



dan ©
STEFFAN
1971

hi--it's still me up here.

L 1

this is the second part of the TA...9 supplement section.
the lettercolumn.

I guess I didn't make myself clear enough about my idea behind these supplements; in fact, one review of TA...8 even said, "if something isn't good enough to put in your regular fanzine, it should be put in the wasteban." But the reason I do these is precisely the opposite--the material I want to print this way is too good to leave out! I want desperately to use it, the reviews, but especially as much and as many of your amazing letters as I can. BUT--if I had to put them, offset, in the body of the magazine, I would have to severely limit what I print, for space (i.e. financial) reasons. Further, neither book reviews nor letters really "need" the advantage of offset and graphic games; they're both pure material, and so I don't feel bad about presenting them in mimeo. And so it really makes me happy when someone (Cu Chauvin, in this case), says: "You're probably going to kill me for this, Jerry, but I really think I enjoyed reading the lettercol more than the actual fanzine. It's nice, giant, meaty--probably the best lettercol since the old Energumen's."

anyway, that's enough from me. My comments in the following letters will, assuming I can remember to change balls, be in this tupe face; I try as best as I can to avoid breaking into the middle of letters, and I apologize in advance for the times when I break that rule. Onward.....

one thing I really enjoy is when I can print something which will inspire further comments and insights on the same subject. such a thing has been andy's column on writing, which has inspired all sorts of writers to discuss how they work. great! in the same way, I really enjoy this letter from one of my favorite fans and pros:

Terry Carr
11037 Broadway Ter.
Oakland, Ca. 94611

The letter section of TA...7 has several comments about the Ace Specials that prompt this reply. Mainly I wanted to thank Harry Warner, and you, for the suggestion that the LA-con hand out a special Hugo to me for the Specials; the thought warmed the cockles of my heart. (Really: it made my day.) It's awfully unlikely that the committee in L.A. would even consider such a thing, but Harry's comments mean a lot to me all by themselves.

I'm a bit bothered by the assumption by several people including you that the specials were a commercial failure. I seem to have become encrusted with this weird image of a swell guy with oodles of literary taste and artistic integrity but not much common sense: I mean, Carr published some good stuff, but he wasn't commercial.... Whereas in fact, I've always been a very commercially conscious editor, and if I told you all the books I published at Ace for the specific and successful purpose of making money, it could take up the rest of this page, not to mention making you throw up. I'll mention only the Man From U.N.C.L.E. series, then, in which I published books selling in multiple hundreds of thousands of copies every time, even years after the TV show itself had gone off the tube. Some of those books were fun, too. Oh, um, maybe that's too easy on my artistically integereed ego; maybe I should confess to some atrocities I published right in the sf field for money reasons, so you'll at least have heard of the books and can judge how ivory-towerish I am. Ever hear of a novel called Noah II by Roger Dixon? It was Really

L 2 Bad, but I published it. (Not as a Special, ninnv!) Or for that matter, it was I who published The Worlds of Robert A. Heinlein, which might more appropriately have been called The Dregs of Robert A. Heinlein. Made lotsa money, though.

Anyway, the idea that the Specials were Ace's big financial disaster is one that won't stand up to scrutiny. I saw the figures on the sales of all of Ace's books for 1970, for instance, as well as for earlier years: what they showed was that the whole sf category had plummeted badly, as it had for many publishers that year--Dell and Signet stopped buying sf at all about that time. A breakdown by Specials and non-Specials showed that the Specials sales were down by something like 6% and the non-Specials by more like 7%. It also showed that the areas of heaviest drop were in the higher-priced books--the ones at 75¢ or more, which included all the Specials and a number of "regular" sf books published by Don Wollheim. 1970 being the year the Recession hit in earnest, such sales results weren't surprising. The lowest selling sf book of the year was one that Don published...at 75¢. On the other hand, a number of the Specials sold quite well that year, evidently depending mainly on the brightness of the colors in the covers. (Palace of Eternity, for instance, did well.)

I hesitate to try to explain the reasons for my break with Ace, but suffice it to say that there was a heavy power struggle going on at Ace after the death of A.A. Wyn, the former owner, and Ace's acquisition by Charter Communications Inc. People who'd been through changes of ownership at other publishing companies kept warning me that the almost invariable result was a mass firing of top personnel and frantic grabbing for power by anyone who got the chance. I felt that if such a thing were going to happen at Ace I didn't want any part of it...I despise power trips. So I decided to let the kids play their games and I'd close my office door and just do my work, which I did. And by mid-1971, out of some 30 management-level people who were with the company when the change of ownership occurred, only one (1) person was left. (Don Wollheim quit in disgust, I hear.)

All that may mean little, of course: it could be coincidence or the natural result of a company in trouble flailing about for new personnel to help them out. But if so, It made for some ironic juxtapositions: in the spring of 1970 I was given a bonus of over\$2,000 and told by the circulation manager that "Your books sell so well I can't even tell you about it because you'd ask for too big a raise" whereas a year later I was eased out of the company.

Re Hank Davis's letter: He's quite right that it was Avon who published Bob Shaw's first novel, Nightwalk. He's a little incorrect about Lafferty's first-published novel, though: The Peefs of Earth and Past Master came out the same month, no matter when they happened to hit Hank's local newsstand. Peefs was written first. But if you want to get into the question of which was Lafferty's "first" novel, you have to start counting The Devil is Dead and Okla Hannali, published in 1971 by Avon and Doubleday, respectively. Okla Hannali is the earliest; I read and declined to buy it in 1968. Devil came after that; I declined to buy that one, too, and I think if anyone studies it in tandem with his later novel Fourth Mansions, he'll see that Lafferty was essentially rewriting Devil in the later book, and doing a much better job.

But these two books can serve as a good example of the effect the Specials had on the field: before Master and Mansions, Lafferty couldn't sell those novels, but after the attention he attracted

in the Specials he became an author in demand and was able to L 3
get good publishers for these earlier novels. You could add
Alexei Panshin, whom Putnam chased and signed for a novel after Rite
of Passage, and Ursula Le Guin, whose novel after Left Hand went to
Scribner's and sold in paperback for some marvelous high sum. Gordon
Eklund, still a beginning writer, has already gone from the Specials
to selling his novel to Doubleday. And so on. I was told by two
different hardcover editors last year that they'd convinced their
(somewhat conservative) publishers to inaugurate sf lines by citing
the quality of work appearing in the SF Specials series.

Hank Davis' musing that "If the Specials line had continued, doubt-
less more clunkers would have come forth, but more gems as well"
prompts me to mention that there are a number of sf books that have
been or will soon be published by Ace that were bought by me for the
Specials, and you can judge, somewhat, how the series would have con-
tinued, by these books, viz.: The Falling Astronauts by Barry Malz-
berg, already published; The Worlds of Theodore Sturgeon, already
published; Bob Shaw's "slow glass" novel; Tom Purdom's The Barons of
Behavior; D.G. Compton's The Missionaries; Gordon Eklund's Disciples
of the Dark Star. (Some of these titles may be changed before pub-
lication, of course...and the Eklund title surely will be changed,
since it was put on the book as a joke by Gordon: an "Ace title" for
a novel about future revolutionaries lead by a black man.)

Well, the Specials are a matter of history now, for whatever reasons:
how they'll be judged in the long view remains to be seen. But I'll
venture one prediction: whatever their literary effect on the field
may be, those novels by Panshin, Russ, Compton, Lafferty, Brunner,
Le Guin, and so on will continue to be reissued over and over in
years to come, much to the financial remuneration of Ace books.

This letter's too long: let me end it by saying that I thought the
funniest thing in the whole issue was Mike Glyer's line, "Just once
I'd like to see a Rosemary Ulliot column end with her getting laid."
I'll second that, by damn.

*yet another comment-bringing subject has been Clarion; Lisa, who at-
tended the Clarion/Tulane Workshop last summer (and to this date has
sold at least three stories) discussed her experiences here, and the
result has been much comment on "the Clarion method". Next issue
should bring a long piece by another Clarion alumnus. Right now,
here's Vonda McIntyre, goddess of the Seattle Workshops:*

Vonda N. McIntyre
3014-135th Ave. NE
Bellevue, Wa. 98005

I don't know Lisa: we're of different work-
shop incarnations. I think we feel about
writing along the same lines, and I expect
she goes livid with rage as I do when I see
reviews of sf books by women, in which the
reviewer quotes some line, indicates its complete lack of socially
redemptive value and its "cushy" quality, or whatever, and then pro-
claims in capital letters and italics if he happens to have access
to a Selectric, "AND THAT'S THE TROUBLE WITH ALL WOMAN WRITERS!!!"
Aaugh. Ursula Le Guin has the best comeback to junk like that, if
the reviewer is young and foolish enough to be forgiven and there-
fore deserve a response: the same reviewer who wrote the above also
proclaimed that Ursula "did not write like a woman." (This supposed-
ly complimentary.) Ursula responded "On the contrary, I write like
a woman, just as I throw a ball like a woman, run like a woman, cook

L 4 like a woman, because I am a woman. Some of these I do well, some badly, and all with my own personal characteristics..." On another occasion someone asked her if a man could have written Left Hand of Darkness. Her response: No. Only I could.

And I agree with Lisa's remarks on I Will Fear No Evil, despite being a slavish Heinlein devotee. Heinlein had a great chance to show the roles people can be forced to play because of what they look like, and the frustration that results; instead, he has his character throw himself whole-heartedly (among other things) into an incredible stereotype, the "ideal woman". Yuch. I leave you with this: can you really believe that a man who has had his own way for--what, 80 years? --would or could submerge his entire character and experience and wishes because of a body transplant? Come on.

I'm considerably upset by a number of comments I've seen (not only in TA) about Clarion, by people who data is apparently derived from secondhand rumor. Okay, I don't know what Lisa said and I don't know about Tulane, but I do know about Clarion 1970 and about my workshop last summer (and this summer). So:

What the hell is "the Clarion method"? There's only one common factor between weeks at any one workshop or between workshops, and that's intensiveness. Granted, some people may not respond to the intensiveness, but that in itself is not going to destroy or even harm a young writer because--no matter what you may hear--no one is forced to write. (Harried a little, maybe...no, that's a facetious comment.) Since Harlan Ellison is the most flamboyant writer-in-residence at these workshops, an awful lot is said about his so-called "story-a-day" technique, and people say, oh well, I couldn't write a story every day and I don't think anybody could and I don't think they'd be any good even if I did. In fact, no one I know has ever written a story a day for Harlan, including Harlan, who submits what he does write to the same kind of criticism he offers the students and the students offer each other. (Last summer, at the University of Washington, Harlan rewrote one paragraph of the story he wrote to close to three pages because of a comment by a class member.) But Harlan inspires production, and much of what is written is excellent. Harlan can be abrasive, of course: that's one of the things that makes him Harlan. Some people may have their self-image as writers shaken by his comments; they would get the same comments if they submitted their mss by mail to him. Insert all common cliches about good criticism being cruel. But at a workshop, there is positive reinforcement for every negative comment, whether the reinforcement is somebody saying, "Christ, Ellison is all wet, that was a good story, and this is why I think so," or seeing somebody else get the same treatment and survive--like you do. (In 1970 a guy named Tom Slattery wrote a story about Russian spies dumping 1952 Kelvinator refrigerators in US garbage dumps near oil wells, opening them by remote control to release oil-eating bacteria, which attacked the wells and covered the entire country with piles and piles of bubbles. I thought it was hysterically funny. Everybody else thought it stunk.)

And Harlan is not the only writer-in-residence. Chip Delany has been at several workshops, but people prefer to dwell on exaggerated accounts of the bombastic aspects of Harlan's technique rather than, perhaps, discussing Chip's quiet and effective emphasis on style and structure. Chip deals with single words, or characterization, or insights. Jim Fallis has an incredible ability to show you exactly what is wrong or right with a phrase. I could go through every writer-in-residence I've ever worked with and show a different emphasis,

As for deadlines: there are do deadlines, or, at least, there were none at my workshops, which were both run as schools and universities should be run: assignments may be made, but no penalties exist for not completing them. If you can't write for a deadline, no one will trash you. You could go through the workshop without ever writing anything: people would be concerned, and you would be wasting an awful lot of time, money, and valuable help, but you could excuse yourself, and again, no one would trash you.

