WARHOON 25

Bob Shaw
for Taff,
of course.

WARHOON

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The winsome Venusian femmefan on the cover of this issue announces the first public endorsement of possibly the most witty and talented fan ever to run for Taff. I take great pleasure in announcing the second. And just in time to get trampled by the stampede, it seems: at this writing I have heard of support from Harry Warner, Doug Lovenstein, Bob Tucker, Lee Hoffman, Walt Willis, Ella Parker, and Ken Bulmer. Next?

I think the final tally in the voting (another candidate is expected to enter) will raise the question of why this candidacy was so overdue: as one of the original sides of the Belfast triangle and co-author of "The Enchanted Duplicator" (which will give you an idea of the quality of his work if you've been skipping his pages in Wrhn) one would think he'd have been Taffed long ago. Perhaps part of the problem is that like Laney he has had the luck to be in proximity to one of the most incandescent fans of all time and partially hidden by his glow in much the manner that Laney's writing ability was obscured by Burbee's -- not to mention the fact that all these years he has been hiding his light behind a glass bushel. Under normal conditions a talent like Bob's would rank him as a name to be automatically invoked with the likes of Hoffman, Tucker, Grennell and others. Whatever the reasons, Shaw has been smoked out into the open where we can all make clear what we think of him and fandom now has a golden opportunity to improve the range: it is in the best interests of all of us to tell him to his face.

THE WARRIOR ROBOTS ARE COMING

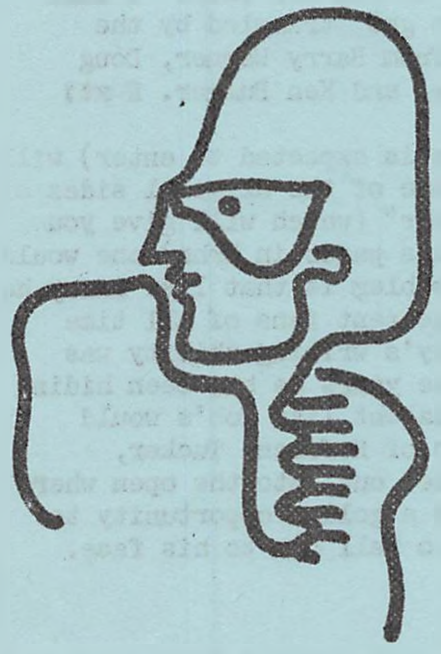
Yes, I watched the proceedings of the Democratic convention (you remember: that was the deliberative body which ratified Lyndon Johnson's choice of a successor though Johnson himself was too unpopular even to attend -- it being assumed by a process of reasoning so sophisticated it escapes me that LBJ's choice would be acclaimed by the American people even though they couldn't stand Johnson's guts). I watched them with a mixture of fascination, horror, and sadness. As a spectacle of viciousness on national television it would have been unsurpassed if not for the generosity of Gore Vidal and William F Buckley (in one of their programs of commentary on the convention) whose mutual denunciations of Nazism and sexual deviation surpassed each other in a new low of irrational discourse.

At any rate I should like to briefly note my amazement that the majority political party of the United States was willing to offer the world a picture of democratic processes whose most memorable parliamentary device to end debate was the singular image of Mayor Richard Daley dragging his finger swiftly across his throat: precisely what only Richard Nixon and Ho Chi Minh had the power to rescue LBJ and 3H from having done to the Democrats this year. (As we've seen, Ho tried but Nixon failed.)

It may have been the most spectacular example of political cannibalism on record and whether your taste ran to scenes of the Machiavellian boob Daley most surreptitiously packing the galleries with sanitation workers in full view of some 30,000,000 viewers, or to his goons beating up TV commentators and delegates on the floor of the

convention on camera or to the more rarified banalities of the acceptance speech of Hubert ("Let's quit pretending Mayor Daley did anything wrong.") Humphrey, there was more than enough raw flesh for everyone.

