tortured sensibility and raw sensitivity to evil" for which I gave van Vogt credit a while back are generally regarded as indispensable tools to a serious writer. But to a science fiction writer these attitudes are detrimental to his trade: they interfere with his ability to present ideas solely in intellectual forms and throw dark shadows into his brightly lit laboratory. This definition also takes care of those strange people like Ray Bradbury, Theodore Sturgeon, and Fredric Brown whose first impulse is to write literate fiction and second to write science fiction. It also covers such subliterate cretins as Kendell Foster Crossen and Wilson Tucker (not to be confused with fan Bob Tucker, who is neither subliterate nor a cretin -- how is it that one man can be so intelligent and witty as an amateur and so dull and fumbling as a professional?) who want to write fiction first and science fiction second, if at all -- their idea of fiction obviously being as much plot complication as possible with as little theme as possible. The definition does leave, however, Heinlein, Arthur C. Clarke, Henry Kuttner, Isaac Asimov, and quite a few more. If pure science fiction is your meat, you probably will be satisfied with these gentlemen anyway.

"Larry Shaw wants chase stories!"

TWIPPLEDOP (Concluded from page 7)

George E. Metzger, Skhk's new artist, is 18 years old and a freshman at Yuba junior college. He'd like to attend art school later and perhaps become "a famous cartoonist" with "lotta money, big house, large den, swords on the wall, and a guillotine in the corner for curing headaches." He lives in Oroville, Calif.

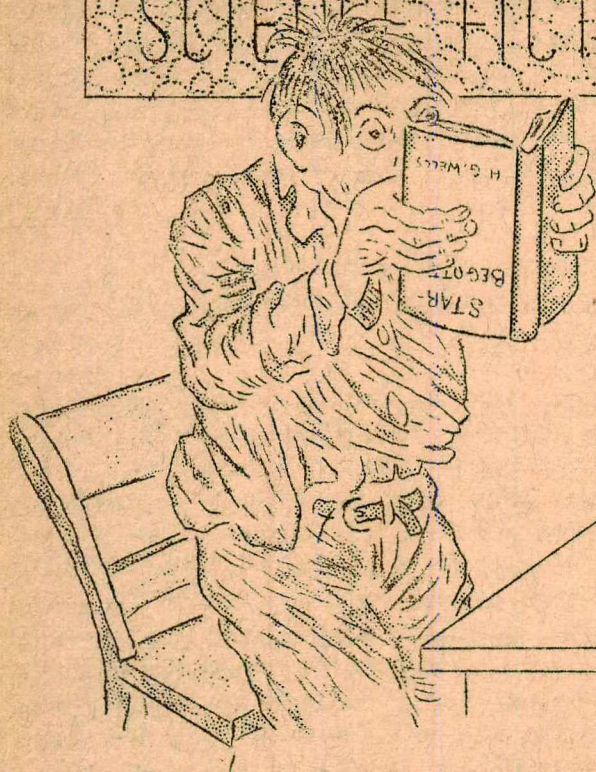
"Home Spun Rag" is a Way of Life....

Here is cartoonist Al Capp, talking in Minneapolis about Charles M. Schulz: "Peanuts" is one of the great artistic works of our time, and don't think all of us don't envy and resent him." Good Ol' Charlie Brown, the fourth "Peanuts" book, has just been published by Rinehart and Company at \$1....

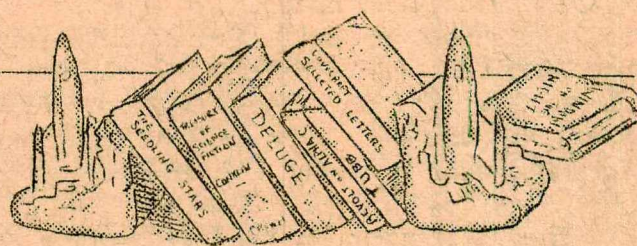
Dr Marie Stopes has written a book called Sleep. I suppose it is the sequel to her previous book, Married Love....

Personally, I prefer licentious Labourites.

SCIENCE FICTION READING ROOM



BY JIM HARMON



METZGER

THIS BOOK* has a message: it says it isn't pornography. It says pornography is bad and that it itself is not a bad book. I disagree all around. Some pornography is worthwhile. I think this book is pornography, but not one of the valuable works in the field.

Other books -- Mein Kampf, Das Kapital, et cetera -- have various other messages. Personally I do not always believe a thing just because a book says it is so. Unfortunately the science fiction bookmen (if we can attach that traditional literary distinction to our own reviewers and editors of books) seem to believe anything if it is labeled "fiction." They have been so conditioned by flying saucers, psi, and scientology that they spring at all non-fiction and often have to come to a flustered halt in midair when they see it is Willy Ley below them.

If this book isn't pornography, what is?

Margaret Mead, who (I'm told) knows even more about sex than most women, has characterized pornography as rape in the church pew in the book An Analysis of the Kinsey Reports. Pornography, then, is the exotic and strange in sexual activity. It varies with the culture, of course. In our society an honest description of a vis-à-vis sexual act isn't particularly exciting, but heterosexuals are frequently stimulated by tales of lesbian and other homosexual love. It is not so much a question of perversion but one of something new, untried, something about which we ourselves are naive. As Sam Moskowitz might observe, pornography requires a sense of wonder.

* Tomorrow's World, by Hunt Collins. Avalon, 1957. \$2.50. (Paperback edition: Tomorrow and Tomorrow, by Hunt Collins. Pyramid, 1957. 35¢.)

Tomorrow and Tomorrow -- to give this book its slightly more thoughtful title -- is a compendium of strange sexual acts. It is by definition pornography. Many great books -- The Decameron, The Canterbury Tales, Droll Stories, Tom Jones -- are pornography, of course, but there is little need to defend those works that happen to be, among other things, pornography. Obviously Collins' book is not as good as these other works, but the problem is: Is his book more than mere vicarious sexual stimulation, like these others? The author says it is. But we don't have to believe him if we don't want to.

I think it is clear that Collins is not against all pornography: only that which was not written by him. This is really a very confounded philosophy; it is in fact rum Collins indeed.

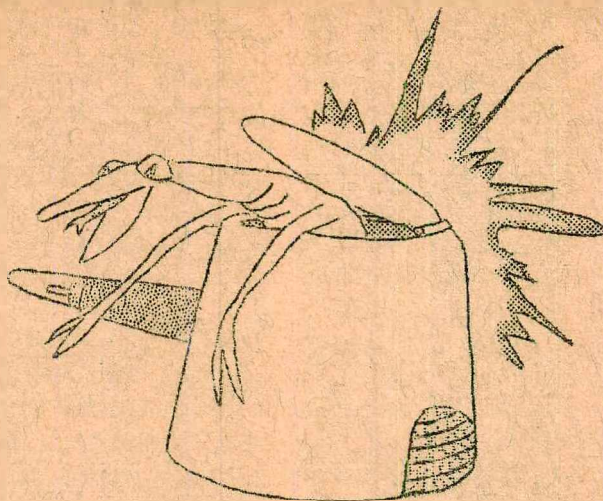
His story is about Realists who are imprudent and Vicarious pornographers who are impotent. Commendably Mr Collins does not approve wholeheartedly of either group, but does seem to give the pornographers the edge over the censors. Like Billy the Kid and Jesse James they lose out in the last chapter without convincing anybody that it wasn't fun while it lasted. The only science fiction mechanical device in the book (other than the plot) is the familiar full-sense participation movie, the "feelie," which has been handled more effectively by George O. Smith, Clifford D. Simak, Fletcher Pratt, and Raymond Z. Gallun. The protagonist, Van Brant, tries to gain financial control of this device to add to his wide holdings in paperback pornography publishing, movies, and television. He is a real Vike, completely vicarious in his pleasures; he uses morphine and shuns women, like all other Vikes. The Rees believe in great literature, presumably orthodox religion -- although Collins avoids the subject -- and dress conservatively right down to hats and neckties, "of all damn things."

In the struggle between vicarious sensualism and iron-willed decency the Rees win out without any convincing reason why they should except that they happened to have a few better brains on their side, we might suppose. Considering that most of the great intellects of history were sensualists and that the average man becomes one when freed from social pressures I fail to see how such a Vike society could fail to crush the Rees almost immediately and then collapse itself only after several centuries of slow internal decay. This is probably the flaw in all the endless "Underground" science fiction stories: major ideological revolutionists are almost never successful. Science fiction writers may reject Bolshevik philosophy, but they seem to be inordinately impressed with its highly circumstantial success.

If Hunt Collins ever writes a book exposing the evils of stamp collecting I am convinced that I could learn enough from it to become an expert philatelist. Meanwhile, Collins -- or Evan Hunter or S. A. Lombardini, if you prefer his real name -- has written books on such subjects as juvenile delinquency, drug addiction, abortion, and fouling-off in the navy. They are excellent textbooks (and used as such to my personal knowledge, in the case of one book) with the addition of some extraneous and unhomogenized moralistic elements which serve to misdirect from the main body of the book the attention of the Legion of Decency -- both that specific organization and a larger informal group that thinks of itself as such.

Despite these moralistic sleights the book undoubtedly has more sex than any other I've read. On the other hand, it certainly is not the best science fiction sex I've ever read, and I do not believe the book has to be accepted merely because it deals with sex. The war cry of science fiction fans used to be that sex and science fiction don't mix. By that, I'm sure we meant cheap, sensationalistic sex, not

honest sexual themes. As sex in literature came to be associated less and less with sensationalism and more and more with quality mainstream writing, the battle cry was a casualty of this progress. Philip Jose Farmer's "The Lovers" in Startling delivered the telling blow in science fiction as long ago as 1952. Farmer had been preceded by Wallace West, author of such stories as "En Route to Pluto" (Astounding, August 1936), and by Joe Gibson, who wrote "I Like You, Too --," the first completely honest sex story in a modern science fiction magazine (TWS, October 1948).