Probably many of the people who've attended workshops and subsequently demonstrated exceptional writing skill would have made it as writers anyway, eventually (some of us had sold stories before attending). But I believe that the workshop experience probably accelerated the development of whatever elements contribute to a person's being able to write good fiction. They did for me, anyway.

[and for Lisa too, I'm almost certain. As long as I've known her (at least four years), she's written some sort of fiction; I can't speak for her, but I think that had she not decided to go to Tulane last summer (with a push or two from us), she never would have had the confidence or seriousness of purpose she has now.]

on the continuing discussions of Rosemary and of writing in general, here's an enjoyable first letter from a British writer and fan:

Christopher Priest
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6 Lower Road,
Harrow, Middlesex
England

You'll pardon my naivete, but "Rosemary on the doorstep" was the first time I'd encountered Miss Ullvot. I suppose it must be a put-on, but that's the disconcerting aspect. The writing is so elliptical and anecdotal that it rings with a surreal kind of authority.

It's so banal it just has to be for real: but then I know it isn't. Shakes head sadly and waits for the next encounter. Mike Glycer made a good point: let's see Rosemary get laid, and perhaps she will reveal more about herself. [I wonder about this single-minded agreement about so many of our male readers--Terry and Chris are not the only ones to agree with Mike.]

I read Darrell Schweitzer's letter about writing for a living with great interest. It seemed to me he fell into a trap of his own making: the assumption that it is a crime for a writer to write for money (a crime as opposed to a mistake). The assumption springs, I believe, from the several-stages-removed position of reading a novel which one knows or suspects has been written hastily, and consequently is not the work one would have hoped for. It follows that the writer has misdemeaned by skimping on effort, and sacrificed his reputation on the altar of commercial expediency. But bad books are written for several reasons...would Darrell allow that inability to write better would be one of them? Any writer who works at the typewriter full-time has to make some concessions to commercialism.. even Tolkien (or his representatives) fought Ace over their bootleg edition. But just because a writer is full-time does not mean his work should be viewed with suspicion. Some writers see commercial writing as a simple surrogate for a job; they turn out strictly commercial work under pseudonyms to earn bread and butter, and do their 'true' work in their spare time.

L 6 While on this subject, I must say that the sweaty Mr. Offutt alarms me. (I say this not simply to be controversial). I suspect from the testimony of his prolific egotism that his sensibilities are inimical to those of a creative writer. I have encountered many of his articles about his writing (though precious little of the results of his labors), and none has failed to take away the breath. I think it was in Speculation he once revealed that the longest word-block he'd ever experienced was 40 minutes; it took me a fortnight to recover from that. But sibling rivalry aside, it seems to me that Offutt is one of a new breed of writer, who comes on in a welter of hard sell and productivity, but who has as a base not much more than a king-size complex to offer. Perhaps this is the way the writers of the future will be, will have to be. They seem to make more money than the old kind, at any rate.

and then a quickie review, my impressions of the first Doc Savage novel I'd read (YECH!), brought on a note from Hank Davis last time and that in turn brought on this, from Doc's biographer:

Philip Jose Farmer
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Peoria, Ill. 61614

I don't blame you for your reaction to that particular saga [The Yellow Cloud]; it truly stinks. The Yellow Cloud and Land of Long Juju are enough to turn off anyone not acquainted with the better sagas. But if one has read all 181

(not 100, as you stated in TA...8) or even a number of the best ones, then one knows that the quality of writing/plotting varied from 1933 through 1949. On the whole, Lester Dent, who wrote all but 15 of the 181, was consistent in turning out ingenious gimmicks, a fast pace, splendid villains' gadgets, a tight plot and few discrepancies in plotting, and over years he changed Doc's character somewhat, always for the best, for a more human Doc.

Hank Davis' remarks on the sagas are valid. They're to be read for fun, and as Davis says, the fun is one-dimensional, a juddling act put on before the symphony orchestra (comparing Robeson to Weinlein). I'm not urging you or anyone else to read them, since I think that they appeal only to a certain temperament (though there must be a million such), and it's best if you begin reading them when you're 11. In my days, it was best if you were 15, since we didn't mature as swiftly as the modern preteenager. As a fact, the first Doc Savage, The Man of Bronze, hit the stands when I was 15. I was a devout fan until 1939, when I went back to college, got married, started reading Dostyevsky, Proust, Joyce, Rabelais, Fielding, etc. But the old love was not buried too deeply, and when Bantam started its reprinting, I started reading them again, and then I borrowed the magazine versions from friends (having lost my collection) and re-read the ones I knew and read the ones I'd missed. All 181. From #1 through in proper sequence. One after the other, sometimes 2 a day.

This all-at-once reading enabled me to see the epical sweep of the sagas, as I call them. And it enabled me to see the main protagonists and their environment in a way that no casual reader could grasp. I could see the great faults in the sagas, of course. But I could also see the merits.

All this is leading up to the book I'm writing about the Man of Bronze and his punch-drunk gang. (I say punch-drunk because in the period 1933-49, Doc and his pals were knocked senseless many times, Monk holding the all-time record. Indeed, in one saga, he was struck un-

conscious 3 times in 2 days. Doc himself was seldom hit over L 7 the head. The listing of statistics of the knocked-silly incidents will be in an addendum in the book. I'm impelled to bring up this particular business because I'd just finished reading that saga where Monk gets it 3 times when I read the latest Travis McGee, A Tan and Sandy Silence. In this, McGee tells the reader, with much clinical and true-to-life detail, just what a blow on the skull that knocks you unconscious does to you. Now, Monk's skull was thicker than most men's, since he must have been a throwback to some Neanderthal ancestor, but no one recovers from such traumas with the ease of Monk and friends. Not even Monk and friends. However, we have the word of Doc himself, in No Light to Die By--May, 1947-- that Robeson's versions of the sagas are fictionalized and more than somewhat exaggerated, so it's probable that Doc's aides weren't really hit over the head as often as reported.)

Doc's HQ was on the 86th floor of a skyscraper, you know. Inasmuch as the only scraper in Manhattan at that time to have 86 floors was the Empire State Building, I'd always presumed that Doc had rented out the whole floor of that building. But a letter to Mr. Wien, former owner of the ESB, got me the information that the 86th floor is, and always has been, the observatory. If Doc had a floor in the ESB, it was not the 86th. The next step is to try to get a list of the tenants in, say, 1935. If there should be a Dr. James Clarke Wildman who'd rented a whole floor (or even half a floor)--I'd be delighted and also considerably amazed.

Addendum 2 of my Tarzan Alive, The Definitive Biography of Lord Greystoke, Doubleday, April 1972, "proves" that Doc's real name is James Clarke Wildman, that he is the son of James Wilder, who was the illegitimate son of the noble whom Watson called "the sixth duke of Holderness" in "The Adventure of the Priory School". (Holmes called him the "duke of Greyminster" in "The Adventure of the Blanched Soldier".) The sixth duke was Doc's grandfather (paternal) and Tarzan's great uncle. Leopold Bloom, by the way, is shown to be the second cousin once removed of Tarzan. And it is "proved" that Wolf Larsen (of London's The Sea Wolf) has to be Doc's maternal grandfather.

The projected biography of Doc is along the lines of Baring-Gould's Nero Wolfe of West Thirty-Fifth Street, whereas the Greystoke biography is comperable to Baring-Gould's Sherlock Holmes of Baker Street and Parkinson's The Life and Times of Horatio Hornblower, and is a genuine tour de force. The April Esquire will contain my interview with Greystoke, a reproduction of an oil painting of him in modern clothes, and the genealogical chart which is used as end papers in Tarzan Alive. Ninety-one people.

Where the hell was I? Oh, yes, I started to say that you might not care to read the Doc Savage novels, but you might find a book about him interesting. It includes a chapter of literary evaluation of the sagas and an attempt to analyze his popularity as compared to the failures of the reprints of the Shadow, the Spider, and G-8.

I can only shake my head when I look at TA...8. It is of almost Byzantine splendor. You must be bucking for a Hugo. Don't do it. Awards and prizes and trophies are haubles; live the simple life, the humble. On the other hand, where would we be if we hadn't had that handful which is always striving to reach beyond their grasp? Well, for one thing, we wouldn't have a polluted planet. What the moral of this is, I'm not sure. I'll have to stop and think about

L 8 it. And if you want to read something superb but deeply puzzling, read Pynchon's V, which is available in the Modern Library publications. Nothing one-dimensional there.

P.S. I must not forget to comment on the Sensies, which I enjoyed very much, especially the description of Rottensteiner [a small, pale man with eyes made of sheet-metal screws], which coincides closely with my mental image of him. But me: A narwhale's tooth! Does that mean I'm a big brick? Or a penetrating weapon with no weight behind it, since the narwhale itself is missing? Hmm. I just had a sensie flash through my mind. James Blish: a monocle with fangs.

[excellent, Mr. Farmer! Andubody have any more Sensies--remember, the idea is a visual/tactile impression of a person, for fun only. I don't know what Sandra meant by hers, but I can strongly echo the mention of Thomas Pynchon's V, also Cruing of Lot 49.]

how many people do you know who are permanent subjects of Bill Rotsler's cartoons? I can think of only one off-hand:

Harry Warner, Jr.
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Hagerstown,
Maryland 21740

The Dan Steffan and Mike Gilbert spectaculars are totally beyond my powers of describing reaction. The use of tears to tie together the tour de force in the former's pages was the ultimate stroke of genius. I want to spend at least three more evenings looking carefully at the foldout before deciding if I'll ever be quite the same again. [I'm glad somebody besides Dan and I understood that crying bit--almost every other letter seemed totally mystified.]

I'm glad the use of "plagiarism" didn't result in any real trouble. Maybe it's time for Joe Mensley or Jack Speer or some other fan with law school background to make the supreme sacrifice and give some free advice in the form of an article on the main ways for fanzines to commit libel. I wrote such an article once, based on my amateur acquaintance with the law, and spent the next 3 or 4 years in terror lest some fanzine editor somewhere interpret my advice as assurance that such and such a statement isn't actionable when it is.

I am firmly on Rosemary's doorstep; I like enormously the informal essays like Rosemary on the Doorstep. Much of the criticism must result from the increased emphasis in recent years on publication of "significant" and "important" material. That may be fine for the Psychiatrists Quarterly. But look at it this way: individuals are in the long run the most important things in the world, and some professional publications deal only with great masses of individuals because they lack the space to take them up one at a time. If fanzines have the space to describe what one human being does and thinks, the world is a better place. Rosemary writes beautifully, her adventures make me feel that the world is worth preserving for the sake of such individuals, and I feel like a better person for knowing more about one human being than for reading the 80th plea for social justice for the cross-eyed segment of humanity.

Bob Vardeman's method of sneaking in his column is so brilliant that it's hard to see the glow of good humor and personality which he puts into the column itself. I wish I could remember now exactly what I disliked about "the Omega Man", but trusting 6-month-old memory, I

thin I thrust forth hackles furthest on 3 occasions: near I 9
the start, when all those crisp sheets of paper kept blowing
through the city weeks or months after there were enough people to
litter the streets (weather would have yellowed or cumbled them
long ago); when it became evident that the hero was just sitting
there exercising his hostile emotions instead of doing the obvious,
getting out of that undeclared war and looking all over the contin-
ent for other possible survivors; and when the heroine made that
violent and dirty-word entrance, then never did anything else con-
sistent with that behavior.