It was a time of saturnalia but it wasn't until a day or two after the convention that I noticed it had been having an effect on my artwork; which as I've mentioned in previous issues has become a sort of strange automatic form of writing out my subconscious. Unless it's a specific job of interpretation like the heading on Bob Shaw's column, (and even that didn't take its final form until in dissatisfaction I threw out the deliberately planned early versions and quickly launched into scribbles done with such speed that I had no concrete idea what was going to happen on the paper until I saw it) once the moving hand starts I let it wander over and over an idea producing a series of variations that go on and on until I've Had It.



The series that started during the convention (and turned into an unconscious comment on it) began with the drawing at the left -- the original of which is slightly less than one inch high. It appeared before me in the space of no more than a second with its unsettling suggestion, perhaps, of Killer Kane. This is a strange little drawing in which one line begins by forming an ear, goes on to become the chin, mouth, nose, loops down and around to form an openly malevolent eye, meets itself again at the top of the nose, goes around the head, down the throat, arches back up to become the mis-shapen shoulder over which the rest of the line is stealthily looking. A lot of work for one line to perform but it was a line whose implications were not to be spent until some three dozen drawings later when it had assumed its final form as The Warrior Robots.

In the beginning they were humanoid, as you will see in Algol and on Geis' Science Fiction Review: still capable of emotion, perhaps even of enjoying a good evening of mayhem, but this quality faded fast to be replaced by a mechanical coldness, a military efficiency, which will appear on the cover of Cry 177 where one of a range of six in that particular phase has been accepted. This led to a variation scheduled for the interior of Science Fiction Review in which the mechanical emphasis begins to overwhelm the humanoid -- and later, on the back cover of Ed Reed's L'Ange Jacque, it does completely. The final stage, developed from Ed's cover, is a super robot of some hate filled race, obviously an instrument of destruction, capable of anything it is ordered to do, a thing of cast iron mentality unaware of any alternative to oppression, head half hint of skull, sheathed in monstrous armor and arrogance.

As yet, it isn't programmed to appear on any fanzine. I have been tempted to use it on Warhoon though it would probably completely stomp out the mood of light fannishness I'm trying to encourage in such sercon types as Willis and Shaw.

Perhaps it could be used as a cover for the annual report of the City of Chicago.

SORRY, NO WORDS FOR SALE

Looking through the folder of manuscripts for this issue and noting the message appended to the Harp that this installment is a chapter of a book due to be published in March by, presumnably, Ace, I was struck by the thought that I might be the only true amateur left in Warhoon! All the other contributors to this issue have accepted money

for their words, at one time or another, and one of them is even editor of several professional magazines. Actually, Willis may have left amateur status long ago if a couple unverified suspicions are correct, ie, that he wrote something for Galaxy years ago as Ermengarde Fiske and also did a short-lived fanzine review column for a prozine. It's entirely possible he did neither or one or both but was paid for neither. This is a matter I'll leave to Harry Warner for clearing up -- in the meantime there's no disputing that his book is a major sell-out (the manuscript indicates this is chapter "16", oh frabjoyous day!) as well as the longest piece of Willis writing since "The Harp Stateside" -- if not longer. Surely this represents a wonderful coup for Terry Carr, for whom it was written, and, if the sample at hand is any evidence, with proper handling could turn into a best seller... as happened to both "The Italians" and "Iberia"; books which in some respects are inferior to Walt's.

Really, though, my delight over this forthcoming book is purely selfish. Writing as an itch has never been one of my problems and I recall Walt's remarks that he himself is a "non-writer" and "If it wasn't for fandom I dare say I wouldn't have written a line since I left school" so I can't say I envy him the task. My own turgid essays require hours of blank staring at the typewriter before one line follows another (there was a two minute pause between the words "typewriter" and "before" in this sentence and an even longer one to formulate this deathless parenthetical note, if you want an example) and according to the Harp in Wrhn 12 this is a tortuous procedure not unknown at Strathclyde. So when a few years ago Charles Platt included my name in a list of people who should be writing for the science fiction prozines instead of wasting their time writing for fanzines I was flattered but not in the least inspired.