Thereafter, Theodore Sturgeon took the wraps off his sexual symbolism, and various other writers attempted sexual themes, notably D. A. Jourdan, who began appearing in Robert Lowndes' magazines with "A Change of Color," in Science Fiction Quarterly, November 1954. I myself wrote one sex-based story that was very well received by the readers of the January 1956 Science Fiction Stories, "Stranger."

In their eagerness for science fiction to gain an equality or even an identity with mainstream literature, some science fictionists had by this time become convinced that every sexually based science fiction story had to be accepted wholeheartedly. On those grounds many will accept Mr Collins' novel. Collins himself wants the book accepted on the grounds that it isn't sheer, pointless pornography or sheer, pointless reality. He is right, of course, but he protests too much.

The book is pornography, but it isn't all pornography or just pornography. It is good, but it isn't that good. It is somewhat superior to the average half of an Ace Double Novel and somewhat inferior to the average Ballantine book. I don't expect Collins to recognize this, but I suspect many readers will, even if the reviewers haven't divined the truth.

It is perhaps unfair of the critic to bring facts extraneous to the book into a review -- such as Damon Knight, in In Search of Wonder, pointing out that A. Merritt was a funny looking little man. But there is a fact that we might discover if we at least extend ourselves to the task of reading other works by the author and comparing them with those of his contemporaries: Hunt Collins is Evan Hunter and Evan Hunter is contemptuous of science fiction. My authority for this statement (beyond the eloquent intrinsic evidence) is an article in the 1955 Writer's Yearbook. Marianne Besser, the author of "Young Man in a Hurry," an article on Evan Hunter in that issue, points out that Robert W. Lowndes bought many of Hunter's early detective stories but that in the case of science fiction Lowndes "didn't feel that he (Hunter) checked his facts carefully or gave the story thought enough. He had the impression that Hunter was writing those for a fast buck while looking down on the medium."

The fast-buck, looking-down attitude of Hunter toward science fiction is evident in his choice of byline for this science fiction novel. A shorter version of it appeared in If for January 1954 as "Malice in Wonderland," by Evan Hunter. Yet the book appears under the Collins pseudonym. The Evan Hunter byline is a valuable property; it would have made a considerable difference in the sales of the book, I strongly suspect. The reason why the Hunter name isn't used may be due to contrac-

tual obligations. But the article I mentioned quoted Hunter as saying that he was going to reserve the Hunter byline for those works he thought worthwhile and by which he wanted to be known. It would seem that Mr Hunter does not regard Tomorrow and Tomorrow as something worthwhile or a novel by which he wants to be known. He probably shows better taste than some of his contemporaries -- although Mickey Spillane might well wish he had written the book, as he has wished he had written some of Hunter's other books, according to cover banners anyway.

As far as the sex in Tomorrow and Tomorrow is concerned, like a distinguished correspondent (Redd Boggs, who prefers documentation on all things) pointed out in regards psionic machine stories: the subject existed before the story. In other words, Hunter sat down to write a sex novel and built from there. He did not start to write a science fiction novel that developed a strong sexual theme as the motive grew. Perhaps I am mistaken. Hunter may have a very sex-oriented mind.

Some reviewers like to play amateur psychoanalyst where authors are concerned. About the only thing I can deduce about the workings of Hunter's mind is that his moralizing is an automatic subconscious response and not merely a commercial device. He rationalizes that the moral flavoring justifies the concoction of a deep-dish pie of lechery, that a moral justifies the duties of a conscientious observer and reporter. Actually the only right of the artist to portray depravity lies in the fact that depravity exists.

Mr Hunter's books would sell as well -- with perhaps minor legal difficulties -- without the morality he tosses in. Popular fiction is developing an amorality in the digest-size crime books and flat-size men's magazines. Here murder or adultery can be punished or not, as the internal plot mechanism demands. Superficially, this might seem to make for more realism, as it does in science fiction where logic instead of sentiment or morality is allowed to dictate the conclusion, but the demand in these magazines is not for logic or reality but for the machinations of an artificial plot exhibiting plenty of violence and depravity.

I think Mr Collins, or Mr Hunter if you prefer, is a religious man. He has a sense of sin, a sense of shame. I won't make judgments on the worthiness of another man's religious beliefs, but Collins seems more frightened than comforted by his. He is going through a period where he must justify himself by moralizing; it is a subconscious reaction, but not implicit in his basic makeup. He will probably find that an artist must be first a reporter, then a communicator. His moralizing will end when he can find a moral he can believe and trust. I don't think he really believes the traditional moralism he has been taught. Again, I think he protests too much.

As of now, he seems convinced (with a lot of outside help, it must be admitted) of his own greatness. In writing this book he shifted great sections of his protagonist's story from the first-person version in If to the present third-person form only by changing nouns for pronouns. There are fundamental differences between telling a story from two such viewpoints, and the awkwardness -- such as a man thinking outside himself -- is evident in spots. Collins seemed to think virtually every word of the original version too good to change. I'm not much on rewriting myself, but if you are going to all the labor of retyping a manuscript you may as well polish it a bit. Of course Collins may have had his secretary do the copying and verbal transposition.

The only other change between the two versions is Hunter's censoring of some of the suggestive language in the anti-censorship book of the original magazine story. This seems consistent with the novel's level of honesty.

* * *

Reading at Random: I am about to make a statement I am sure I will regret and may recant under the furious assault: Robert A. Heinlein is not the greatest writer of science fiction. The opening chapters of "Citizen of the Galaxy" (ASF, Sep 1957) have finally convinced me. This is just another goddamned adventure story! Sure, it has psychological, symbolical, and philosophical over- and undertones but, by damn, any professional writer telling an action story of the fourteenth or the fortieth century would put these in or he wouldn't be selling. These are the very marks of the professional writer and praising a scribe for including them is as pointless as congratulating him for having characters or a plot. Heinlein is the absolute master of all the subtle and the blatant techniques of commercial fiction but his work can be broken to its quantum elements, its building blocks. Elevating all these techniques to such a high level is admirable, but like making a work of art out of a comic strip (a la Walt Kelly and Will Eisner) it is also a pitiful waste of talent.

The really fine writers of science fiction are undoubtedly the stylists, not the storytellers, for style is not discrete and "style" stories are indivisible. While Theodore Sturgeon's "The Pod in the Barrier" (Galaxy, Sep 1957) follows the predictable techniques and formula of the commercial story, it rises above this and the sum is greater than the parts because Sturgeon achieves real art by catching in fiction the facets of his own unique, offbeat personality.

Robert Silverberg represents the Efficient Writer more than any other person in our micro-era. As a money-making commercial author he is nearly as successful as Mickey Spillane. He obviously turns out fiction effortlessly. He may work hard at the job but assaying the result I can hardly believe he involves himself in the creative process. Efficiency has crowded out any trace of self-analysis in his work -- the quality that is necessary in the making of great art. Not to divorce these remarks entirely from practical reality, I must point out that Bob Silverberg is a quite friendly acquaintance of mine and I have heard him state publicly that his immediate goal is not to write great art but to survive on his present level -- an attitude with which I sympathize, of course. But there is small room for doubt that he can survive on the current level. Some of his work, such as the "Johnny Mayhem" stories in Amazing, are mere cartoons in typemetal, but generally he shows a firm grasp of professional technique. His current novel, The 13th Immortal (Ace, 17½¢), for example, is interesting, thoughtful, and entertaining; as an Earthbound space opera it is thoroughly non-silly, a unique quality in this esoteric art form. But I feel that it is about time he aimed a little higher. To start with, he might try to make those stories he writes so well around cover paintings (vide "His Head in the Clouds," SF Stories, Sep 1957) less obviously and predictably the exact story you imagine when you see the painting. More than that, Bob, I'm sure no one would think it undignified if you involved passion and emotion in your stories: this is a forgivable eccentricity even in science fiction writers.

In the same issue of SF Stories Thomas N. Scortia achieves a notable tour de force with "Genius Loci," one of the top science fiction short novels in my reading. Whereas such classics as those of Cordwainer Smith concentrate on a narrow area of possible human experience, Scortia's yarn offers a shotgun blast of ideas involving psychology, sex, chemistry, and meteorology. The effect is at once breathtaking and

elusive. I am forced to conclude that a tour in a magnetic storm should be taken with something more than a compass -- a roadmap, perhaps. If less memorable than Alfred Bester's novels, "Genius Loci" is fascinating for its Besterian pyrotechnics -- slightly subdued as if for Campbell. I would normally add, in commenting on a story like this, that the many pages of factual science would appeal dearly to the founder of Amazing Stories. But I have been reading some current advertisements. I am filled with a sense of wonder that Hugo Gernsback likes F&SF.

For some reason, literary creations often are not allowed to die with their creators. This is probably not as bad a thing as some purists insist it is. If you enjoyed the original stories in a particular series about a character, probably you will find the imitations by another author more entertaining than first editions of something else. The hallmark of such continuations of another author's work are the constant references to events and characters in the originals, not only to establish a continuity but to convince the reader (or the new writer himself) that he is a devoted student of the Sacred Works and therefore trustworthy as the original author's successor. Apparently on the theory that no one man can ever come close to equalling the Master, frequently two men attempt the task, as in the imitations of Sherlock Holmes written by Adrian Conan Doyle and John Dickson Carr. These characteristics show up in "Conan the Victorious" (Fantastic Universe, Sep 1957), which is an imitation Conan saga written by L. Sprague de Camp and Bjorn Nyberg (who may or may not be Bjorn Nyberg). It is a self-conscious pastiche, full of past-references, and a creditable job. Unfortunately the authors lacked the inspiration of Robert E. Howard's secret madness, and we must conclude that -- though echoes and pastiches have their place and are entertaining -- they'll never equal the original. And regretably, unless there's something to this Bridey Murphy business, Robert E. Howard (like Arthur Conan Doyle) is gone forever.

I must conclude on a sour note, criticizing an often creditable author: Theodore L. Thomas. His "Just Rub A Lamp" (SF Stories, Sep 1957) concerns a little man who tries to patent the process of rubbing Aladdin's Lamp and thus obtaining anything one desires. After much confusion in the patent office, the patent is denied on the grounds that the process is described in an edition of A Thousand and One Nights published in 1840. Now, in the first place, there would have been no long-drawn-out confusion in the patent office because the originality requirement is an obvious factor in the granting of patents. In the second place, a man who had something by which he could obtain anything would have no trouble obtaining a patent. In the third place the whole idea was just too nauseatingly cute in the first place. This story obviously was the absolute ultimate in what Damon Knight calls the idiot plot, compressed into one handy, indigestible capsule.