The Andy Offutt column is best in its first page. If he would just
write a little more about himself in other activities than writing,
all this letter section hostility would melt away. I felt a mild
twinge of horror when he described his habit of writing while wat-
ching television. That shows the difference between generations.
I would never dare try to do anything else while watching TV be-
cause of a deep secret fear that this miracle will go away if I
don't venerate it properly through strict attention. I doubt if
anyone who grew up with TV in the house since babyhood would under-
stand. I also feel horrified every time I see a stop action ending
to a commercial or a scene in a drama on TV. Intellect tells me
that this is just a convention and something deep inside insists
that the world may have suddenly lost its ability to propagate the
kind of TV waves which cause movement on the screen. [Taking the
generation gapperhaps one step further, I virtually never just sit
and watch TV--I'm almost always reading, typing, etc. Nor do I,
except on certain rare occasions, simply sit and listen to music;
conversely, I hadly ever type or read without music (at this moment,
the original cast recording of "Jaques Brel").

Tom Digby's letter makes me wonder how much reading experience a
batch of fans chosen at random would turn out to possess in common.
The body of sf grows more enormous every year, the number of classic
titles and must-read authors doesn't increase at nearly the same
rate, and what percentage of the fiction read up to now by a per-
son who discovered sf in 1967, let's say, will also have been read
by another person who began reading it at the same time? It was so
much easier to talk about sf when the bulk of the available stories
were contained in the back issues of 4 or 5 prozines and a couple
hundred hardbound books which anyone could read in a couple of years.

*if I had to name my own choice for the best English-language fan-
zine, it would unquestionably be SF Commentary. In a nauseatingly-
regular magazine--something ridiculous like 8 exciting issues last
year--he presents a very large percentage of the best in fascina-
ting critical material around, tempered with all too infrequent and
short personal writing and superb letters. "He", of course, is:*

Bruce P. Gillespie
GPO Box 5195AA
Melbourne
Victoria 3001, Aust.

I can't get very excited about charges and
counter-charges of plagiarism, as in your
editorial. I'm not really all that im-
pressed by writers who are always trying
to protect their reputations, or backsides

or whatever. Writers retain good reputations by not writing for TV
or films or sf magazines or almost anywhere that pays money. Being
a "professional" to me means doing what the bloke at the top wants
you to do, and quickly. If you want to be a good writer, than you
would probably never become a professional. But that's a good way
of starving.

L 10 You could have printed a lot more of Bergeron. [Richard?]

"Confessions of an Editor" was quite fun to read, but I can't say much about it. In Australia we don't seem to have many wandering editors hanging around into whose hot little paws we can shove sticky manuscripts. Therefore I'm not sure what the effect of such a wandering author would be. It sounds as if there's still a lot going on in American sf, despite the "recession". Let's get to the twiltone.

Ah, at long last, some sf, and short reviews at that. Have I read any of the books? Offutt? No, I'm not likely to read any of his stuff. New World Quarterly? Yes, I've read that. A few good items, especially the Keith Roberts thing. Lisa like Disch's "Angouleme", but I thought it was his weakest piece for some time. In the Sphere edition, the illustrations were printed badly, but no doubt Berkeley did a better job. I wouldn't agree that "there isn't a bad story here." David Redd's "Prisoners of Paradise" is abominable--the sort of thing NW magazine would never have printed. Aldiss' and Bayley's stories are not very good, either. The whole thing is a come-down after the magazine. Partners in Wonder wasn't nearly as bad as I thought it was going to be. Some of the collaborations which work are "The Song the Zombie Sang", "I See a Man Sitting on a Chair...", and "Come to Me Not in Winter's White"--in each of which the collaborator's style is far more important than Ellison. Whenever Ellison gets the upper hand, the stories sink very rapidly into mediocrity. However, "Song" in particular is a good Silverberg story, and "I See a Man" has enough of Sheckley to give it some bite. The most disastrous combination is Sturgeon and Ellison, with that insult to Cordwainer Smith, "Runesmith". I don't know about wasted space. Perhaps any amount of clean white paper is better than lots of Ellison. It seems a very well-designed book, something I like having on the shelf, even though I know the average quality of the contents. Give some points to Walker for trying.

Science Fiction: What's It All About was quite interesting to me, but then I haven't read most of stuff Lundwall talks about. The best sections were on 19th Century fantasy, rather than recent 20th century sf. But we're still waiting for a decent book about sf; John Fovster could write it, but he doesn't have the time. Nebula Awards 6. I'm running a review about it fairly soon by George Turner. George demolishes "Slow Sculpture" very well; I can't remember anything about the story itself except that it was awful slush. As somebody said to me recently, it fails the "Joe Fan" test--"If Joe Fan had written this, would it have still sold or won an award?" No, it wouldn't have. "Ill Met in Lankmar" was not nearly as good as the story Leiber rubbed out of the competition ["The Snow Woman"]. "Continued on Next Rock" is indescribable, and is Lafferty's best story for years [and is light years beyond "Sky", his Hugo nominee this year, sigh.]: "Second Inquisition" is not very good Puss; "Island of Dr. Death" is not particularly good Gene Wolfe; "In the Queue" is by Keith Laumer and so it is not very good; and "By the Falls" is one of only two stories in the volume that I like. About average for the Nebula Awards. I'm really annoyed, though, that Beagle didn't pre-announce Stardreamer. We had no idea that it was released until a few months ago, and therefore Mary Birns missed out on a chance to order it. I've read most of the stories before, but from contents lists I've seen, it includes at least one I haven't read ("Western Science is So Wonderful"). I don't think Smith is an idiosyncratic writer, just light-years better than nearly all the other sf writers.

Alpajpuri's comments about the layout of your pages seem L 11 justified..there are very few central, controlling illustrations that might tie the pages together. The pages seem to fly apart. With small print like this, it might be an idea to justify your right-hand margins, to balance fairly solid areas of type with solid areas of illustration. Steve Fabian's work is the sort of thing I'm thinking of. Personally, I'm not sure how "good" layout (except for the very simplest and most striking effects, such as those which John Bangsund employs) is possible these days, when the world's top designers are devoting their efforts to such matters. Any fanzine editor must simply weep with despair and give up after looking at any of today's better-designed magazines. Reverse-outs are impossible for fanzines; so are photo-collages, glossy paper, color printing, and all the other basic tools of the printing industry. This all backs up my argument that fanzine pages should be clear and readable, with perhaps lettraset headings, and little more.

[on one hand, Bruce, you're urging me toward greater formality, as with justified type, and on the other telling me to give up. I find it a challenge, as I'm sure do many other fanzine editors, to try to discover exactly what can be achieved under the financial restrictions we must work under. Andy Porter has chosen one direction, to produce a slick, professional-appearing magazine. While I hope to remain offset, I would like to be able to stick with more informal, plastic, free-wheeling designs if I can.]

in the lettercolumn of one of the millions of fanzines I found waiting for me when I got back, I found a letter from Mike Glicksohn (get to HIS letter soon), talking about the members of "active letterhacking fandom", mentioning among others Harry, of course, and several others. One he misses, but one who I think should be ranked with the best around, is:

Rick Sneary
2962 Santa Ana St.
South Gate
Calif. 90280

To my unattentive eye, you seem to have your graphics/layout more under control this time, with a better over all effect. I have still not changed my opinion of the value of all this, or of offset reproduction. Though it seemed to me there was less reason for the expense this time than in the past. The two Bergerons were the only items that met the ~~old~~ famed Sneary Standard Test of what is Art. And, Richard has run the same sort of work in Warhoon, on mimeo. [True, but Richard has some of the best mimeo around, and few of us can hope to match that. And while a lot of the art could have been done electrostencil and still been satisfactory, I would not have been satisfied, notably the Gilbert and Steffan specials. I try to use the best artwork I can get--but I can only use what I do get.] If you are going to run an arts and graphics fanzine, I would think you would at least go all the way, and get good stuff. Your article titles are good, but not outstanding in this day and age, and common in the better mimeoed zines.. Bold blacks and whites, or long straight lines are fine, but it isn't using offset up to its best. Barr, Austin, Steranko, all work in the fine line and shading styles that require offset to be effective. Finely done lettering might be out of place with the informality of your articles, but would seem to me more up to the investment.

I can well understand you having money problems.. And my continued carping is really a reflection of my own "Scottish" attitude toward spending money. (Though my Scots ancestors left the land of Grant

L 12 after the Trouble in 1745.) I must honestly say that I wouldn't pay 50¢ a copy for it, if you ever got hard-nosed about it (though I wouldn't blame you in the least--if I were a fanzine editor these days, there would be darn few free copies). This is too bad too, as in spite of my insistent complaining about too much art and too little relevancy, I find you and your fanzine one of the more enjoyable ones around. I think that this is because of your own personality throughout the zine....which while I may disagree on points, seem to have similar outlooks and values to my own. You take a serious interest in Fandom and how it operates, but do not take it or yourself too seriously. You also project a positive attitude toward things, whereas much of new fandom and current sf seems to be negative or downbeat. At the risk of sounding old and patronizing, you seem more like the Fans of 5th and 6th Fandom, that I grew up with, than most of those newly active today. Thus, if I complain a lot, it hopefully will not be taken too seriously, as an opinion that you are All Wrong, but merely an exchange of differing opinions, between friends. I suspect that urge to be creative in fanzines, and in the theatre, are signs of your positive attitude toward life. *[I suspect you are right in most of this, inasmuch as I can see my own approaches to things. I do thank you for your honesty, and value your friendship very highly.]*

I was mildly annoyed that so much was being made in your editorial of the passing remark by Mike Glicksohn's, about David Gerrold's possible plagiarization of a Heinlein idea, and was going to make a typical corrosive remark about thin-skinned authors...when I got to Mike's reply...I can only think of one word for it..."beautifully".. That is, if like me you can look at a Pistolet Parabellum Model 1900, and see it as a thing of beauty, in function and design. Mike's letter was all ice and spring steel, and Boggs couldn't have turned it better... In fact, it is one of the best "Answers" I can remember--not really classic, but still great... It would be hoped that Gerrold would learn that soft words turneth away a harsh critic--or, "never to pick a fight with someone who can outwrite you", but I fear he is just enough of a fan not to.

Again, the Rosemary Ulliot essay had nothing to do with anything. Maybe even more than usual, in that this time it isn't even an event. It's about a page 23 in a 54 page trip report, by a talented writer who never heard of science fiction. I doubt Purbee would get away with this...but if he had tried, at least it would have been filled with enough exaggeration to be funny.. I'm no longer interested in what she is trying to say...but I am getting interested in why you use it. // Gee, I started off enjoying Andy Offutt's column this time...It started off talking about some one else, and showing Andy really did have other interests...Nice, move-right-along writing, which I'm sure is what he puts into his best books. I was even worried about Jodie--a recent piece by her in another fanzine suggested she might become a talented fanwriter--but half way through it got back to the nora! Offutt article... Gee!

Well, I do admit that the Mike Gilbert fold out wouldn't have worked in a mimeoed fanzine. It had a good deal going for it, too. Clever, and with lots of detail, that could be "read" and studied. Despite my complaining about art, I am highly visually oriented, and find I can usually learn more from a map or diagram, and faster, than other non-specialists. I am a map nut, in fact, with drawers of maps and nearly a dozen different kinds of atlases. I really dig novels with maps, even of fantasy lands. This has one of the criteria for art, or at least lasting interest. It can be viewed

more than once, and new things discovered...and renewed I. 13
enjoyment/interest gained from parts already seen. [It's the
same for me, to at least some extent--one of my favorite parts of
the Harvard Lampoon parody of LotR (Bored of the Rings) was their
hilarious take-off on Tolkein's map. For TA...10, Helmut Pesch is
already working on a highly detailed and decorated map of the ima-
ginary world of German fandom's (actually, FOLLOW) super-game, Ar-
mageddon.]

The column by Lisa was the most enjoyable I've read to date. (I al-
most said "the best", but realized that was a personal value judge-
ment and that I've been out of step with your readers all along.) I
can hardly turn an unkind eye toward anyone who is writing to try
and communicate and find understanding--as that is what I've been
doing for 25+ years. (It becomes clearer that the passing of time
only makes both seem harder to achieve, as we learn how much we don't
know about doing either.) I would ask one question, of female writ-
ers in general-[Watch out, Rick!]-why is it that women writers in
general write such poor and lack-luster historical adventures, and
such good detective/mystery stories?