I wouldn't write fiction for the science fiction prozines if they paid me. As a matter of fact, I wouldn't even read them if they paid me.

Somehow that reads a bit nastier than it should. The fact of the matter is I can't write or read fiction. (Over-night pause.) Perhaps it's merely that I like to escape to a world of reality, Of course I do a little special motive fiction reading of stories like Bob Shaw's "The Two-Timers", which I'm sure I would have found as enjoyable even if I hadn't been reading it to discover how a fannish genius applies his talents to a time travel story. But the science fiction novel I read before it was "Stranger In A Strange Land" -- a few months after it was first published. A fiction reading frequency of this tempo is a strong indicator of the impatience I have with fiction: for me there's quite enough sense of wonder and entertainment in just dealing with life and I find most writers in the genre such bad entertainers that all one (this one, anyway) is left with are a few kernels of information in the form of a parable -- a suspect form, at best, and a difficult one from which to extract any intelligence as the conflicting interpretations of most of the important science fiction of the past decade or two would attest. Consequently science fiction as entertainment hasn't existed for me since the sense of wonder departed from it shortly after I left my teens and no longer used it, in the words of Bob Shaw, "as a welcome escape from a reality I regarded as being not too close to the heart's desire".

These years I find more sense of wonder in appreciating the editorial abilities of Richard Geis or enjoying the wry wit of John Bangsund than in speculations on organ banks of the future or the sexual problems of orbiting earthmen. I haven't found anything in sf to compare with Norman Mailer's "Miami-Chicago" convention report with its surgical portraits of Kennedy, Rockefeller, and McCarthy. There's more entertainment for me and relevance (a not unimportant consideration when fiction is seen as a waste of time -- as unfortunately it must be if it isn't entertaining) in biographies of eccentrics like William Randolph Herst, Lord Duveen, or Sir Richard Burton than in a fairy tale land of swords and elves. Can anyone nominate a character in science fiction with the drive, recklessness, curiosity, and complex personality of Burton, or

a character a mercurial, creative, and unpredictable as Picasso, or one with the manipulative geniu of Duveen? Possibly D.D. Harriman comes close to the latter -- though I now find Barry Goldwater less obnoxious than most of Heinlein's grand old men. But even Harriman is about to be relegated to the land of never-never for in a few months we shall see (as has been apparent for years) that his story isn't even as relevant as some of the romances of Jules Verne and is just another flight from a world we never made into a world nobody ever made -- though I found this story highly enjoyable. Nevertheless when I want to drop out for a bit I'd rather escape into a world somebody actually did cope with (if the author can't beguile me into forgetting this one -- and evidently that isn't his aim judging from Willis' exaggerated example of a typical sf story: "The modern author, noting that postage stamps keep getting bigger, postulates the obliteration of New York in the year 2000 by a monstrous first day cover delivered from an Easter dictatorship.") and enriched in unsuspected ways by information that helps me in this one; not filled with garbage hacked out at 2¢ a word.

Obviously if I find life more entertaining than fiction I'm going to be a poor student and writer of it -- the problem is I'm hooked on reality: there's more sense of wonder in exploring the teeming medina of ancient Fez (as William F Temple found when he compared his travels to his fantasy collection in a letter in VOM in 1947) or working on an advertisement for Robert Kennedy than in trying to experience life through parables and half-baked prophesies by writers who have forgotten they are supposed to be poets and magicians. (I pause to consider how I got into all this.)