For good overall averages this quarter I would definitely recommend Infinity and Venture. There was some amusing stuff in SF Quarterly and Future, too. Science Fiction Adventures continued as the best of the space opera magazines, and Satellite deserves mention, though no stories struck me as worthy of particular comment in so restricted a space as this.

WILL YOU LOVE ME IN MAY AS YOU LOVE ME IN DECEMBER? DEPARTMENT

(from America in Literature, edited by Tremaine McDowell, page 205)

"These are the times that try men's souls. The summer soldier and the winter patriot will, in this crisis, shrink from the service of their country..." -- Thomas Paine.

SKYHOOK BOOKSHELF:

MARION ZIMMER BRADLEY

SPACESHIP'S BOSS MAKES GOOD

THE 13TH IMMORTAL, by Robert Silverberg. Ace Books, 1957. 35¢.

MASTER OF LIFE AND DEATH, by Robert Silverberg. Ace Books, 1957. 35¢.

THE EVALUATION OF AN EX-FAN TURNED PRO is one of the most difficult tasks facing any reviewer himself a fan. There is the tendency to hang the ex-fan's whole writing career, both fan and pro, around his neck. It would be a pity if a writer as good as Bob Silverberg should be confronted with the ghosts of his early fanzines, which were -- to put it mildly -- unspectacular.

On the other hand, the fan reviewer is usually so delighted to see one of his fellow fans making good in the professional world that he tends to smooth out faults and exalt the ex-fan turned pro to a high position which he has not yet, at least, attained. I am halfway convinced that all fans who have achieved any widespread fan fame should assume pen names for their professional writings.

When I read my first Bob Silverberg story, which was called, if memory serves me rightly, "The Martian," I made one of those snap judgments to which all opinionated people are prone, that here was a writer of sensitivity and perception, a little inclined toward pessimism and the precocious misery which haunts only septaugenarians and teenagers. This early judgment was a little blunted by a whole procession of readable, interesting, and thoroughly unmemorable stories of the competent-hack variety, appearing in most of the leading sf magazines, not one of which remains in my memory as either good or bad. Silverberg, I understand, forthrightly refers to himself as a "fiction factory," and for a while seemed to be attempting to top the record of the late Ray Cummings for both output and competent mediocrity.

All this is a somewhat lengthy preamble to the recording of one fact: it was a welcome experience to read, over a single weekend, two new novels by Silverberg that provide an opportunity for a careful evaluation of Silverberg-the-author, as opposed to Silverberg-the-fan-turned-hack.

The 13th Immortal proves that a hack apprenticeship has both benefits and drawbacks. On the credit side it allows the writer to tell a story clearly and without

excess verbiage, to shape a plot competently without any of the annoying side-issues and loose ends to which even the most talented of beginners are prone. On the debit side it seems to make a writer believe that any old plot will do for a peg on which to hang a novel. I recall the words of a cynical editor of Planet Stories, who once informed me that a certain story in his magazine was very badly written but that it had sold on the basis of possessing "a tried and true zing-boom plot." He suggested that I try to emulate the writer of this story.

Granted that there are only a few basic dramatic situations and that science fiction as a field is especially prone to repeated treatments of ancient themes, The 13th Immortal's plot seems to have been pulled piecemeal from a ragbag of trusty cliches. There is the World Gone Feudal After Atomic War. There are the Twelve Dukedoms, complete with medieval regalia. There is the Kuttnerish assembly of freakish mutants, in cheerful disregard of biological viability or the probability which prevents any too-great variations from species from surviving except in an artificially protected environment. There are the tired, bored, world-weary Immortals.

The best thing one can say of the plot of The 13th Immortal is that it is a compliment to Bob Silverberg's talent that such a mishmash of weary cliches could be made into a readable novel at all. For it is readable. Characterization is skimmed -- the hero, Dale Kesley, is about as nonentititious a character as one could create -- but the story moves quickly and adventurously. It is told with a bright perception of movement which indicates clear visualization, and has a freshness incredible in so seasoned a young writer, a freshness that at times approaches naivete.

This freshness of writing is perhaps the major redeeming point in this rather nonsensical story. In this cliché-crowded world, Dale Kesley, a farmer with amnesia, sets out on a pilgrimage to the forgotten Thirteenth Dukedom, to find out who he is, and why. Along the way he encounters some adventures which are as fascinating as any that have been written about in the past ten years, told with a flamboyance that is faintly reminiscent of Vance and Kuttner. Duke Miguel of Latin America turns out to be a real character, portrayed with just the proper touch of astringence to keep him from being the stereotype of the Weary Immortal. The mutant, Lomark Dawnspear, who turns up like a bad penny in the most unexpected places, is delightfully fanciful. The scene in Wiener, the self-sufficient Robot City, is perhaps the most imaginative and interesting in the book -- and is the novel's one real touch of the dry, delightful humor which characterized the fannish Silverberg.

For all of its somewhat hackish predictability (I guessed the denouement of the plot by page ten) the book is thoroughly worth reading. For the lover of adventure, it provides an experience of wonder which is not too common in these days of rather drab science fiction. And for the critical reader, it gives hints of a talent which some day will do better things.

Quite another matter is Master of Life and Death, although once again there is no startling newness in the plot. The theme of an overpopulated world being rigidly controlled by a central agency has been handled both well and badly before. Unlike most such stories, however, this one does not deal with a victim of, or a rebel against, this regimentation; rather, it deals with an important bureaucrat who is in a position to use this power for good or ill. The protagonist, Roy Walton, who is, as the novel's title indicates, literally Master of Life and Death, heads the Bureau of Population Equalization, known as Popeek.

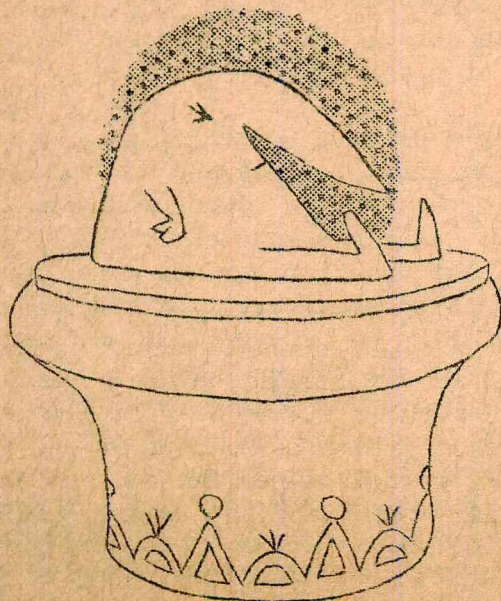
Perhaps this small innovation is a hint that Silverberg may stand at the head of a rebellion against the sordid and uniformly dull tales of which we get too many

today, those stories succinctly described by one disgusted young fan as stories "about a little guy and his little wife and their little house and they have a little trouble and who the hell cares even a little?" The common man may be important to sociology, but fiction must, to retain its appeal, deal with the uncommon man.

This is not to say that Silverberg's hero is a glamorous figure. Except for his powerful office, Roy Walton, the Master of Life and Death, seems a remarkably ordinary person, and nowhere in the novel betrays any hint of outstanding intelligence or great talent that might have brought him to his high position -- which in itself has much to say about tomorrow's mechanical promotion structures. He is more deftly drawn than the colorless hero of The 13th Immortal, having conflicts and emotions, but he seems to exist solely against the background of his onerous job instead of being a man with personal characteristics, likes and dislikes, habits and ruts. We see him only when he is on the job, dealing with Popeek's problems.

The story gets off to one of Silverberg's good fast starts when a grieving father forces his way into Walton's office to beg reprieve for his infant son who is slated for euthanasia, euphemistically termed "Happysleep," and Walton makes the one exception which may totter the foundation of Popeek. From then on it is uphill all the way, as the saying goes. Unlike The 13th Immortal, whose plot and ending were predictable almost from the word Go, the twists and turns of Master of Life and Death are entirely unpredictable and the story continues to surprise the reader up to the last page. Star travel, fascinating aliens, a recipe for immortality that would put the overcrowded world completely out of balance, create some unusual encounters and suspenseful moments.

A high judgment on the potentialities of Silverberg-the-writer on the basis of these two books would probably be unfair. But a few things stand out: Bob Silverberg is a young writer still, with a readable and uncomplicated style, a fluent imagination, and a competent hand at his chosen craft. He has already acquired the basic tools of his trade -- a perfect ability to manipulate elements, to tell a story, to make old tricks sound like new tricks.



From reading these two novels, I would say that Silverberg, right now, is poised at some sort of turning point in his career. He can degenerate into a comfortable, profitable hacksmanship and be the new Ray Cummings of science fiction, with a large faceless audience that knows a Silverberg story is always entertaining and will not make any great demands on the intellect. The critics will not think much of him, but the editors will appreciate him tremendously because a Silverberg story can be accepted sight unseen: it will be competent, craftsmanlike, and readable.

Or, having early acquired the basic tools of the trade, Silverberg can go on to develop his characterization (which seems to be his main weakness at present), enlarge his basic control of plot, broaden his vision, and give free rein to his essential sensitivities. He can retain all the credits of his competence

-- the appreciation of the general reader, the confidence of the editors -- but he can also, if he uses his talents in their broadest way, grow perhaps into another Heinlein or Kuttner, whose prolific outputs have in no way damped their perceptive tendrils.

It will be interesting, say in five years, to read another pair of Silverberg novels and see which choice he has made.

FRED CHAPPELL

EGO IN THE SKY

EYE IN THE SKY, by Philip K. Dick. Ace Books, 1957. 35¢.