Benford's analysis of the trouble with the Two Fandom issue is very
good. That is to say, I agree with him completely. I think you are
right, too, in that those who write for a number of fanzines build a
reputation, at least in part on the fact that more get to read them.
I don't think a new Willis or Calvin Demmon would remain unknown,
though, even if they did write for 1 fanzine. While it is impossible
for any BNF to keep up with all the fanzines, enough read enough
that a really talented new fan would be talked about and copies, if
not read- Excellence in writing breeds excellence, just as clownish
tomfoolery bred clownish tomfoolery in late 4th fandom. Greg may
not have credited Greg Shaw as a great new fan writer because, like
me, he hadn't read anything by him before he made it into FAPA. I'd
heard of Greg, but couldn't remember anything. Now a FAPAN, he is
proving very interesting... But, looking at the Hugo list, I could-
n't help but say quietly to myself, "These are the Great Names in
Fanzine Writing?!" [It's possible, but I doubt that Greg was un-
familiar with his namesake; he's always been close to the people of
the Fannish Resurgence (Void and, among other things, his superb
fanzine review column in Quip), and Shaw has certainly been at least
associated with this same group.]

If, as you say it appeared to you, that some of the Clarion people
were actually anti-fan, I think they are in trouble. First off, not
liking a group of people who like the same thing you want to write
suggests basic differences in attitudes, and while I don't think
Fans can speak for all sf readers, there has always been enough sim-
ilarity of taste that it amounted to the same thing. Fans do not
control the market, nor does an author have to be liked by fans to
make it big. Neither does one have to have the support of Organized
Labor to be elected President of the U.S.....but it helps. And, as
a good many of the editors and publishers in the field today are ei-
ther ex-fans, or close enough to get along well with them, anyone
who doesn't feel a kinship to fans is going to have a hard time un-
derstanding the people who will be buying their stuff.

I find almost as pleasant as words of praise to find myself in agree-
ment with someone who's opinion I highly admire. Redd Pogg's has in-
deed sounded the old curmudgeon of late years, but still I find it
reassuring that I am in his company in being critical of Miss Ullvot
and Tuttle. As a judge of writing, there is no one better than Pogg's

in fandom. In agreement with him, I would be willing to face the rest of fandom.

when I first started seeing Mae Strelkov's letters in a few fanzines, I skipped over them. They seemed for the most part long, involved, and difficult to follow. Even worse, they didn't seem to have anything to do with sf, fandom, or the previous issues! I think it was finally a very enjoyable piece in Aspidistra that inspired me to send her a TA, and since then, I've been getting the most amazing, fanciful letters...of course, they're impossible to edit, but:

Mae Strelkov
Casilla de Correo 55
Jesus Maria, Cordoba
Argentina

[Talking about problems in reading] But one gets by, and living is a lot of "existing" and "surviving", I can tell you, and "making do", and having fun even in miasmas of trouble, somehow. Fun awaits you in the little things of life continually, and laughter, at

our bizzare estate as "monkey-men aping God". Maybe the China background taught me that wry view, for I grew up knowing their language like a native and listening in to their conversations everywhere, which they didn't dream a white person understood unless I suddenly floored them with a wisecrack without an accent. They loved me when I did that. (I loved 'em back and still do in retrospect.) Chinese...Hebrews...my favorite peoples. Next? Indians and natives and our local self-styled crillos. Mebby English, if not too--too English! Next? Oh, anyone. (Dolphins, I think, would be my next selection for "favorites". Also cats, skunks, and goats under the age of 3 years.)

[After discussing pet goats and skunks, and their departing.] Our house is now neat and--lonely. To be sure we have an extra cat, a wild little gray kitten so like the departed skunk in its likes, dislikes, and way of playing, we are calling it (a him, it's becoming) Stinky too, at the decision of our youngest (Yony, 11). And "lonely" is but relative--the kids are as uninhibited as I am, and who shouts the loudest wins. (They do.) What I shout, "Look here, you tidy up that table because I won't," they melt away, and either I tidy it or it stays in a mess to remind me that next time around, I shall not start having children till I'm 40, and then just mebby one. (What a hope! They argue they'll not let me get away with it. I'm to be their mother again--and again! I'm so easy to hoodwink, bamboozle, and control.) Besides, we do not feel people have "more souls" than dogs and cats and goats, skunks, rabbits, chajas, and so on (all pets we've had in our time, and pigs too. Why not? Also, in Chile, formerly, horses, one for each of us, just. Not great hands, naturally. We never were millionaires save in inflated pesos now, and everybody is. Cows make nice pets, too, but I always run away from bulls.)

[After talking about efforts to locate Rob Williams:] Talking about "people-I-like", away back last year, a comment in Outworlds by Jerry Kaufman made me write a long letter to him I never got up courage to send, which wassilly. He'd said he thought I sounded sincere, and that got me to analyzing sincerity per se (lots of people think I'm not) and--well, I went deep into it page after page, because I'd been thinking on the theme already and he triggered it off. But I never got up courage to send it, and sometimes I think I shouldn't write and not send letters like that, when I like someone...just out of fear of putting them off and disenchanting them. In other cases, by chance, I'd send a letter of that sort and a lovely friendship develops. I like knowing nice people well--how they think and feel, even the "flaws" they think they may have. (As if we aren't all similarly "flawed".)

Andy Offutt is always readable and I enjoy him wherever he appears. He's very human and vulnerable, and lays himself open at attack just by his cheerful sincerity. In a way I too am "vulnerable", save that as I've such a thick hide, stings don't penetrate and missiles bounce back, as many a fan has learned since I entered fandom 10 years ago via Cry. It's that the issues are stake to me are very "big"....I take to heart themes like religion and local politics, and the enslavement and crushing of natives and by-gone Indians, and their vanishing myths, customs, languages. If someone wants to upset me, tackle them! Rosemary is always fun...why are the male-fen heckling her so? I like her a lot, still, and I don't find "too much of her tiresome", as some profess they do. But then, I like spirited people, and women especially need to be so to survive, meebby. Otherwise they become so meek and faded by 40 or so (or worse, nagging and nasty).

L 15

I was particularly interested in John Brunner's letter. I happen to have read several of his older books, and The Squares of the City pleased me HIGHLY. In his style, I wish I could write on similar themes, and I do try, novels I haven't sent out yet, because where to send them? They are frankly as skeptical of the "loving-kindness" of orthodoxy as was his Squares. Actually, when postulating the future in such novels, I simply draw--as it were--a curve on a mental graph extending present conditions and come up with shocking glimpses of doomsday when the Inquisition is back here (sponsored by the police and military and elite), nobody can afford an education and there's none available except for the Church's pets--as in the Colonial times here I've researched. Science is for the few. They already write in magazines here (and in Spain) that birth control devices must be taken off the market and strictly controlled, because "there's so much spare room". Nuts! For peones and serfs on huge latifundia, that's all. And I even came across a little paperback from Barcelona suggesting that "to avoid the greater sin of birth-control", we should return to the Golden Age of Christendom when medicines were unavailable, and the weak and ill simply died. Thus the population remained stable. Of course, "God's pets" would survive and survive and survive, with the aid even of geriatrics.

Well, I paint that pic...serfs fed on stinking plankton brew for which alone now they labor (no wages needed), all independent thought wiped out in newly organized (true-to-history-pageants), autos-da-fe in Lima anew and in other big towns here, cemetowers full of the dead homing us in, while everybody lives in a tenement-cubbyhole but saves to bury their dead in a swanky cemetower (like the one going up in Rio with its many churches and chapels inside), and the rebels in the Andes are called "devil-worshippers" and hunted down scientifically with infra-red photography from satellites and the air. And the rivers and lakes are open sewers and cesspools filthy-ing the sea, the air is pure smog, no trees remain (megalopolis sprawls everywhere). I feel it deeply, and see it coming ALREADY. I also try to write philosophical treatises picking holes in Catholic dogmas, when in a bad mood. (My background is to blame--disillusioned True Believer, I.) I'm afraid I've not a novel that doesn't manage at least a couple of means dies, either at "no birth control", Eternal Hell, feudalism, or the like. Can't write without it. True Believers gets their backs up, alas. They can't apparently forgive "turncoats". But a trusting child who learns she was taken in and fooled NEVER FORGIVES. That's me.

[A later letter, taking off from TA...8.] I would not like to see

L 16 Andy Offutt cramped or hampered by all the blasts of disapproval he seems to receive. So nobody approves of him for his geyser-like ability to write fluently and swiftly, from the depths of a subconscious self that is surely unplumbable. His love for Jodie must help inspire him, as it does in this story in 8, and I find it moving and charming. His enthusiasm for getting into some magazine (F&SF) or other he was aiming at is engagingly and disarmingly honest. Don't let yourself be "beaten into-fomular patterns", Offutt.

[Damn. Sorry to cut you off here, Mae, but your letters are almost impossible to edit decently. It's now several months after I typed most of the preceeding letters, and as publication time nears, I'll have to get down to this. I have at least another 16 pages I'd like to use, but we must have some logic behind this.]

suppose I might as well get to it now. The best regular genzine around happens to be edited by one of my best friends in fandom, and also my best critic. Energumen is coedited by Michael and Susan Glicksohn, and in addition, Michael keeps up an astounding rate of locs. I tried it for a while, but gave up under the pressue; still can't figure out how he does it....

Mike Glicksohn
32 Maynard Ave., Apt. 205
Toronto 156, Ont., Canada

Even though we've pretty much agreed that we differ fundamentally on matters of graphics and layout, here are a few impressions on these aspects of

#8. I still find the contents page annoyingly cluttered (although I think the basic concept was a sound one) and somewhat sloppy. Partly this is due to the spottiness of the repro, but also a part is due to the fact that it doesn't appear to have been executed all that carefully. And this I find surprising in you, Jerry. For example, several of the lines slope at slight angles to the horizontal and vertical; in one of the boxes, the text slopes noticeably down from the horizontal; the lines themselves vary in thickness and clarity. All little things, sure, but they add up to a subtle feeling of carelessness. [Entirely true, and no excuses possible. I was not as careful in many places as I could have been, and dearly regret this now.] All in all, I think it's a case a trying to get just a little bit too much onto the page and producing a "busy" look that I personally don't find appealing. I did find the use of the upsidedown type in the contents box for Sandra's "sensies" an error of judgement--whether Mad uses it or not!--but then I thought your placing of the sensies themselves was very poor, so.....

The other weird thing about 8 was the position of the foldout. Again, this is probably a personal thing, but the first time through the magazine, I unfolded the Gilbert thingee (superb!), admired and enjoyed it and folded it back into the magazine. When I turned it over, the weight of the foldout and the absence of a back cover stock caused the last two pages of the zine the flip over with the foldout. So I looked at the back cover and thought I was through with the issue. It wasn't until I realized that page 2 was also part of the contents page that I wondered where some of the articles had gone. The moral of the story is: Foldouts belong in the middle of the issue, even Heffner knows that. The other moral is: Pay no attention to Glicksohn, he's a bloody Conservative. [Eliminating that last sentence, Mike, don't you get a bit tired of being right every time you criticize TA. I just wish everyone would be as totally honest in criticism as you and people like Ted and Rick Sneary.]

In the matter of you, me, and David Gerrold, I'd like to L 17
add that my admiration for David increased considerably due
to the gentlemanly way in which he handled the conclusion of our "dis-
cussion". A few hasty things were said on both sides initially, and
it is to David's credit that he took the initiative in rationally
concluding the affair. I've not yet seen enough work by Gerrold the
Author to know quite how I feel about him, but my evaluation of David
as a person has been considerably enhanced by this whole incident.