PHILIP K. DICK'S NEW NOVEL is based upon the same gimmick as What Mad Universe; it is perhaps a consequence of this fact that it suffers from the same fault as Fredric Brown's novel: oversimplified characterization. In Brown's novel, this was perhaps excusable: the character who should have been most skilfully characterized was merely a cliché, but if Joe Doppelberg had been anything more than a standard science fiction fan "type," the audience would not have recognized his private universe. What Mad Universe might have been a novel of more importance if Joe Doppelberg had been a slightly more complex character, but then the book would have lost much of its facility, and probably, somewhere along the line, its entire point.

In Eye in the Sky, the hero is subjected to universes made up of the private fantasies of four people. One is a standard southern-white fundamentalist Baptist; one is a combination of Kate Smith and Mary Margaret McBride with tastes probably derived from an overexposure to Saturday Review; one is a tohellandgone paranoiac; one is a guilt-ridden subconscious communist (whatever that is). It is obvious that Mr Dick has a few deserving pincushions into which he wishes to stick pins. If he seems sometimes to have laid his hand on a railroad spike, it is no more than one expects from the basic gimmick and from his choice of protagonist.

Sending your protagonist into another character's private universe is a queasy matter. It presupposes that your protagonist is an unfailing realist and that he will dislike the universe to which he is subjected. Otherwise there would be no protagonist: he would lose his identity and become only the kind of character the creator of the universe wishes him to be. Indeed, the question arises here as to whether the protagonist can perform any autonomous action whatsoever, since he is really a figure in the dreamer's imagination. Dick tries to answer this by saying that none of the dreamers is omniscient; hence, very often, the character is free to act on his own. In other words, there is a void which must be filled by an intelligence; since no man is omniscient, he can't fathom the minds of other men, thus leaving a void which is filled by the other person's will or intelligence. This is shaky work: it is, after all, a private universe. One doesn't have to know all about everything to construct a fairly logical private universe, and he has only to know something about himself to be able to assign a castiron, hermetic role to everyone he meets. Moreover, in orthodox psychology, a possible postulate is that one subconsciously knows everything about himself.

Orthodox psychology has, however, no place here. The private universes of these characters are dreamlike in structure; that is, they consist of wish-fulfillment. But the secondary Freudian postulate must be considered: that to wish in this manner (i.e., that one is God, or that Russia does not exist) is also to be haunted by a feeling of guilt, and the roots of the trouble are represented by the "plots" of these psychotic fantasies. In view of this, the characters get off too lightly in one respect: they enjoy the crime without suffering the punishment. From what we know of psychology, this can't be done.

But perhaps the book shouldn't be judged in this manner. The basic gimmick is, after all, patently ridiculous, and one suspects, as in the case of Brown's novel, that the reader is expected to swallow it and read on, disregarding psychology and little things like that. One should read it, as in, again, the case of Brown, as an adventure story and for whatever else it may offer incidentally. It is a very entertaining book, and the rocks it throws at various half-assed ideas and attitudes are well-placed. The adventure element is not so well handled as in What Mad Universe, nor is its satire as pointed. (What Mad Universe is the most damning indictment of sf fans ever written. The fact that it was so well received is itself an eternal damnation of fans, in that they presumably found nothing strange about Joe Doppelberg's most glorious conception of himself as a completely disembodied intelligence: a floating iron superbrain.)

Eye in the Sky is very good light reading, but it cannot pretend to being more than that. It is not an important science fiction novel such as, say, Odd John, More Than Human, or even Beyond This Horizon. On the face of it, it would seem that Mr Dick had an opportunity to write a science fiction novel that I'd read at least as many times as I've read Final Blackout (four times). The basic idea is good: it is the same one as used in the Divina Commedia, which I'll probably continue to read until I'm dead. The idea is modified to about the same extent as it is in Philip Jose Farmer's recent novelet, "The Night of Light" (F&SF, June 1957).

One derives something valuable from seeing sinners go to hell, and the visit to hell occupies a large place in the literature of the world. It begins much earlier than Book XI of the Odyssey, leaves a trace in "A Midsummer Night's Dream," and occupies a goodly section of Ezra Pound's Cantos. In Eye in the Sky, the protagonist is sent to hell four times in quick succession. Four different people are in private hells of their own making. The hell of the paranoiac is as frightening and sick-making as, say, the ninth bolge of the Eighth Circle of the Inferno. But paranoia is a disease, not a sin. Dante is, according to the precepts of Thomistic philosophy, quite justified in torturing the schismatics with horrible self-mutilations. They had free will during their stay on earth, and they created this hell for themselves by the nature of their misdeeds. They chose to be schismatics; the doctrine of determinism (without which science could not exist) did not bother Dante -- although, of course, it had been around for centuries by his time. No one chooses to be paranoid; it is a psychotic condition which may even have a physical cause, according to some recent experiments in California. What right, then, has Mr Dick to torture his eight characters by making paranoid fantasies physical realities? It is as if Dr Johnson were suddenly made God and those immovable and arbitrary decisions took effect.

Mr Dick has, of course, the right to do anything he wants to with his characters. After all, he invented them. He also invented his protagonist, and one assumes that he has at least a measure of sympathy for him. But this protagonist is the surliest critter I've seen since the male lead in "The Incredible Shrinking

Man." His main purpose seems to be to make snide remarks about the other characters and to recoil in horror from their fantasies. Upon what basis can he do this?

"We've been in three fantasy worlds," Hamilton said. "Three closed worlds that don't touch on reality at any point. Once we're in them we're stuck -- there's no way out. So far, we've had bad luck." Thoughtfully, he said, "But I'm not so sure the rest of us live in total fantasies."

After a moment, Laws said, "You smug sonofabitch."

"It could be true."

"Possibly."

"It includes you."

"No thanks!"

"You," Hamilton said, "are neurotic and cynical, but you're also a realist. So am I...."

I have to agree with Laws, the Negro guide: "No thanks!" In the fantasy world of Mrs Pritchett, even though it was a sentimentally silly one, the protagonist's survival was in no way threatened, but almost immediately he begins to plan to kill Mrs Pritchett or at least render her unconscious. How does he justify this? Easy: he's a realist.

No thanks! Mrs Pritchett's world, though I'd hate it like Sunday school, is at least essentially harmless. A hell I'd hate to go to would be the protagonist's: a world full of laboratories doing research on high fidelity equipment, guaranteeing the absolute purity of sounds which can't be heard, cities laid out by Picasso and full of architecture by Klee, where everybody has a pretty wife, etc.: the paradise of the intellectual snob. Much as I like Picasso and seventeenth century lute music, I'd go nuts there shortly. I don't think Mr Dick would like my fantasy world either.

If the protagonist in Eye in the Sky had been a Catholic priest, it might have been a fairly important novel. Science and/or pragmatic philosophy cannot provide a reliable basis for consigning people to hell: only a consistent morality can do that. Science and pragmatism cannot offer a consistent morality -- that is not their purpose. But that is the crying need of this novel: a moral basis.

DON H. NABOURS

THREE CASTAWAYS

FIRST ON MARS, by Rex Gordon. Ace Books, 1957. 35¢.

CYCLE OF FIRE, by Hal Clement. Ballantine, 1957. \$2.75 and 35¢.

THE GREEN ODYSSEY, by Philip Jose Farmer. Ballantine, 1957. \$2.75 and 35¢.

WHEN THE ROCKET, "a long silver craft, round and alien," came to Mars, "it fell down softly to land" on the green lawn of a Victorian-style house with geraniums at the windows. Or: the rocket men found people with "gold coin eyes" who swam in the Martian canals "when the wine trees filled them with green liquors" under the blue

Martian sky. Or: the rocket landed by a dead Martian city, and the men crawled out, gathered dry wood, and built a campfire, and sang songs.

When the Ares landed on Mars, the crew found grey plains covered with small "blobby growths" and inhabited by bizarre creatures, neither plant nor animal. The crew members suffered from frostbite and the lack of oxygen when they ventured outside, and felt cooped-in under the sky because of the narrow horizons of the planet.

The Martian Chronicles and "A Martian Odyssey" represent two sharply opposed viewpoints -- not about Mars but about science fiction and its function. For Bradbury a purely imaginative depiction of Mars is essential for his purposes, while for Weinbaum a factual depiction is equally essential. Bradbury's book is of course not science fiction at all except by accident of its extraterrestrial setting; little he says about man on Mars can ever be true and the value of his fairy tales stems from the fact that he illuminates some truths about man on Earth by removing some of us and our foibles to a place where we can look at ourselves from a new perspective. Weinbaum's Mars stories, on the other hand, are science fiction from concept outward, and the very essence of "A Martian Odyssey" and "Valley of Dreams" is that the author has allowed the facts we know, or think we know, about Mars strictly to shape and limit the imaginative view.

Rex Gordon's novel is, in some respects, a thoroughly unlikely, eminently successful amalgamation of the Bradbury and Weinbaum viewpoints, in the setting of their most famous stories. To be sure, Mr Gordon leans heavily toward the Weinbaum side, but parts of his book and his purpose in writing it seem strongly Bradburian.

The spaceship that gets the protagonist Gordon Holder to Mars so that the story can begin is quite as fantastic as any Bradbury might depict in a happy moment. The spaceship is built in wonderful secrecy at Woomera, camouflaged as a water tower against even the eyes of the British government which unknowingly supplied the funds for the ship. The rocket takes off, also in secret, from the Australian desert, carrying seven men on a round trip to Mars -- all this fifteen years before an American ship succeeds in landing on Mars (beating the Americans into space seems to be a popular pastime). The ship is intended only to circle Mars and return -- "if we could only have doctored the books to the tune of another three million pounds we could have made a landing" -- but through a very curious sequence of events crash-lands on Mars carrying only a single crew member. This happenstance is not quite so fantastic as the accident in the movie "Rocketship X-M" wherein a spaceship aimed at the moon shoots past and hits Mars instead, but the first five chapters of First on Mars are almost as preposterous as a Bradbury science fiction story.