Subscriptions are weird things. I think I must have about the small-
est circulation of any of the "leading" fanzines today. I run about
240 of each issue, send out about 160 and the others get slowly dis-
tributed to people who write in for copies, or send contributions or
similar such things. But we still have ten copies of 8 and 9 and
40 copies of 10. Considering the amount of favorable publicity we
get, I find this surprising. Charlie Brown warned me that getting
on the Hugo ballot last year would inundate use with subscriptions.
I think we got six. We seem to be popular among hard-core fans but
almost totally unknown to the "outside" fan world. Like I said, it's
all rather strange. *[This is true (I've been reading old Voids...).*
Is this still true now, Mike, eight months and another nomination
later? Obviously, you send out a hell of a lot less trade copies
and freebies than we do, and there's the difference. Our paid sub
lists are probably fairly equal.]

Dan's graphic trip was a delight! He didn't quite master all the
styles he went after, but the idea AND the execution were most en-
joyable and reveal a considerable amount of talent. Interesting to
note that Dan's own style is quite distinctive now; although it
still shows obvious Bodé influence, it has developed into his own in-
dividual style and makes him one of the leading fan cartoonists.

Although I agree with Alpajpuri on his comments on your layout in
the lettercolumn, I can't recall any radical departures from the
norm in the last Carandaith. Okay, I just went through my fanzines
and got it out: it's a remarkably attractive fanzine. Fine colour
work, several excellent full page drawings, superb repro. But there
are still many pages with illos tucked away in corners. This is the
way of mimeo and I don't object to it at all. What I do find a little
tiresome are these constant sophisticated sounding lectures on how
dull and unimaginative most faneds are and what they should be doing
in the way of graphics and layout. As Paj himself says, those who
think we are inclined to be dullards ought to show us what we're
missing, not just tell us. CDTM is a fine fanzine, Paj; but it does-
n't do much that Jerry doesn't do (except colour), and I'd like to
see you practice a little of what you preach.

Greg Benford makes a few good points. I think there are several
very good writers in fandom today, but whether they'll reach the sta-
tus of the legendary writers of the past remains to be seen. I re-
member reading a Terry Carr reprint of a piece by Bob Leman and being
astounded that I'd never before heard of a writer of such quality. On
the other hand, I've read pieces by Rosemary and by Arnie that I'd
rate every bit as good as any of the reprinted "classics" I've seen.
So I can't help but wonder just how much of the reputation of a
writer depends on the passage of time. We see almost all of the out-
put of the current writers, so we see them at their best and at their
worst, which is seldom all that bad for the better writers. As time
goes by, will those adequate but not exceptional pieces fade from
memory while the really first rate writing stays fresh in our minds?
Was Bloch always superb? (Well, yes, he probably was!) Did the

L 18 writers Greg recalls never write a weaker piece? I doubt it.

So what's wrong with praising the good writers we have? They are good, so why not let them know if their work brings you enjoyment? That there were, perhaps, better writers in the past should hardly prevent us from enjoying the talents of those who are writing now.

My own reaction to the Ace Specials was that the last four came close to destroying the reputation of the earlier works. Terry gave us a consistent series of good to superb books with only the occasional loser. But if he really chose the last four as Specials, I have to wonder why. I found myself wondering if they were rejects that Ace decided to publish after Terry left!

This myth of my imperturbability is all wet, you know. First there was you in Bab saying everyone likes me, and now Dave Hulvey praising my affability. I'll have to do like Harry Warner and write an article about all the fights I've had and all the people to whom I epitomize everything that is fuggheaded about fandom. Like most fans, I hold pretty strong opinions and don't mind expressing them; and, as you yourself know, I have a tendency toward misunderstood facetiousness that often embroils me in feuds. But I suppose it's to be expected; when you're as nice a guy as I am there are always people who'll be jealous! (See, I'm doing it again.)

here's one that's been sitting around for a while; I meant to print it last issue and misplaced it entirely. Jan Strnad used to edit a fancy comics/sf fanzine (still owes me the third issue), and has now gotten into professional work, and he talks about his experiences:

Jan Strnad
1340 N. Hillside #4
Wichita, Ks. 67214

The financial hassles of writing boggle the mind. Right now I'm doing comic-like stuff: writing for Warren Publishing Company (Eerie, Creepy, etc.) and in collaboration with Richard Corben on some underground work. We're coming out with a comic for Krupp, tentatively titled "Fever Dreams", that ought to interest sf/fantasy comic fans. Richard is a great artist, does terrific breakdowns, and it's a joy working with him. I'm sure this mutual enjoyment in what we're doing will show in the book. We've also been working on a s&s strip that will be printed in half-toned 4-color in the underground version of Rich's fanzine Fantagor. What the professional comic people do with 4-color is nothing compared to what Richard does with it; though somewhat sexy, this story too is a labor of love, will take several months to illustrate, and points out the difference between having to do something for money and doing it because you want to, plus having the time to devote to it. I won't get any money at all from the Fantagor story, and won't get anything from the Krupp book until it starts making money--it's strictly a commission thing. I'd hate to think of supporting myself on deals like these. From what I read in TA, things look just as bad in the legitimate sf field. Maybe we should re-establish the patron system and get some millionaires to support these novelists while they sweat out their masterpieces; the super-rich would probably find some way to turn their advantage anyway. (I've had a dream for the last couple of years about being able to afford a huge luxury mansion wherein dwelt my favorite writers and artists, all supported by me while they worked on whatever they wanted to do with guaranteed publication upon completion. Sure would be nice.) [Indeed. Meanwhile, how are these projects you describe here coming?]

I've been in a year's worth of creative writing workshops and learned a large amount about the craft from them. I don't think that writing

is an inherited trait at all, but rather a talent that needs to be developed. Which isn't to say that everyone could be a top author, but rather that there are things that can and must be learned that are not born into the individual. Whether this learning comes best from trial-and-error self-teaching, or rather one has a guiding hand along the way to benefit from, is a matter that varies from person to person; I know that several people in the workshops I attended didn't get anything from them. I, on the other hand, feel I benefited greatly. What reaches some people doesn't reach others, so it all depends on what it takes to impress each individual. Are quickly-written books categorically inferior to slowly-written ones? When is a person a hack, and when is he "prolific"? [That's simple. The writer who writes a great deal whom I like is prolific; the one you like is a hack.] Does an author necessarily WANT to be remembered through the ages and studied in college literature courses? How about the idea that maybe he just wants to make a living, finds that writing makes him money and he'd rather write for movies and TV than work in a factory, and who cares about immortality? All these questions and the controversy surrounding them are the result of our seemingly incurable desire to simplify the world into a form it will never take. We want to have everything summed up neatly: fast books are worse than slow books, immortality is better than obscurity, etc. When actually such things are subjective, dependent on the psyche of the individual. Who knows? Maybe it's even nobler to entertain the masses than it is to cater to the intellectual games of the elite. In fact, if you can keep the repulsive lower specimens of humanity inside their rooms, curled up with a sex novel, it's doing the elite a favor just by keeping the peasants out of sight and therefore out of mind. Almost makes the pornographer a martyr.

all right. Two more long letters--only two, I swear--that's it! First from Dave Hulvey. Tell you the truth--Dave Hulvey makes me feel very, very old. In the space of just a few years, I've watched him go from a veritable neo among neos to an enjoyable writer, and a friend whose opinions I highly respect. Tis a sobering process indeed:

Dave Hulvey
Rt. 1, Box 198
Harrisonburg
Virginia 22801

I was very much impressed with the overall artistic content of the zine...but Jerry, why oh why can't you get written material up to your superb artistic standards? This is the major flaw--poor to passable but undistinguished writer (the only exceptions this time around appear to be Rosemary and, surprise, Barry Brenesal.) Let me qualify what I mean. The general level of writing in TA has been low in comparison with zines like Energumen and Focal Point. This time it is even lower. Your editorial, though competently written, struck me as restrained and sedate, not even attempting to dazzle the reader or stimulate his senses, simply a rather rote rendition of facts and figures, events and nonevents, all nicely stated, but as you would say, pedestrian. I conceive of the editorial as the second most important part of the zine, directly behind the lettercol--which, to me, is Supreme. Editorials, from my subjective bias, are monstrously long personal raps by the faned, which may or may not say one thing about the fanzine in question. Too many people use the editorial as a piece of forced labor to be dismissed as quickly as possible. Others tolerate it only in so far as it represents a colophon with a few extra frills. People, the editorial is you, the editor, speaking on whatever the hell you feel like. It doesn't need to be decorative, but it vitally, most importantly, must be functional, creative. Sadly, the misuse of the editorial is glaringly apparent in TA. [The sad thing is that I agree with you, David, and I do my best. I just ain't a particularly scintillating

[In another two pages of letter, Hank proceeded to go through L 21 virtually all of the original sf published in 1971, to discover if his ideas on the health of the novella (or lack of same) were statistically valid. He found an approximate total (give or take one or two of 30 novellas over the whole year, most of which were just slightly over the 17,500-word limit in the Hugo rules, and a number of which were not labeled as "novellas". He points out that in all likelihood, five of these, or one in six, will be hugo nominees, and:]

The short story and the novelet are alive and well...more so than the novella. We need to decannibalize those first two categories.

FINALLY! Now for a section stolen bodily from Energumen (who was it said, "Great artists don't borrow--they steal,")--magnificent and scintillating paragraphs from letters I just don't have room to print in total. Everyone bow in the direction of Canada (if you're There already, just look honored).

James Tiptree, Jr.--I noticed where he [David Gerrold] seemed to be reproaching himself for rough editorial handling of writers' feelings. Just want to say, he couldn't have been finer, from where I sit with my tender ego all spread out like a twitchy ouch-carpet. He not only was a nice guy in general, but he and Goldin--what terrible power does he wield over SG?--did appreciate things like letting one know what the flopp was going on at regular intervals, and David personally helped me enormously before we even met, so to speak; wrote me a terrific pitfall-by-mantrap account of what I would be going up against if I tried a certain wild scheme which I didn't and am muchly grateful....anyway, I wanted to say.

Dan Goodman--Greg Benford lives in the past; specifically, the Fannish Fandom of the Fifties. I don't think he's noticed any new writers--fannish or otherwise--in more than a decade. I think Arnie is fit to be ranked with the top fannish writers of the Fifties, or just below them. He certainly is producing better fanwriting than they are now, with the occasional exception of Terry Carr. I agree with Benford that certain fannish writers are less well-known today than they should be; but I wouldn't pick the same list he does. I would name Lee Hoffman, Len Bailes, Steve Stiles (sticking to members of Fabulous Fannish Fandom). // What Darrell Schweitzer may not know is that Tolkien spent far more time on LotR than was truly needful to produce work of that calibre. He writes in longhand, and then hunt-and-pecks the manuscript into shape for submission; if he had learned to touch-type some years back, he might have produced more work. James Joyce spent a mere 20 years writing Finnegan's Wake, which is a rather more complex work than LotR. And he was making his living as a professional writer.

Donald G. Keller--It's odd to me that so many fans are so high on Lathe of Heaven--I found it extremely disappointing after Left Hand. LeGuin is much better handling exotic worlds where she can control all of what goes on. I found Lathe colorless and lifeless, almost dull, with almost non-existent characterization. // You put-down the Adult Fantasies as "oh-so-dusty", yet you mention a couple times that Carter deserves a special Hugo. [No contradiction. I can on one hand say that Lin deserves recognition for outstanding service to the sf community, even while on the other hand I personally don't enjoy a majority of that sort of writing. What he's doing is a Good Thing, whether I like that sort of fantasy or not, and I think he deserves formal recognition for it. Simple.]

L 22 Jan Evers--Anais Nin is a very strange writer. I discovered several of her books in a musty second-hand bookstore about two years ago, and have been fascinated ever since. Most of the stories in Under the Glass Bell and Other Stories are high-level tripping, on the same order as Borges. Have you read Love and Liberation by Lisa Hobbs? I think it's the best book I've come across concerning female and sexual liberation. I'd recommend it to everyone.

John Brunner--I hereby solemnly declare and depose that I am not now and never have been a polished slab of brown agate. Polished, certainly. But agate? You'll be talking about lapidus lazuli next! What you should have said is serpentine! (Cornwall. Lovely stone, that.).

Derek Carter--It gladdens the old heart to realise that by my working in so many different styles Dan Steffan didn't even attempt to put me in his tribute.