Someone has written that Bradbury's spaceships are purely imaginary contraptions; but they do not exist even to that degree. They are completely nonexistent: Bradbury's descriptions of them plant in one's mind the awful belief that he has somehow confused space rockets with Fourth of July rockets. Rex Gordon's spaceship exists imaginatively, even if the ship is an improbable beast. Mr Gordon gives the reader the impression that it can be touched, lived in, and directed, not that it is an elusive wisp of dream. The author probably knows something about rocketry -- enough to realize that the spaceship he describes is a towering sham.

First on Mars invites comparison with Robinson Crusoe -- Gordon's book was first published in England as No Man Friday -- but this Bradburian opening makes the book stand in pale contrast to Daniel Defoe's masterpiece. The solid, documentary beginning of Robinson Crusoe, full of evidence of the narrator's native honesty and his

powers of observation, persuades us that he actually experienced the other adventures he records. There is little circumstantial reality in Holder's tale till he lands on Mars, and after hearing such absurd things about rockets blasting off from Earth and making secret trips to the moon and Mars, we find it quite conceivable that the rest of his story is merely part of a wild alcoholic dream.

Holder's six companions are killed off in a space accident almost as ironic as the chance which drowned the fourteen man crew of Crusoe's ship. In that novel, you will remember, their lifeboat founders while the abandoned ship itself, caught on a reef, remains safely upright a mile from shore during the storm. In First on Mars, while the protagonist risks his life in a spacesuit, climbing on the hull of the rocket while it is in space, the others, remaining inside, are killed in a foolish, incomprehensible mishap.

But the family resemblance of First on Mars to Robinson Crusoe begins in chapter six, with Holder alive in the hulk that had once been a spaceship. From here on in, the book is science fiction in the strictest sense, leaving Bradbury's dream world more than 34 million miles away -- although, as I shall mention in a moment, Bradburian aspects reappear in the latter portions of the book. The resemblance between books which depict the adventures of a solitary castaway is not accidental. There is basically only one story to tell on this theme: the fight to survive in the face of natural perils. The natural forces that oppose the castaway must be described, and the castaway's resources must be arrayed against them; the ensuing struggle must be decided logically by weighing one strength against the other. Defoe was the first to tell the story according to these rules, and -- though the rules are after all empirical -- every other novel on the theme must perforce resemble his. It is not a matter of mere slavish imitation.

THE FLUTTER BIRD

They came from the treetops all together
Swarming along in the rainy weather
Rookery, rookery, rising high
Turn like a flutter wheel in the sky

Fluttery down on a shiny pond
Set about greenery fern and frond
Rustle through grasses dead and dry
Little one, little one, time to fly

Lavender clouds on the far hill's rim
Watch while the world turns under him
Tilting and swaying and growing small
Who'll ever know he was here at all

— JEAN YOUNG

There is another rule: the castaway must be no superman, else there would be no struggle. If he can build a spacewarper out of his wrist watch and whip away, he is no Crusoe. Most science fiction heroes are supermen, and as a consequence there have been few Crusoe novels in science fiction. But on the other hand the castaway must not be too ordinary a man. He must insist that he is a very commonplace person, and Crusoe himself declares that he "had never handled a tool in (his) life." Stevens, a castaway on Ganymede, in E. E. Smith's Spacehounds of IPC, calls himself the worst chemist in the world. Gordon Holder describes himself as follows: "No one had ever called me brilliant. I was just the sort of person who was useful on a camping holiday, who would mend his own punctures when out cycling, and who would give a hand to decarbonise the engine for a car. As a practical engineer, I had never ranked very high with the mathematicians and professors back at Woomera." Nevertheless, all fictional castaways prove to be extremely resourceful, far more handy with tools and possessed of greater skill in outwrestling nature than the average man. Perhaps it

proves that all men are possessed of unsuspected resources; more probably it proves merely that a castaway must actually be a little above average in order to survive.

Till science fiction writers were willing, as they should have been willing all along, to abide by the facts of the real world in providing a setting for their interplanetary Crusoes, none of their novels were at all comparable with Defoe's. In Spacehounds of IPC, for example, Smith unfairly loaded the dice in his hero's favor by postulating a fertile and congenial climate for Ganymede. A tropical island was a fair choice for Crusoe's place of exile, but it isn't fair to transport the island to the Jovian system. Without making Mars a terrestrial world as Bradbury did, Gordon has managed at least to postulate a more congenial world than most astronomers would be optimistic enough to predict. Yet he has, like Weinbaum, stayed within the narrow band of probabilities. It was necessary to be as liberal as possible in extrapolating life on Mars under the conditions described, for if the hero of a Crusoe novel cannot be a superman, neither can nature be too powerful, or the hero cannot win. The life Holder discovers on Mars is as alien and as screwy as anything Dick Jarvis finds on his "odyssey." Holder's journey of discovery, and most significant of all, Holder's method of establishing communication with the Martian "Eii," closely resemble "A Martian Odyssey." But there the resemblance ends. In the latter part of the book the author forsakes Weinbaum for Bradbury (though without going to Bradbury's Mars); or perhaps he forsakes Daniel Defoe for Jonathan Swift. At any rate Holder, far from finding a Man Friday, doesn't even meet a Tweel.

Instead he meets a Houyhnhnm. Or perhaps Eii is a Brobdingnagian. He is neither and both. He is a Houyhnhnm because he is not of human form, a Brobdingnagian in size. At any rate he is not simply a Weinbaum screwy animal, but a creature such as Gulliver might have met had he made a fifth voyage. Like Gulliver in Brobdingnag, Holder becomes sort of a pet of Eii, a creature as big "as a two-ton yacht." The Martians are as parochial and dogmatic as Houyhnhnms: when Holder tells them of the whales on Earth, and of their large and complex brains, the Martians assume that whales are the dominant species -- an incident inspired directly by "A Voyage to the Houyhnhnms," wherein Gulliver had to explain that man, or Yahoos, and not horses, or Houyhnhnms, were the dominant species in the outer world.

More important, the Martians' nature contrasts with ours, so that by regarding them we may be reminded of some truths about ourselves. The Martians are non-materialistic and cast dark doubts on the necessity of making life more comfortable and of "striving to see our world and learn what we can of all there is to see." Space travel as a means or an end is thoroughly denigrated. This episode is far more convincing than any of Bradbury's harmonies on the same theme -- the chapters "The Earth Men" and "The Third Expedition" in The Martian Chronicles parallel Gordon's story in this phase: the Martians passively resisting the Earthmen, then defeating them with a single incomprehensible stroke -- and it is carried out without violating our picture of Mars as given us by the scientists.

First on Mars ends with a speech that Bradbury himself might have written. Holder foresees that the materialistic Americans will oppose Eii and the Martians:

"People like the General will treat it as a practical problem. They will see it that they have been opposed by power on Mars, and they will seek to overcome it with greater power. I would even go so far as this. In the end, I think we'll win. We'll conquer the strange beasts of Mars just as we conquered the strange beasts of the continents and the oceans. And, in conquering, we'll learn nothing from them. We'll not even treat them as

creatures who could see or feel or know. We'll kill them and use them, as I told you, for their bones or blood or oil...."

And of course by this time Mr Gordon is writing another Bradbury Mars story: "And the Moon Be Still As Bright." Whatever he is writing, however, whether it falls toward Weinbaum or toward Bradbury, is brilliantly done. First on Mars is one of the most important science fiction novels of the year.

Two other recent novels, neither as important as Mr Gordon's book, concern the adventures of extraterrestrial castaways. Each is, initially at least, motivated by a quest that takes the castaways across many miles of an alien planet and the plot, such as it is, strings along the line of the protagonist's travels. This is a good device; it is the basis for such dissimilar books as Don Quixote and Huckleberry Finn, but Hal Clement's Cycle of Fire misuses it. As Lionel Trilling points out, such a story possesses "a clear dramatic organization; it has a beginning, a middle and an end, and a mounting suspense of interest." By abandoning the journey and the device in chapter XI, where the hero is suddenly rescued by the ship that mistakenly marooned him on the alien planet many months before, Clement lets the novel sag at the middle joint. From then on, the protagonist's adventures, interesting enough in themselves, are as pointless as Huck Finn's at the end of Twain's masterpiece, where Huck aids Tom Sawyer in "rescuing" Jim from imprisonment as a runaway slave.

Perhaps the most interesting aspect of Cycle of Fire is that once again we find echoes of Weinbaum lurking in the material. The human protagonist, Nils Kruger, rescues an alien creature, Dar Lang Ahn, dying of thirst in a great lava field, and the two of them strike up a friendship. They learn to converse after considerable difficulty. One is sharply reminded of the way Dick Jarvis rescued Tweel from the clutches of the dream-beast, became his friend, and learned to talk with him.

Philip Jose Farmer's The Green Odyssey puts an interplanetary castaway, one Alan Green, down on a planet circling a distant sun. This planet is not only inhabited but inhabited by man, and Green's main concern is not so much survival in the teeth of raging natural forces but rescue by an Earthly spaceship which lands by chance on the planet. His problems are, first, to reach the place where the ship is, and, second, to rescue the two-man crew, imprisoned as demons. Green has to travel across a vast plain on a windroller, a vehicle equipped with vast sails, like a sea-going ship. The novel concerns his adventures along the way. Though his adventures are sometimes amusing or exciting, one is reminded that "odyssey" has become almost as corrupted a literary term in popular parlance as "tragedy." It is absurd to call Green's journey an odyssey, thus comparing it with Odysseus' ten years of wandering.

The Green Odyssey is essentially a descendant of the same sort of science fiction that begat Ray Bradbury: dawn-age science fiction, in which Mars, Venus, Jupiter, and other solar planets were peopled with human beings as if they were other Earths. By pointedly ignoring scientific data and setting his stories on an Earthly Mars, Bradbury can be said to be writing merely fantasy. Writers like Farmer, however, are presumed to write science fiction because they choose to set their stories on planets inhabited by humans which are far out in the galaxy and far from the gaze of spoilsport scientists. But such distant planets are almost as preposterous as Bradbury's Mars. Earthmen may in the far future settle on Earthlike planets circling Arcturus or Aldebaran and build up a civilization such as Farmer imagines. But such planets will most obviously never be visited, and adventured in, by Earthmen named Bill Jones, Jack Smith, or Alan Green, any more than America is visited, and adventured in, by Achaeans named Patroclus, Achilles, or Odysseus.

FANZINE CHRONICLE

THE "A" LIST contains reports on the ten best fanzines received during the summer quarter 1957. The "B" List contains reports on other fanzines. Magazines circulated only in apas are not reviewed, nor are Science Fiction Forum, Science Fiction Parade, and The Harp Stateside reviewed here. The annotations mention critical material and other noteworthy items in the magazines. The date supplied in parentheses indicates the month an undated magazine was received.

"A" LIST

Cry of the Nameless (Wally Weber, Box 92, 920 Third av., Seattle 4, Wash.); #106, Aug 1957. Prozine reviews by Renfrew Pemberton and Burnett R. Tosky. A fanzine as loosely constructed as IC 1613, but with fine material. Indispensable.

Kteic Magazine (William Rotsler); #34, n/d (Aug). A letter substitute grown to kingsize. Indescribable and unavailable unless you've blackmail material.

Retribution (John Berry, 31 Campbell Park av., Belmont, Belfast, Northern Ireland and Arthur Thomson, 17 Brockham house, Brockham drive, London S.W.2, England); #7, n/d (Sep). John Berry's "Non-Shaver Mystery"; Bob Shaw's "Chance of a Ghost." Profusely ATomilloed.

Sata Illustrated (Bill Pearson, 4516 East Glenrosa av., Phoenix, Ariz.); #7, summer 1957. Beautiful artwork by Dan Adkins -- worthy of John Grossman; "Cat," a clever verse by Robert Williams.

Science Fiction Yearbook (Fandom House, PO Box 2331, Patterson 23, N. J.); #1, 1957 (Aug). Sam Moskowitz' controversial sf market survey 1956; Takacs' list of 1956's sf books; Tom Gardner's reviews of 1956's magazines ("Who Speaks of Conquest?...is one of the best novels I have read in several years") (!!). Worthwhile project.

Spectre (Bill Meyers, 4301 Shawnee circle, Chattanooga 11, Tenn.); #1, fall 1957. Various fan and pro criticism by George W. Fields and Ron Parker. Fine artwork. Though overburdened with a lot of fan fiction, a promising entry.

Stellar (Ted E. White, 1014 North Tuckahoe st., Falls Church, Va.); #11, n/d (July). Superior fandom fiction by Marion Z. Bradley, Charles Burbee, Harry Warner, Dick Eney. Lovely layouts by Ted White. Recommended.

#12, n/d (Oct). Parodies of famous sf yarns by Paul Spencer, Ron Parker, Gregg Calkins, D. R. Smith, Terry Jeeves, Cliff Gould; fanzine reviews by Dick Eney (?). More lovely layouts by Ted White and excellent artwork.

Veritas (Berry and Thomson -- see Retribution); #5, n/d (Sep). Published for OMPA but evidently available to others. The voice of the Celtic afternoon.

Yandro (Robert and Juanita Coulson, 105 Stitt st., Wabash, Ind.); #56, Sep 1957. Marion Z. Bradley's column about mythological works and fairy tale collections; Bob Coulson's definitive fanzine reviews. Always a pleasant magazine.

"B" LIST

Brillig (Lars Bourne, 2436 $\frac{1}{2}$ Portland st., Eugene, Ore.); #9, n/d (Sep). Kent Moomaw on TV commercials; John Champion on Seattle conclave. Good artwork.

Brifsk! (John Champion, Fleming House, 1301 E. California st., Pasadena, Calif.); no #, n/d (Sep). Mailbox filler -- published "mainly" to inform us of his new address (above). But it turns out he's not sure if it is his new address. Shades of Peter Vorzimer.

Colony (Lars Helander, Lohegatan 11, Eskilstuna 3, Sweden); #4 (?); n/d (Aug). Ramblings plus Rotsler artwork.

Grifanac (Tom Reamy, 4332 Avondale, Dallas 19, Texas); #5, June 1957. Brief autobiog of Lyn Venable. To complete your files.

Dead Calm (G. M. Carr, 5319 Ballard av., Seattle 7, Wash.); no #; n/d (Aug). Singlesheet of fmz reviews, ramblings.

Erratic (Jim Gaughran, c/o American Embassy, APO 74, Box K, San Francisco, Calif.); #2, 1957 (Aug). Brief item on cartoonist Hank Ketchum. Thin soup.

Eternity (Richard Brown & Paul Stanbery, 127 Roberts st., Pasadena 3, Calif.); #1, n/d (July). Mike Sullivan reviews Future, Space SF, SFQ. Neofannish.

ffm (Pierre Versins, Primerose 38, Lausanne, Switzerland); #1 (sic), Sep 1957. Fan fiction.

ffm ending (Pierre Versins -- see above); #3, July 1957. Ramblings. (A different fanzine from ffm, perhaps.)

Focus (Mervyn Barrett, 6 Doctors commons, Wellington 6.4, New Zealand); #5, June 1957. Bob McCubbin's "Olympicon Afterthoughts"; Barrett's transcription of a radio interview of one Edmund Sweehack, who played lead role in the movie "Lair of the Zombie Bug Man" -- hilarious!

Haemogoblin (Fred Smith, 613 Great Western rd., Glasgow W.2, Scotland); #3, n/d (July). Meandering comments addressed largely to OMPA. Amusing.

The Lonely Half-Shot (?) (Lynn Hickman, 304 N. 11th, Mount Vernon, Ill.); one-shot, n/d (Oct). Four-page dialog between Hickman and Bob Tucker. Amusing.

Meuh (Jean & Annie Linard, 24 rue Petit, Vesoul, H.S., France); #2-3, Sep 1957. 72 pages of Linard's fabulous chaos!

Muzzy (Claude Hall, 2214 San Antonio, Austin 5, Texas); #17, June 1957. "An Interview with Chad Oliver"; no-holds-barred fanzine reviews. Fine fanzine.

Orion (Paul Enever, 97 Pole Hill road, Hillingdon, Middlesex, England); #19, n/d (July). "Marie Celeste" by George Richards; good fanzine reviews.

Polarity (F. M. and E. Busby, 2852 14th West, Seattle 99, Wash.) #1, fall 1957. Longish Midwestcon report. Promising.

Rapier (Eric Erickson, 3624 Center "B" st NW, Calgary, Alta., Canada); #3, n/d (July). Babble a' green fools.

Shangri-LA (George Fields, 3607 Pomona blvd., Montebello, Calif.); no #, fall 1957. After ten years the LASFS still hasn't managed to replace Burbee!

SLANder (Jan Sadler Penney, 51-B McAlister place, New Orleans 18, La.); #2, Sep 1957. Harlan Ellison's "Remembrances of Idiocy" -- which previously appeared in part in Tacitum #7.

Space Diversions (John Roles, 26 Pine Grove, Waterloo, Liverpool 22, England) #9, n/d (Sep). Pete Daniels' "How Erroneous Was My Hieronymous"; Frank Milnes' "Omnia Vincit Fandom." Topnotch artwork by Eddie Jones.

Tacitum (Benny Sodek, 1415 South Marsalis Dallas 18, Texas); #8, July 1957. Noah McLeod's "Theodore Sturgeon: Surrealist" ("reasonably good fantasy writer but most of his sf is mediocre").

Triple Whammy (John Magnus Jr, 6 South Franklinton rd., Baltimore 23, Md.); one-shot, n/d (July). Amusing trivia; unusual "dynamic layouts" by Ted White.

Twice in a Blue Moon (Manchester Circle, c/o Dave Cohen, 32 Larch st., Hightown, Manchester 8, Lancs., England); no #, n/d (Sep). Fannish humor and satire; superb artwork by Bill Harry, others.

Varioso (John Magnus -- see Triple Whammy); #14, n/d (July). Magnus on fans vs society; Jim Aletaster on progress in sf.

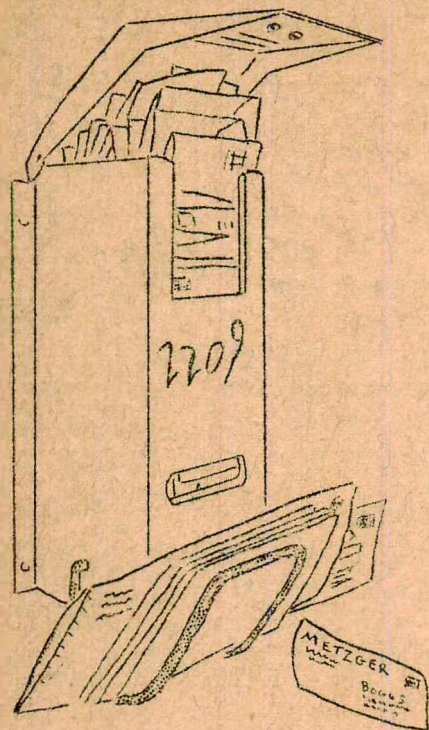
#15, Oct 1957. Review of David Gordon's "Look Out! Duck!"; various reviews of sf-horror movies; long letter department. Nice job; recommended.

Yandro (Robert and Juanita Coulson, 105 Stitt st., Wabash, Ind.); vol. V, no.8, Aug 1957. An "A" list fanzine, but too heavy on Midwestcon reports this issue.

"I Was A Teenage Teenager"

NEXT ISSUE, out in January 1958, will contain material by Leland Sapiro, Arthur Jean Cox, Harry Warner Jr, Bob Tucker, August Derleth, Marion Zimmer Bradley, Jean Young, Fred Chappell, and others -- including William Atheling Jr.

FRED CHAPPELL:



Skyhook #24 was a very good issue as a whole, I thought, though not up to some you have published. Layout and Gestetnering marvelous. I thought "Twippledop" the best thing in the whole issue. Pessimism seems to me an essentially meaningless term when applied to works of writing. Is "Hamlet" pessimistic and "Twelfth Night" optimistic?