David Wise--[In Lisa's column] Only disagreed with one thing, the bit about reading for insight. She made it sound like "insight" meant having an author tell you how to live, when actually, in literature, insight should mean the way another person deals with life. It's a fine distinction, admittedly, but, I think, a true one. Lisa made it sound like she reads the way avid teenyboppers read Kahil Gibran and Herman Hesse. You know. Bullshit.

George Proctor--While you have some fantastically good layout ideas, basically, something seems to have gone wrong with everything you've tried....Another thing what keeps getting in the way of readability is the change in columnization from one page to the next. Very, very chaotic. While I understand the two-page layout concept you often bring up, there is another concept of stability you seem to all but ignore. A magazine is just not a series of two-page spreads, but a total experience, with hopefully some continuity from one page to the next, which TA...8 did not have.

Mark Francis--Frankly, I was expecting more, or rather something else, of TA in the way of artiness, from what I've read of your complaints and pleadings in other zines. Rather than the type of fannish cartoons you use and blend with your written material, I was looking for more of an Art-Thing.

Michael Carlson--Have you noticed how fannish TA...3 is, without really trying? The columns by Gerrold and offutt are fannish, only they both talk about being pros. That thing about the corned beef and screaming and sulking was, I donno, boiled too long? [YES! I was hoping someone else would notice how fannish it was--you've made my day, observant Michael.]

Chris Walker--Rosemary Ulyot is still hissing sentences that have no sibilants in 'em. How does she do that? // Robert Benchley does not lack for fannish admirers. I've been for a long time as fond of Benchley as other fans used to be of H. Allen Smith. The Coultsons, too, if I'm not mistaken, are Benchley fans. For uninitiates you might recommend The Benchley Roundup, an anthology put together by his son, Nathaniel (himself a minor novelist), still available I believe from Dell. [Consider it done.]

Stephen Gregg--Dan Steffan is fantastic--he gives the zine a very distinctive flavor (grape?). [Sorry--couldn't resist that.]

this is the beginning of the first supplement to TA...9.
last time, lots of people complained about the supplements.
because they got lost easily, and didn't have the name on them.
okay. you were right.
this is the review supplement, but a special version:

philip k. dick: the real thing
by bruce r. gillespie (reprinted from sfc 9.)

books by philip k. dick, editions noted:

1966--Now Wait For Last Year, Doubleday & Co., Inc. 214 pages.
1968--Do Androids Dream of Electronic Sheep, " . 210 pages.
1969--Ubik, " . 202 pages.

(In computers) [or novels. brg] it would be possible to model autonomous worlds, with properties which the different philosophical systems have attributed to our world, for instance the strictly deterministic world of Leibniz with its "pre-stabilized harmony". One could model a being who not only metaphorically but actually would be a "trinity" in the sense of Freud: ego, superego and id. One could therefore verify hypotheses of an anthropological, futurological, or philosophical nature. One could divide the interior of a computer into the "world" and its "inhabitants" in order to do research into the relationship between object and subject.

--Stanislaw Lem (J.O.E. No. 3, Page 19)

I. In Now Wait For Last Year, Philip Dick describes the situation thus:

"What's the relationship between this man's ancia and the Secretary's pains?"

"Relationship? Is there one?"

...Eric bent over the cot on which the patient MacNeil lay. So this was the man who had the ailment which Molinari imagined he had. Which came first? Eric wondered. McNeil or Gino Molinari? Which is cause and which effect--assuming that such a relationship exists ... But it would be interesting to know, for instance, if anyone in the vicinity had cancer of the prostate gland when Gino had it... and the other cancers, infarcts, hepatitis, and whatever else as well. (NWFLY, 87)

In one of the scenes from Ubik the traveller Joe Chip faces this problem in his trip across a disappearing America:

...To Joe the official said, "Go out by hanger three and look for a red and white Curtiss biplane."

"Thanks," Joe said, and left the building: he strode rapidly toward hanger three, already seeing what looked like a red and white Curtiss-Wright biplane. At least I won't be making the trip in a World War I training plane, he said to himself.

"Are you Mr. Jespersen?" Joe asked.

"That's right". The man surveyed him, obviously mystified by Joe's clothes, which had not reverted. "What can I do for you?" Joe told him. "You want to trade a LaSalle, a new LaSalle, for a one-way trip to Des Moines?"

Together they made their way to the parking lot.

"I don't see any '39 LaSalle," Jespersen said suspiciously. The man was right. The LaSalle had disappeared. In its place Joe saw a fabric-top Ford coupe, a tinnv and small car, very old, 1929 he guessed.... Obviously, it was now hopeless. He would never get to Des Moines. (Ubik, 130-31)

The occurrences in Philip Dick's novels are impossible. In what future will you find a) one man who may exhibit all the signs of an illness of a man in the next room, b) a process where time devolves around a modern man without him going mad, or the whole chemistry of his body collapsing, or c) a drug (JJ-180, the "star" of NWFLY) that literally, magically, turns back the tides of time, wipes out memory, or transfers people between different time zones, all in the space of one second? More importantly, how often would you find people who would know what was going on when these things happened? Just try to invent a science that will "explain" all the single elements in NWFLY, for instance.

In Ubik, Dick invents a technology to "explain" magical happenings. One of Dick's characters says that "Defusing a psi operation has to be done on a systematic basis". Presumably Dick refers to all the rigorous "systems" of EE Smith stories and Campbell editorials. Telepathy does not make sense: in context, the statement is a joke. In Ubik, Hollis' pais disappear suddenly from view. Glen Runciter's inertials have been hired to track them down and stop them from invading the population's mental privacy--Hollis has removed them from the telepathic "scene" and made Runciter's organization ineffective:

Runciter: "You're sure the teēp was Melipone? Nobody seems to know what he looks like; he must use a different physiognomic template every month. What about his field?"

"We asked Joe Chip to go in there and run tests on the magnitude and minitude of the field being generated there at the Bonds of Erotic Polymorphic Experience Motel. Chip says it registered, at its height, 68.2 blr units of telepathic aura, which only Melipone, among all the known telepaths, can produce...." (Ubik, 2)

Does Jargon extend to everything? Can it possibly extend to telepathy? We know it is one big laugh, but there could be a catch of puzzlement that mars the cuffaw.

In Ubik, Dick talks about a different part of his telepathic technology: the function of Beloved Brethren Moratorium, owned by Herbert Schoenheit von Vogelsang. After you die, your "protophasons" of encephalic half-life glimmer within your body. Your "bereaved" may contact you at the moratorium. There is one problem: as you natter away, your protophasons leak away. Each frame of life draws your

The reader does not really believe in all this, especially as we learn little about the 1992 technology that might weld together such unlikely allies as Punciter, Assocs, and the Moratorium. Dick does not mention, for instance, what the government (if any) thinks about all this.

The chalk-marks against Dick score his card badly. Impossible and impossibler, as Dick's honorable predecessor, Lewis Carroll, might say. Mistakes in political science (or should I say political technology?) glare even more obviously than mistakes about the shape of computers in 1992. Dick's governments, when he talks about them at all, rebel us. Not only are they usually fascist governments that would not allow the freedoms that his characters presume, but their functions are laughably over-simplified.

Dick's "societies" look no more credible. In *NWFLY*, government officials amuse themselves by collecting Lucky Strike packages and lose their identities in Wash-35 (a miniaturized Washington of 1935). The war between Earth, Lillistar, and the reeds proceeds, but makes no visible difference to the face of the Earth. Molinari, the all-powerful UN General Secretary, who directs the War, was "elected" into office. But who elected him, and why? Dick does not show us the population of Earth, only the small group of people who surround Molinari.

"Just head west," he told the cab. I've got to get back to Cheyenne, he realized. Somehow, by some route.

"Yes sir," the cab said. "And by the way, sir, you failed to show me your travel permit. May I see it now? Just a formality, of course."

"What travel permit?" But he knew; it would be an issue of the governing 'Star occupation agency, and without their permission Terrans could not come and go. This was a conquered planet and very much still at war. (NWFLY, 164)

Sure, cabs work in Saigon, but among bomb ruins and beggars' feet. Earth's war does not warrant all the worry that Molinari expends.

But the realities of national politics do not affect Molinari--like Hitler or FDP (with conscious irony, Dick combines elements of both) Molinari directs events from his well-protected bunker. But in *NWFLY*, we do not brush near the SS lackeys, and Molinari does not face the daily swarm of 'Marcos' sycophants. He has it on a plate; LBJ might well envy Molinari's continuing success, but he would learn nothing from Molinari about how it is done. Late in the novel, Dick makes great play of the scene where:

Trailed by Secret Service men, they...entered a guarded, locked room which Eric realized was a projection chamber; the far wall consisted of a permanent vid-screen installation of a grande scale. "Me making a speech," Molinari explained....

Chuckling, Molinari said from the deep, foam-rubber chair in which he lounged beside Eric, "I look pretty good, don't I?"

"You do". The speech rolled on, sonorous, even containing, now and then, a trace of the awesome, the majestic. And it was precisely this which Molinari had lost: he had become pitiable. On the screen the mature, dignified man in military garb expressed himself clearly in a voice that snapped out its sentences without hesitancy; the UN Secretary, in the video tape, demanded and informed, did not beg, did not turn to the electorate of Terra for help.... But how had it been done? How did the pleading, hypochondriacal invalid, suffering from his eternal half-killing complaints, rise up and do this? Eric was mystified.

Beside him Molinari said, "It's a fake. That's not me". He grinned with delight as Eric stared first at him, and then again at the screen. (NOVELY, 94-94)

The tv screen image (false) beckons to the millions (we don't meet any of them, except for the robant taxis) of Earth. Molinari Mark II whips up enthusiasm and directs the motions of the crowd. We know the effects of television and the public meeting on 20th century politics. But we also know of the ground swell of discontent housed in separate discontented minds that must receive the message. Without believable governed, Dick's governors continue to mystify us.

As I have noted, the political-economic structures in Ubik and Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep (DADDOES), if structures can be said to exist at all, look fascist. The only other people in Dick's novels beside the main characters are the members of the other fascists. In the 3 novels, the all-important battles are two-dimensional: the Earthmen fight the aliens, the inertials are trapped by the telepaths, and the bounty-hunters track the androids. Dick's "bosses" Molinari and Runciter are accepted without question by their subjects, and accepted with great difficulty by the reader. "The Mole [Molinari. jwl] would have been their leader at any time; at any stage in human society. And--anywhere." But is there any evidence that our political leaders have ever exhibited signs of superhumanity? Has there ever been less mediocrity at the top than in any other stratum of society, or at any other time than now?

If you wanted to present a case against Dick's work, it would most profitably proceed along these lines. Dick's mind is wide-ranging and his interests far-reaching--but there are whole areas of experience that he does not think about. How many other sf writers think more clearly about socio-political matters than Philip Dick? Only 1 or 2, perhaps, but it is a pity Dick is not among them.

II There are several explanations or excuses that might cover this "credibility gap". At least, these are excuses that people drag up for the faults of all the other sf authors:

i) Many authors, within and without science fiction, have written "impossible" novels. Perhaps all novels feature some elements that would prove impossible if applied rigorously to the evidence from ordinary experience. The most common reason authors advance for the deliberate distortion of perceived reality is that they wish to refine or provide analogies for particular areas of existence. Are

Dick's novels allegorical of particular aspects of our world? P5

ii) Could we say that Dick is just another sf writer, dredging up all the old sf ideas, re-using them like flat soap suds? Are Dick's novels meaningless fantasies, like many works that superficially resemble them? Does Dick write about only two-dimensional distortions of misunderstood processes? (This is a false ploy, of course. If it were true, I would not have written this article.)

iii) Philip Dick likes to talk about politics, industrial warfare, and possible post World War III worlds (DADOES). But are these elements so much scenery, as Ted Pauls suggests in a review? Are these novels private games, like Nabokov's more obscure efforts? Perhaps Dick has escaped from the normal pigeonholes that divide popular literature into such categories as Realistic, Expressionistic, SF Writer. If this is the case, how do we judge Dick's work at all, let alone understand it?