Joe Gibson and I have different definitions of intellectual snob. His apparently includes Trilling, Barzun, even Donne and Philip Jose Farmer, people whose writings I like. He apparently isn't aware that he is a schoolofhardknocks snob, or perhaps he doesn't care. The word "snob" is applicable to almost anyone; it is the word "intellectual" that carries the stigma of guilt. For the simple reason that intellectuals are guilty. It is a tough question and if it weren't so early in the morning I'd go in to it.

Presumably you cut out a great part of the William Atheling column because it was outdated. Frankly, I think Atheling is valuable enough to keep, no matter how outdated his stuff is. Often his criticism is much more important than the stories he speaks of. I think it would have stood alone.

Typing the final draft of my review of Eye in the Sky with it one week cold pointed out its obvious faults to me. Foremost, it suffers from the same problem that besets all Skhk's contributors: the uncertainty as to how the book should be judged. It appears that all Skhk reviews should be written three times from three different standards. This triple standard is necessitated because we're writing about science fiction.

(1) The book should in all justice be judged according to its own standards. There is no use, for example, of censuring Jack Vance's Big Planet because it is not War and Peace. If the book attempts nothing more than being a pleasant accompaniment to the recordplayer and a whiskey sour, it should be judged thereby, for if it is dull it fails. (Planet Stories would be a bad magazine, even in this respect.)

(2) The book should be judged as to how good it is as science fiction. Mission of Gravity would be a terrible failure if judged as pass-the-time reading, and an equally terrible failure if it were judged by the standards of great literature (using the term advisedly, of course). As an example of sf I don't think it can be surpassed.

(3) This standard will probably be rejected by many Skhk readers, but I imagine every fan of any standing hopes to see science fiction contribute, if only in a minor way, to the really fine literature of our time, in the same way that the crime story has. (Thinking here of Simenon rather than Chandler.) It is only by means of a deep and affectionate interest in sf that a fan could bring himself to knock More

THE CAPTURED CROSS-SECTION
LETTERS

Than Human for not being as good a novel as Faulkner's These Thirteen -- which it resembles in many respects. It's hard to judge a sf novel in this respect because one comes suddenly to the disheartening and probably true postulate that perhaps Sturgeon doesn't have the finer equipment that it takes to create stuff of lasting value, whereas Faulkner obviously has. But it is rather frustrating for a fan to come upon a work like Sturgeon's which goes so far beyond the imagined limits of sf, yet not make it quite all the way. Yet it would only be the fan's love for the field which drove him to make such a superficially cruel comparison.

Perhaps there is a sort of Platonic society of books as well as of men. We don't judge criminals solely by their own intentions. If we did we would let the smoothly planned robberies go unpunished because they carried out their own purposes so admirably. Fortunately or unfortunately, we cannot judge by this basis. Every sf novel is guilty of not being a great novel, no matter how entertaining it is or how good it is as sf, simply because there's a devastating need for great novels just as there is always a devastating need for great men. Of course, the majority of sf novels needn't concern us at all in this respect: it's the near misses that deserve our attention, for perhaps by constant examination we may yet achieve, on the dim periphery of sf proper, a great novel.

It's for this reason that it is errant flattery to call Skhk writers critics. Their love for the field requires them to exhibit faults of which a mundane critic cannot be guilty. They are not examining; they are pleading, or more precisely, pushing. I'm not at all certain that they would wish to be called critics anyway. (Candler motel, Candler, North Carolina)

DICK RYAN

The words "a quarterly review of science fiction" define Skyhook much more truly, I think, than "individualist quarterly." I'm all in favor of individualism, but I couldn't quite see the special function of the quality which required such an explicit statement.

I was a little jarred to read James E. Gunn's statement that the primary aim of fiction is to entertain. I thought it was to tell the truth about some aspect of life. This is not always entertaining, unless he defines the word more broadly than I. James Joyce, for instance, is sometimes entertaining, but sometimes he's just hard work; but I think he's telling the truth about a certain kind of life. This is a quibble, perhaps, and entertainment is certainly a chief function of fiction (for chief read major), and perhaps the chief function of science fiction. And as for sf as orienting society toward the future -- what's cause and effect here? Do people become future-oriented through reading sf or do people read sf because they are future-oriented? And I always have to ask: to what extent is science fiction merely an expression of escapism? (166 East Lane avenue, Columbus 1, Ohio)

WALTER A. WILLIS

If people weren't so nauseatedly familiar with all the jokes that can be made with their own name I would say that this is a Redd letter day, but this is a trap I keep trying harder and harder not to fall into. It's difficult though; you think of something in the nature of wordplay on a person's name and are momentarily carried away by its novelty, forgetting that the other has had something like a quarter of a century to think about his own name. I remember even a mind like Bill Temple's fell into this trap. The first time I was at The White Horse I was telling Peter Phillips a shaggy dog story about a dog that said "RUFF!" in which one had to imitate a bark, and Temple exclaimed, "Aha. Willis is barking!" I had to accord intellectual admiration to the joke though. Temple thought of it in five minutes whereas it had taken me seventeen years to arrive at it.

Skyhook came the same day as your letter -- nice timing. That question of Prof. John E. Arnold's has had me worried ever since. At first I inclined to the theory

that perhaps the mirror does reverse the image from top to bottom, but we just don't recognize it. You remember those experiments in Austria in which the subject was given spectacles to wear which inverted everything and after a few weeks constant wear his brain turned the images right way up again. Further, when the glasses were taken off, he saw everything upside down for a few days. But then we don't spend our lives looking into mirrors, do we. No, I suppose it must be something to do with the fact that our eyes are set laterally. When you look sideways into a mirror, after all, top and bottom are transposed. It all reminds me of a conversation we had here once when we were trying to persuade Peggy White that when you turn a TV set on its side the picture turns sideways too. George sagely pointed out that when you turn a radio set on its side the music doesn't come out sideways.

There was an interesting discussion in the Third recently about parity: you know, broadly the principle that nature is ambidexterous. Apparently this isn't so any more. Exceptions have been found, in particles which insist on revolving in only one direction. It's all mixed up with contra-terrene matter, and I only wished I'd had Andy Young to explain that it wasn't because I was dumb that I couldn't quite follow it, but because they were too dumb to explain it in my frames of reference.

Interestingly, that Freas cover you mention on page 4 Heavyweight Champion of the World, on If, Dec. 1955⁷ shocked various English fans, but no one on your side uttered a peep. (170 Upper Newtownards road, Belfast, Northern Ireland)

DAMON KNIGHT

Delighted with the new Skyhook, especially Jim Harmon's unexpected review: can I have tearsheets of this for my scrapbook? I thought Marion Z. Bradley's review of The Frozen Year was also very sound and penetrating, a pleasant surprise. Like your new accent on criticism, and hope you can keep it up.

Startled that you flipped so hard for "Omnilingual." Didn't the two-dimensional characters and impossible dialog bother you at all? (Pennsylvania)

RICK SNEARY

Most moving item in the issue is the Gunn speech, "Window on Tomorrow." At least that is the way I feel, and if I'd been there I'd of clapped like crazy. (Just as I did for Richard Matheson at Westercon IX. He talked for ten minutes about what a writer owes to his field, and made a very telling point of it. I looked down to write a note on it, and when I looked up he had sat down. Most remarkable. Mark Clifton, at this year's Westercon, talked very well about the importance of thinking, and stf writers' responsibilities, but went on for 100 minutes.) Well, I'm sidetracked, but what I was getting around to is, how come? How come these good writers -- they are all good writers -- say so much, and the field doesn't get any better? I feel that "they" aren't listening.

I hope you will get more Joe Gibson. Or was his article a real old item? Joe is a provocative firebrand at times. There is something about him and Jim Harmon that is solid and dependable. You seem to be one of the last resting places of this serious but not "sercon" writing. (2962 Santa Ana street, South Gate, California)

ISAAC ASIMOV

Hey, you've put me in a helluva spot. Here I am reading Skyhook #24 in which some guys talk about Lowndes' article (presumably in Skyhook #23) in which he quoted some stuff from me -- only I never saw Skyhook #23. Wha'd I say? Wha'd I say?

Anyway, I remember enough of what I said to be able to answer James Blish's letter. Blish quotes two remarks of mine. One is to the effect that I wish Damon Knight would review a book of mine (whether for good or evil) so that I could learn by it. Well, why not? A favorable review elates me and an unfavorable review de-

presses me, but eventually elation and/or depression pass and if I think about the matter, chances are I'll learn something.

Blish also quotes me as saying a critic proper is small beer compared to an editor who can lose you a thousand or two in the twinkle of a typewriter. That was said in response to an Atheling criticism that I couldn't take. I explained that it was not my habit to take personal attack from anyone and it would never be my habit. As for legitimate criticism, if I could take editorial rejections with a grin (as I can), I can take criticism, too.

Get it now? Have I got it clear? Criticism is small beer financially, but can be useful instructionally. If the instruction can result in eventual financial benefit, that depends entirely on the auctorial reception and utilization of the criticism, not on the critic. To me, there is no conflict in the two views of criticism.

Incidentally, I just read a Time magazine review denouncing the current Judy Merrill anthology very bitterly and among other things cutting up the Damon Knight story. So I'm daydreaming of a review by Damon which would cut up Time and its anonymous book reviewer who thinks Jules Verne is out of this world and was once also favorably impressed by Robinson Crusoe.

P. S.: As long as Damon Knight calls for the outlawing of "genre," may I ask that "aficionado" also be excised? It is an importation from mystery-fandom by way of Tony Boucher (whom I nevertheless love) and it is a ridiculous synonym for "fan." Lately I heard a certain lovable sf personality say in his usual ungrammatical fashion, "This here story is the kinda thing that the sf" (pause) "aficionado" (pause) "goes for in a real big way." (Massachusetts)

BOB SILVERBERG

Good to see Jimmy Gunn's Clevention speech in print; I accidentally was detained in the bar while he was giving it, and look forward to reading it in Skhk. Jim Harmon's book review seemed intelligently done, and Marion's very sharp and clear.