III. For the reasons that I have already outlined, the reader must admit that #i is unlikely, for the same reasons that some readers might shrug off Dick's work with #ii. Dick features politics, inter-racial warfare, the society of an empty, radioactive world, etc. In NWFLY there are numerous parallels between the Earth Lilitarsreegs conflict and the four-sided Vietnam war. Dick makes his war into an elaborate game where everybody gets hurt except the organizers; where huge numbers of civilians and cities are said to have disappeared, but Dick does not show us any signs of the process of disintegration. Ultimately, these are asides: Molinari's comic ambiguity is nowhere near as comic or as ambiguous as, say, that of two Presidents facing different public reactions, a local yokel who runs his state but lets everybody know had badly he is doing it, and a paternalistic Communist whose influence increases in inverse proportion to the organization of his troops and the strength of his supply-lines. There is nothing as remotely interesting or compelling in NWFLY's allusions as the situation behind those headlines we yawn at every day. As for science and sociology in general, Dick gets them wrong. Quite often this is done with comic intent (as in Crack in Space), but never with allegorical intent.

Number ii is more likely. In Dick's writing there is a never-ending flow of original, grotesque or quaint sf gimmicks and variations on old "ideas". I had thought Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch had exhausted all the novel aspects of drugs, but NWFLY tips over a whole new barrowful of tricks from the same source. We are sick to death of android stories and After-the-Bomb stories, but Dick manages to gloss over his Nexus-6 androids and his empathy boxes (DADOES?) so that we think that nobody else had ever used these ideas. And who could resist the ever-present little can of Ubik that peeps from behind every doorway in the novel of that name? Every chapter begins with one of the virtues of Ubik, qualities presented by an advertising executive. The third chapter, for instance, carries the cryptic message:

Instand Ubik has all the fresh
flavor of just-brewed coffee.
Your husband will say, Christ
Sally, I used to think your
coffee was only so-so. But
now, wow! Safe when used as directed. (Ubik, 17)

R6 The last line of each blurb always gives the game away: the all-purpose aid to modern living must never exceed the limits, must be "taken as directed". Ubik is the savior, but the novel that unrolls underneath these advertisements tells of a terror that is past saving.

Before the reader has time to consider the significance of Ubik, its magical qualities taunt his mind. It springs up like a poltergeist in every situation. As Joe Chip's world deteriorates around him:

A hard-eyed housewife with big teeth and horse's chin replaced the cartoon fairy; in a brassy voice she bellowed, "I came over to Ubik after trying weak, out-of-date reality supports. My pots and pans were turning into heaps of rust. The floors of my conapt were sagging. My husband Charley put his foot right through the bedroom door. But now I use economical new powerful today's Ubik, and with miraculous results. Look at this refrigerator." On the screen appeared an antique turret-top GE refrigerator. "Why, it's devolved back 80 years."

"62 years," Joe corrected reflexively.

"But now look at it," the housewife continued, squirting the old turret top with her spray can of Ubik. Sparkles of magic light lit up in a nimbus surrounding the old turret top and, in a flash, a modern 6-door pay refrigerator replaced it in splendid glory. (Ubik, 118)

Finally even Ubik itself seems to degenerate under the pressures of the processes unleashed upon the novel's characters:

....Ubik, he thought. He opened the door of his Ford and got in.

There, on the seat beside him, rested the bottle which he had received in the mail. He picked it up--

And discovered something which did not really surprise him. The bottle, like the car, had again regressed. Seamless and flat, with scratch marks on it, the kind of bottle made in a wooden mold. Very old indeed; the cap appeared to be handmade, a soft tin screw-type dating from the late 19th century. The label, too, had changed; holding the bottle up, he read the words printed on it.

ELIXIR OF UBIQUE....A BENEFICENT AID TO MANKIND WHEN SEDULOUSLY EMPLOYED AS INDICATED. (Ubik, 131)

All this might have significance, but it certainly has a comic point.

Are Dick's books nothing but highly entertaining conjuring tricks? Certainly the trickery is the reason why I find each book just as fascinating as its predecessor. Dick's pyrotechnics alone would assure him his place in the sf echelon. Some of Dick's earlier novels, such as Dr. Bloodmoney (discussed in SFC 1) could best be described as energetic romps.

But in the three novels under discussion, there is much prose that does not "romp". Many passages of NWFLY are very funny, but the jokes are not those of Bob Hope. As Farlan Ellison has noted, Dick's jokes are more like Harold Pinter's. When Eric Sweetscent in NWFLY moves forward in time ten years, he is rescued from death by his ten-year-older self: P7

As Eric stepped from the MP patrol ship the man sprinted up to him.

"Hey," the man panted. "It's me."

"Who are you?" Eric said; the man was certainly familiar--Eric confronted a face which he had seen many times and yet it was distorted now, witnessed from a weird angle, as if inside out, pulled through infinity. The man's hair was parted on the wrong side so that his head seemed lopsided, wrong in all its lines. What amazed him was the physical unattractiveness of the man. He was too fat and a little too old. Unpleasantly gray. It was a shock to see himself like this, without preparation; do I really look like that? he asked himself morosely. (NWFLY, 171)

A tremendous routine, you must agree, worthy of all the best Absurdist writing, and certainly a vast improvement on Robert Heinlein's "By His Bootstraps", and all those other time-paradox stories. At the same time, the joke wrenches: how would your 50-year-old-self like to see your 40-year-old-self approaching you?

Many of the conversations in these three novels are ironically funny, but also feature agonized quibbling and wrangling. Two characters often cut away at each other, and the mental pain rivals that in "Accident". National problems become personal battleground. In DADOES there is the brutal, yet ironically pitched encounter between the two bounty-hunters. Pick Decard hopes to "retire" six Nexus-6 androids in a day, and Phil Pesch, who has chased androids for years, now fears that he himself may be an android equipped with false memories.

"You're sure I'm an android? Is that really what Garland said?"

"That's what Garland said.....This is necessary. Remember: the killed humans in order to get away. And if I hadn't gotten you out of the Mission police station they would have killed you. That's what Garland wanted me for....Didn't Polokov almost kill you? Didn't Luba Left almost? We're acting defensively; they're here on our planet--they're murderous illegal aliens masquerading as--"

"As police," Pick said. "As bounty hunters".

"Okay; give me the Boneil test. Maybe Garland lied. I think he did--false memories just aren't that good. What about my squirrel?"

"Yes, your squirrel. I forgot about your squirrel."

"If I'm an andy," Phil Resch said, "and you kill me,
you can have my squirrel." (DADOES, 117)

The horrifying joke is that Deckard is bent on destroying creatures that he cannot recognize except with the aid of a purely mechanical test. Luba Left "posed" as an opera singer before the ambitious-boy-on-the-way-up, Decard, shot her without a whimper from him. Several other androids "pose" as a typical American family--but their attitudes and actions do not differ at all from that of the "real" family. And where have the "real" people gone? They have ruined Earth with atomic bombs, and now do little except save money to buy the few remaining specimens of live animals left on Earth. Few novels pose the question: "What is humanity?" quite as sharply as does DADOES.

But one may have just missed the irony in this passage in the excitement of Deckard's chase. Only the blunt prose itself contains all the strands that make up the complex emotional response with which we should read this book. The androids appear as more human than the humans, and we have least sympathy for and most understanding of the boorish SS-like killer, Rick Decard.

Some conversations in *NEWLY* bite just as deeply. Dick entertains us with the extraordinary effects of JJ-180, but the reader remembers just as clearly the bitter exchanges between Eric and his wife, their separation, and the private quest for security that leads Eric right back to home base. Dick sets the tone early in the novel:

[Jonas] broke off, seeing that both the Sweetscents had a grim, taciturn cast about them. "I interrupted?"

"Company business takes priority," Eric said, "over the creature pleasures." He was glad of the intervention.. .."Please scram out of here, Kathy," he said to his wife, and did not trouble to make his tone jovial. "We'll talk at dinner. I've got too much to do to spend my time haggling over whether a robant bill collector is mechanically capable of tellies lies or not." He escorted his wife to the office door; she moved passively, without resistance. Softly, Eric said, "Like everyone else in the world it's busy deriding you, isn't it? They're all talking." He shut the door after her.

Presently Jonas Ackerman shrugged and said, "Well, that's marriage these days. Legalized hate." (*NEWLY*, 15)

The tone is familiar. Soggy American melodramas talk this way. But few authors catch the interrelationship so well--Kathy appears passive; welcomes Eric back, and the old fights break out. Dick simply cuts deeper than many writers who attempt the same thing. This is ironic comedy that contains no laughter, and Dick sees possibilities that many other authors could not think of. If they did, they would not be able to write scenes as cruel as this:

"I'll put you in the building's infirmary," he decided, rising to his feet. "For the time being. While I figure out what to do. I'd prefer not to give you any medication, though; it might further potentiate the drug. With a new substance you never--"

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Kathy broke in, "Want to know what I did, Eric, while you were off getting the Secret Service? I dropped a cap of JJ-180 into your coffee cup. Don't laugh! I'm serious. It's true, and you've drunk it. So you're addicted now. The effects should begin any time"....Her voice was flat and drab.....

He managed to say, "I've heard that about addicts in general; they like to hook other people."

"Do you forgive me?" Kathy asked also rising.

"No," he said.

(NWFLY, 135)

Eric has transferred his attention from his wife to the all-consuming Molinari. He misjudges his wife, and suddenly he collapses, hit from the most unexpected quarter. His only immediate reaction is "I've heard that about addicts in general"--his emotions have been so dislocated that he cannot respond any more emotionally than that. The rest of the novel tells us of his rediscovery of these "necessary" emotions: it is a story of personal salvation in a world that, like all Dick's worlds, comes apart while you watch.

But even these sharp observations do not form the centre of Dick's work--very few of his novels centre upon these close human relationships. Judged in the light of NWFLY, all except a few of his other novels are complete failures. But many of the others are not complete failures. We cannot explain Dick's work with chatter about the "ideas"; we cannot justify them with talk about Harold Pinter dialogue. What have I left out?

IV What I sought in two previous articles and did not find was the centre of the wheel around which all of Dick's other ideas revolve. I've not read Kant, Zen Buddhism or theories about entropy, so I cannot spin a neat theory in terms of his self-acknowledged sources.

Instead, I want to go back to the passage from NWFLY with which I commenced this article. Molinari (as we find out) is the only character in the novel who can control the drug JJ-180. He alone owns the antidote and can control the time-alteration features of the drug at will. He can take the antidote at intervals to stave off immediate death. However, JJ-180 catches up with all its addicts--in Molinari's case, he takes on the symptoms of the terminal diseases "projected" by other persons in the same building.

Now the question that we immediately ask ourselves is: how does the illness of one patient "cause" the illness of Molinari? Why do we accept this "miracle" as Dick relates it to us, and read on with scarcely a whimper of protest? What is it in Dick's writing that justifies his wholesale dislocation of events, and his evasion of the laws of evidence? Why do Dick's worlds work differently from ours, but still make sense to us?

Kant's philosophy I will leave; more elementary observations may serve just as well in discovering what Dick is up to.

In logic, there are two main types of statements: those that are logically possible, and those that are only empirically possible. "I met a married bachelor" is a logically impossible statement--because

R 10 of the terms of the definition of the word "bachelor", you could never expect to meet a "married bachelor". The statement is self-contradictory.

However, it is possible to imagine the situation: "The moon is made of green cheese" (or, "Molinari exhibits the symptoms of the diseases of the people in the same building"). There is nothing in the idea of "moon" that precludes the idea of "green cheese".

Our ordinary observations, and the laws of science, seem to indicate that there are certain states of existence that are altogether impossible, and certain laws of cause and effect that are necessary. But in the classic case that questions this assumption, David Hume gives the illustration of two billiard balls. You hit one ball with the cue, and it (ball A) travels toward ball B and makes contact with it: ball B commences to move toward the opposite end of the table. We say that ball A "caused" ball B to move. However, it is quite possible that, instead of moving toward the other end of the table, ball B could have flown straight up in the air, stayed still, or disappeared altogether. In fact, we observe that in all cases ball B moves in a particular direction when hit by ball A.

It seems to me that Dick uses this Occam's Razor in all his novels. He does not "explain" a large number of events in his novels because he takes the philosophical view that many events do not have to be "explained", even though they contravene accepted scientific "laws." All is possible (at least, all physical events are possible) because all is logically possible. The web of scientific law is part of the common reality through which Dick tries to penetrate.

In *NOWELLY*, JJ-180 does not "cause" people to move about in time. This would require scientific explanation, and Dick would merely have exchanged one tedious structure for a more acceptable tedious structure. JJ-180 is an agent which removes from the characters' minds and bodies their previous misconceptions about cause and effect. The reader (and the characters in the book) expect that the only way in which Molinari could exhibit the signs of (say) malignant cancer would be if he suffers delusions. But the symptoms of cancer actually appear in Molinari.

In the same book, we can see this process at work when Kathy takes her second dose of JJ-180: i) Kathy climbs into the robot cab. ii) The cut on her finger disappears... "No break. No scar. Her finger, exactly as before..." iii) She notes down this occurrence on a scrap of paper, but even her writing disappears iv) The cab "forgets" that she ever had a cut finger v) The cab and Kathy fade completely into the alternate future to which the drug has removed them.

But even with that last sentence I falsify Dick's writing. Dick does not say that "the drug did this": Kathy, and the reader, think that the drug "causes" these events. The reader makes the intellectual connection between events, just as the observer sees the process of billiards in such a way that he thinks the billiard player causes ball B to move, via his cue and ball A. Dick does not say that there are no, and should be no, scientific laws. He just reminds us that we made them up, not the universe.

V So Philip Dick can do what he likes, and excuse all his mistakes with an airy wave of a philosophic hand? Not exactly.

We would expect Dick to replace those thought-forms he re- R 11
jects with new thought-forms that control the structure of his
novels. You cannot conceive of meaningful fiction without some
structure.

Dick's letter [to SFC. jwl] provides many clues to this structure.
Dick posits that a deepened view of reality will see past the self-
consistent physical universe that surrounds us, and may observe
another self-consistent reality. If we can find some way to throw
off the delusion of "normal" reality we may "dream dreams and see
visions", as the New Testament puts it. Or, as Plato would have it
we would stop dreaming, and would turn from a world of shadows and
look directly towards the "sun" which we had never seen before. As
Dick demonstrates in "Faith of Our Fathers" (Dangerous Visions) and
in the afterward to that story, his quest is religious.

But his novels are not religious, or at least, not in any conven-
tional sense. Dick's novels do not melt into an undifferentiated
sludge, as you might expect.

Dick feels free to write about the revelation of reality, but it is
his reality. His vision is entirely despotic--the reader either ac-
cepts things as they come or he does not read any further. At the
same time, Dick's purpose is not to promote a world ecstatic religi-
ous vision. Instead, he shows us the frailty of our reality, and
lets us catch a glimpse of other mysteries only when appropriate.
Three Stigmat of Palmer Eldritch remains the only novel in which
Dick has tried to detail a vision. More importantly, the drama of
his novels flares out from the process of discovery, not that which
is discovered. A blind man given sight looks at his surroundings
with understanding before he tries to look at the sun.

Whatever Dick tries to do, the answering cry will be: "But he's
making it all up! Dick's worlds are entirely imaginary--they are
entirely subjective." But he can convince us that his quest is le-
gitimate, and his discoveries are just as "real" as our own obser-
vations. How does Dick break down this dichotomy between "objec-
tive" and "subjective"?

Ubik is almost a textbook illustration of the process that the au-
thor describes in his letter. [From Dick's letter: "In summation,
let's put it this way: in my novel the protagonist's comfortable
private world is disintegrating and an awful, mystical, puzzling,
enormous world is expanding--from elements already there--to fill
the void." jwl] One fanzine reviewer sniffs that Dick "has this
wonderful world, but doesn't really use it". But Dick's "world" of
1992 centres around that implausible telepathic technology that I
looked at earlier. It is a world that has some unusual features,
but Dick's characters live in it no more easily than any inhabitant
of our time lives in our world. Joe Chip cannot afford to pay the
vending machines that supply all the elements of existence. Glen
Runciter, his boss, keeps in contact with his "dead" wife, as they
are still equal partners in the firm.

But process of half-life, however, is an analog for the process of
decay that sucks out all life from that secure universe which we
think is quite reliable. The Moratorium's half-alive patients lose
more "life" with each conscious act. As they move toward the fi-
nal experience, they lose the power to experience. It is an arch-
etypal tragic situation, where each affirmation of life contains an

R 12 equal amount of negation.

But again, this is not an "explanation" of the processes set loose in Ubik. Dick sets it all before us, and expects us to fall in line, or at least enjoy the superficial aspects of the story. Why do we do it?

In Ubik, Runciter's Inertials travel to the moon to interview their "enemy" Hollis. The interview is a trap, and an explosion kills Runciter and leaves the others badly shaken. The group returns to Earth, attempts to pick up the pieces of the Runciter organization, but finds that the physical aspects of their world decay around them as well as the social aspects:

Joe said, "Look at this cream." He held up the pitcher; in it the fluid plastered the sides in dense clots. "This is what you get for a poscred in one of the most modern, technologically advanced cities on Earth. I'm not leaving here until this place makes an adjustment, either returning my poscred or giving me a replacement pitcher of fresh cream so I can drink my coffee."

Putting his hand on Joe's shoulder, Al Hammond studied him. "What's the matter, Joe?"

"First my cigarette," Joe said. "Then the two-year-old obsolete phone book in the ship. And now they're serving me week-old sour cream. I don't get it, Al." (Ubik, 76-77)

The process cannot be stopped: this gives the feeling of despair that surrounds most of Dick's novels. The character becomes an observer in a world that peels away. Joe Chip protests, but the whole universe turns backwards. Joe tries to buy a tape-recorder; he opens the back to find the components burnt out. He picks up the phone--he wants to patch up the remains of the Runciter organization and cobble together some normality:

Joe hung up the phone and stood dizzily swaying, trying to clear his head. Runciter's voice. Beyond any doubt. He again picked up the phone, listened once more.

"--lawsuit by Mick, who can afford and is accustomed to litigation of that nature. Our own legal staff certainly should be consulted before we make a formal report to the Society. It would be libel if made public and grounds for a suit claiming false arrest if--"

"Runciter!" Joe said. He said it loudly.

"--unable to verify probably for at least--"

Joe hung up. I don't understand this, he said to himself. 88) (Ubik,

The voice drones on. On this first occasion it makes no contact, but it breaks through numerous crevices of the world which Joe tries to readjust himself towards. Runciter reminds us of Palmer Eldritch, but Runciter is not the suffocating face of evil. He becomes a neutral figure, one of many in Dick's novels that try to send a feeble semaphore from another "reality".

Chip arranges a hotel-room rendezvous with another of the Inertials. She does not arrive, and in the morning Joe finds. P 13

On the floor of the closet a huddled heap, dehydrated, almost mummified, lay curled up. Decaying shreds of what seemingly had one been cloth covered most of it, as if it had, by degrees, over a long period of time, retracted into what remained of its garments. Bending, he turned it over. It weighed only a few pounds; at a push of his hand its limbs folded out into thin bony extensions that rustled like paper....

In a strangled voice von Vogelsang rasped, "That's old. Completely dried out. Like it's been here for centuries. I'll go downstairs and tell the manager."

"It can't be an adult woman," Joe said. "These could only be the remnants of a child; they were just too small. It can't be either Pat or Wendy," he said, and lifted the cloudy hair away from its face. "It's like it was in a kiln," he said. "At a very high temperature, for a long time." (Ubik, 93)

You may see from this passage in particular why Dick carries his reader with him. On one level this is a mystery story--we want to know what happens next. The experienced Dick reader will know already that there is no neat explanation at the end of it all: he wants to discover the wide range of possibilities that Dick elucidates. But most importantly, every process is revealed clearly and precisely--there are no waste words. Chip exclaims in bewilderment, but each scrap of knowledge comes without explanation. This is unimpaired sight--an experience transferred to the reader's nerve-ends through the main character. We cannot detach ourselves from the process and say "This is impossible". It is not impossible--it is happening to us.

Dick has a surface explanation for the novel: that Runciter did not die, but rather was the only person left alive after the explosion on the moon. The rest of the Inertials lie in half-life, Chip among them. Runciter succeeds in the projection of partial messages into the time-degenerating half-world, but he cannot reach through as he should be able to. Runciter appears on television in Chip's "reality", and wields Ubik:

"Yes," Runciter's dark voice resumed, "by making use of the most advanced techniques of present-day science, the reversion of matter to earlier forms can be reversed, and at a price any conapt owner can afford. Ubik is sold by leading home-art stores throughout Earth. Do not take internally. Keep away from open flame. Do not deviate from printed procedural approaches as expressed on label. So look for it, Joe. Don't just sit there; go out and buy a can of Ubik and spray it all around you night and day."

Standing up, Joe said loudly, "You know I'm here. Does that mean you can hear and see me?"

"Of course, I can't hear you and see you....This commercial message is on videotape...." (Ubik, 119)

The image of Runciter continually reappears, but Joe's reality still

R 14 holds some continuity--Punciter cannot speak directly to Joe, but finds himself on a videotape recording. The image manages to direct Chip to Des Moines, Iowa. He arrives there just before all pre-World War II motor traffic degenerates altogether. His post-World War II plane disappears into the form of an early model car.

There are no answers in this process--at the end of the novel the "explanations" are there, but the tragedy of Joe Chip's new circumstances remains. The haunting desperation of The Zap Gun's "Enough is enough" remains in the last few chapters of Ubik.

The experience is total; the documentation complete. But this is a tour through Dick's experience, not a tour through our world, or the world over Philip Dick's back fence. This is a chute of metaphysical discovery, in which every one of our assumptions is tested. Sometimes the process is terrifying; at best it is also very funny.

Dick's fear of evil is there--but Dick does not run from it. He welcomes it as the only legitimate perception of a fully-awakened mind, even though he knows this perception can only burn out the perceiving mind. Dick's characters are part of himself. On the one hand they do not understand the proceedings; they "feel" fear, panic, or horror. But they also see clearly; their fear does not blind them in any way, but only brings out the best in them. At the end of Ubik, Joe watches himself deteriorate as he climbs the steps of the decrepit Des Moines hotel. There is no hysteria here--just direct, all-inclusive description that draws around us all the emotions that fit the situation:

He lay for a time, and then, as if called, summoned into motion, stirred. He lifted himself up onto his knees, placed his hands flat before him...my hands, he thought: good god. Parchment hands, yellow and knobby, like the ass of a cooked, dry turkey. Bristly skin, not like human skin; pinfeathers, as if I've devolved back millions of years to something that flies and coasts, using its skin as a sail.

Opening his eyes, he searched for the bed; he strove to identify it. The fat far window, admitting gray light through its web of curtains. A vanity table, ugly, with lank legs. Then the bed, with brass knobs capping its railed sides, bent and irregular, as if years of use had twisted the railings, warped the varnished wooden headboards. I want to get on it even so, he said to himself; he reached toward it, slid and dragged himself farther into the room. (Ubik, 168)

Action merges into perception; perception shows Joe his own alienness; this perception sets his mind and ours forever seeking the key to the pattern; action and perception settle into a kind of acceptance of the last resting place. There is despair in the scene, but also the kind of intelligence that seeks to understand even when all understanding seems to have disappeared. How better could I sum up the whole of Philip Dick's enterprise?

--Bruce R. Gillespie, 1969

Lapidus here again. This discussion first appeared, as I said, back in SFC 9, in the days when SFC had virtually no American distribution (it still doesn't have enough, for the best sf-oriented fanzine around). A large section of the issue, writing from Stanislaw Lem, was reprinted in the WSFA Journal; a lot of people have asked about this section, so here 'tis. Regular book reviews return next time.