Bob Bloch's remarks on criticism in the letter column were well said indeed; one of the things that would annoy me if I annoyed more easily than I do is the casual way a perfect stranger will inform a writer at a convention, "I thought that novelet of yours in last month's Science Wonder was a real stinker, Bob." Sure, maybe that's the privilege he buys with his 35¢ -- but try telling the driver of the bus you're on, "I thought you did a lousy job of rounding that corner," or the cook in the restaurant, "This steak is pretty miserably cooked, fellow." You'll get a black eye for your pains, sure as anything. But yet every fan who plunks down his quarter and dime is thereby entitled to tell a writer (who isn't even interested in this particular uncouth-looking fan's opinion) that his story on which he may have spent a month's work and much suffering is a real stinker. And woe betide the writer who gets angry!

And those are all the comments I have on the new Skhk, pending a detailed reading tonight or tomorrow; all I did was browse. But I do want to add that I heartily enjoyed the Edward Thomas poem, "Adlestrop," in "....." (New York)

JAMES BLISH

On the whole I liked Bradley's review of The Frozen Year (except stylistically; she often mistakes vehemence for cogency -- "quite slickly," "vast defect," "extremely obsessed," "very satisfied," "undue amount of unpleasant attention," "extremely arbitrary," etc. I like the old White rule: every time you are tempted by one of these adverbs, substitute "damn" instead, and the rewrite man will automatically take it out.) She is right about its being a first novel -- and wrong about its being a sf novel; she can't have it both ways.

She is wrong about Cole's opinions being my opinions, but this is the inevitable outcome of writing a novel in the first person, no matter how necessary the de-

vice may seem to be to the author; you just have to sit back and take it. She sees that Julian Cole is a rigid, opinionated ass with a dangerously shut mind, but doesn't see that the novel (a Bildungsroman) deals with his education out of that attitude. Had she seen that, she would not have made such a hassel about the first-person device, since she would then have seen that it was essential -- Julian does not know that he is the protagonist, and that his attitudes are the ones which must undergo growth and change, until Farnsworth so charges him. That couldn't be done in third person, because a third-person hero does not have the essential privilege of comment.

Now, it goes without saying that until we get books which are written entirely by machines, any novel written honestly (and most of the dishonest ones) will reflect the value-systems of the author. I think mine does. The education of Julian in particular is supposed to convey my opinion that the values he winds up with are better ones for a man to have than the ones he started out with. Hence it irks me when MZB insists that the "frozen" values which he has to start with are my values. (New York)

HARRY WARNER JR

I'm not going to comment at great length, mostly because I hadn't read many of the magazines or books that were the subject of the criticism this time, or because some parts of the critical articles were too wildly generalized to be commentable. For instance, James E. Gunn's article, "Window on Tomorrow," would require a long article in reply, to take up one by one the points that he appears to cover and doesn't. Just one example: He asks why westerns are popular and says it's because people want to get back to the simpler past. This explains nothing because it doesn't tell us why westerns are popular instead of stories about many other time-space combinations in this planet's past. And it is sinful to repeat still another time that same old turkey about "the Victorian concept" of an orderly, classified, and predictable world. There just wasn't any such thing. There were conservatives in England and elsewhere, but both in England and throughout the western world those were decades of unprecedented change in ways of living and philosophies and science.

As for Sackett, I think that in "Whither the Weird Tale?" he overemphasizes the relationship of religion to the weird story, although I don't pretend to know why the weird story has lost most of its popularity. The mating of weird fiction and religion was never overpoweringly widespread, particularly in the better kind of writing, and it would have probably died out altogether if Lovecraft hadn't set the fashion for a new slant. It's quite difficult to determine just where it sprang up. Certainly there's little or nothing in Christianity that permits more genuine use in weird fiction than the cliché of the cross that scares off the vampire. It's also interesting to speculate why religion has stayed out of science fiction pretty consistently. After the mating between science and religion that pervaded alchemy for so many centuries, you'd think that the early fictioneers, at least, would have tried to effect the same mating of matter and spirit. (Maryland)

F. M. BUSBY

Re your comments on If: unfortunately there has been a "typical If story," at least over an approximate two-year period. It's the "overthrow the dictator" tale that swamps Editor Quinn. I first noticed this weakness when the prize-winners of the college-student story contest were printed; at least three of (I believe) four were overthrow-the-dictator jobs. It's not always a personified Hitler-substitute -- sometimes just an anti-utopia with faceless leadership -- but Big Brother peeks over the author's shoulder all too often.

Oops, a mirror does not "reverse" anything in any direction; it's more that the way we look at and describe things is a li'l confusing. We're a trifle preju-

diced by having two eyes set in a horizontal plane, perhaps. If "up" and "down" were dependent on which way we were facing, the way "left" and "right" are, we'd have the same sort of "reversal." The idea is that "left" and "right" depend on individual orientation -- the mirror does not "reverse" east and west, for instance: the east side of the room shows up in the east side of the mirror. Regardless of how we twist and turn before the mirror, only we ourselves are "reversed" -- because we have the individual "left" and "right" always with us.

Re Damon Knight's "Dear Genre": somebody-or-other in SAPS insists on referring to the "science fiction gender." Fandom -- the third sex?

Atheling fingers the weak spot which JWCJr seemingly refuses to notice in the ASF series of Everett Cole, H. Beam Piper, and Agberg-Garrett: the whole pitch is spilled in #1 or at least by #2, as far as wot's gonna hoppen, and from then on it's merely how. (2852 14th avenue West, Seattle 99, Washington)

NAN GERDING

I can sum up Joe Gibson's "The Game and the Kill" by quoting one of his own sentences. Joe's article seems to me to be "strongly influenced by his own personality." Naturally, but more so than naturally in this case. Even though, in spots, Joe was correct in what he said, the overtones and undertones of the article impress me just like Gibson himself does. Where else in human history is there anything else like fandom, he asks. Criminy, just about anywhere you want to look, and in any field you want to take as an example. I also object to Joe calling Phil Farmer an "intellectual snob." I'm afraid Phil does give that impression to some people, especially in person, but in actual fact he is not anything of the sort.

I always figured a cash register rang with avid triumph. (Box 145, Roseville, Illinois)

MARION Z. BRADLEY

Here in early September we are still having blistering hot weather. 98°-101° during the day, though the temperature drops to 70° or thereabouts at night, and what a relief after so many hot and humid nights. At this time of year Texas is beautiful; the roses freshen again after the midsummer wilting which scorched the buds before they even opened, the four-o'-clocks fill the night with spicy perfume, and the zinnias blaze with color.

But I miss the riot of gold and red and orange leaves which we saw in upstate New York and which we never see here. I miss the white road winding over the mountain, a pale narrow ribbon leading through blazing color: red and umber and henna, gold and ochre and saffron, brown and rust and maroon, and here and there a poisonous vine weaving festoons of the brightest crimson anywhere into the yellow-rust of maple leaves. And I miss the fragrant stubble of hayfields, shocks of tall corn, ripening pumpkins and dark green squash scattered in the brown fields, and the waving tops of fluffy goldenrod, and Queen-Anne's-lace with its sweet carrotty smell.

I loathe the word "autumn"; I think of "fall" -- the fall of a dying year, the loveliest season. It makes me remember the dusty road and the hills I walked over on my way to school; the new paste smell of schoolbooks and the dusty cedary smell of pencils, and the taste of their erasers. Pencils always smelled so good to me, I couldn't imagine that they weren't good to eat. The cloakroom had a distinctive odor: a heavy, nose-filling and not unpleasant smell compounded of wet wool coats, rubber galoshes, and hard-boiled eggs. Steve's school smells sanitary, having smells of sweeping compound, clean chalkdust, brick and glass walls; and someday to him that smell will be as provocative as wet-wool-rubber-hard-boiled-eggs is to me. And the yells at football games will mean to him what I found in hopscotch chanting, and the thawk-thump of the skip rope on the hard-baked gravel. (I was a poor jumper, because of my unbespectacled myopia, so I swung the rope, a goodnatured, steady turner, recess after recess.) (Texas)

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"West and away the wheels of darkness roll,
Day's beamy banner up the east is borne,
Spectres and fears, the nightmare and her foal,
Drown in the golden deluge of the morn.

But over sea and continent from sight
Safe to the Indies has the earth conveyed
The vast and moon-eclipsing cone of night,
Her towering foolscap of eternal shade.

See, in mid heaven the sun is mounted; hark,
The belfries tingle to the noonday chime.
'Tis silent, and the subterranean dark
Has crossed the nadir, and begins to climb."

-- A. E. Housman,
"Revolution"

"The Turks tell their people of a Heaven where there is a sensible pleasure, but of a Hell where they shall suffer they don't know what. The Christians quite invert this order: they tell us of a Hell where we shall suffer sensible pain, but of a Heaven where we shall enjoy we can't tell what."

-- John Selden,
Table Talk

"'Twas autumn, and a clear and placid day,
With warmth, as much as needed, from a sun
Two hours declined towards the west; a day
With silver clouds, and sunshine on the grass,
And in the sheltered and the sheltering grove
A perfect stillness."

-- William Wordsworth,
"The Prelude," Book I

"One of the prime errors of recent radical criticism has been the assumption that great novels and plays must necessarily be written by people who have everything clear in their minds. People who have everything clear in their minds, who are not capable of identifying themselves imaginatively with, who do not actually embody in themselves, contrary emotions and points of view, do not write novels or plays at all -- do not, at any rate, write good ones. And -- given genius -- the more violent the contraries, the greater the works of art."

-- Edmund Wilson,
"Bernard Shaw at Eighty"

"Pity, tho' it is the most gentle and the least mischievous of all our passions, is yet as much a frailty of our nature, as anger, pride, or fear. The weakest minds have generally the greatest share of it, for which reason alone none are more compassionate than women and children. It must be owned, that of all our weaknesses it is the most amiable, and bears the greatest resemblance to virtue; nay, without a considerable mixture of it the society could hardly subsist: but as it is an impulse of nature, that consults neither the public interest nor our own reason, it may produce evil as well as good. It has helped to destroy the honour of virgins, and corrupted the integrity of judges; and whoever acts from it as a principle, what good soever he may bring to the society, has nothing to boast of but that he has indulged a passion that has happened to be beneficial to the public."

-- Bernard Mandeville,
The Fable of the Bees