So you see it requires no special talent to retain my title as Wrhn's resident amateur -- I don't even have to work at it. But there is another area of writing threatening my status: non-fiction. Commenting on a Tucker fanzine in Skyhook 23 in the winter of 1954, Redd Boggs wondered "Why didn't Rinehart publish this A-1 Tucker stuff?" In 1968 after the success of the Carrs in Esquire, Alexis Gilliland in a recent Playboy, and the planned republication of Breen's article on "2001" in Crawdaddy, it's no longer facetious to wonder why some of the current issue of Tucker's Pong doesn't appear in a half dozen national magazines. The time has arrived when people like Bob Tucker, Dean Grennell, and Bob Leman can easily make much more money writing informal essays for the large circulation magazines than they ever could from science fiction. It isn't difficult to imagine the current Harp in The New Yorker and it's a very short distance from Bob Shaw's inspired comic touch to a Broadway or Hollywood comedy involving far more money than even Arthur C Clarke made from "2001". A creative agent could make a fortune with talents like these when comparatively prosaic wits like Benton and Newman are wild successes. (Pause to think about <u>that</u>.)

For myself, however, since writing is a painful process I only do for the fun of it, the arguments in favor are easily demolished. The monetary lure doesn't exist -- I am shamefully well paid at a job which after years of experience I've systematized to the point where my subconscious literally does the work. Unfortunately, the mass media seems to pay poorest in the only commodity that would interest me in writing for it: egoboo. My attitude is close to that of Broadway actors who appear on television and are seen by more people in one evening than in their entire careers: it seems quite empty to them because there is no reaction from the millions of viewers and they are used to responsive audiences. If I were making a living by writing I'd be competing for the best rates and the largest circulation, by all means, but when payment is in fun there must be more satisfaction in playing at masterminding a small publication than in being published and forgotten in The Saturday Evening Post. There is nothing quite as uninteresting as silence.

And yet, I've reluctantly put off answering a letter from Paul Williams who has invited me to write for his highly successful Crawdaddy "now and then, on whatever subjects excite you most at the moment". The thought is tempting but the anonymous masses

are daunting. Would it be fun to write for his audience of approximately 100,000 or would it be like those advertisements I appeared in in Life, TV Guide, and Look which were seen by about 100,000,000 people only a dozen or so of whom ever mentioned the appearance to me -- except that an appearance in Crawdaddy would be a lot more work with potentially the same reward. A few non-fans I told about Paul's invitation urged me to write for him because it would be fun. Would it? These people are aware of Warhoon but never comment on it. Why, as far as they are concerned, would I enjoy more having my writing ignored in Crawdaddy than in Wrhn (where at least a small band of fellow nuts give it more consideration than it deserves)?

Scanning the above I'm forced to the conclusion that this wandering piece is more odyssey than essay. What it needs in conclusion is a dynamic punchline to wrap the whole thing up and leave you impressed by the way all these disparate themes revolve around a central point.

(One month pause.)

PUZZELMENTS AND GOODNIGHT

In the last, but not final?, issue of Egoboo I confessed to being amused by Ted White's note on current fandom that "old titles are being revived, from Wrhn to Wrr." I took the remark alphabetically (a sly bit of White humor) and asked "How many titles are there between Wrhn and Wrr? Co-editor John Berry replied: "Several, evidently: such as Psychotic, Shaggy, Odd, Cry..." I'd like to know in what sense these titles fall between Wrhn and Wrr. Not alphabetically, surely. And not chronologically, either. Psychotic and Odd were revived before Wrhn. Cry (and possibly Shaggy) appeared after Wrr. Geographically?

I'm also confused by Carl Brandon in Shaggy 74: "One year every readable fanzine is either incredibly fannish or personal, and the next they are all very serious and constructive. Is it really possible that fandom couldn't stand having both a Void and a Skyhook published simultaneously?" I would have thought that over the years fandom had demonstrated quite the opposite: Only Harry Warner could be expected to remember it but Void actually was published simultaneously with the late Skyhook -- though the early Void may have been even more serious than Skyhook, so the Brandon thesis is not refuted with that example. However, Skyhook was also published simultaneously with Quandry and Hyphen. Earlier evidence would include simultaneous publication of Fantasy Commentator and Le Zombie, and Acolyte and Chanticleer. Aside from an occasional sterling exception like Egoboo, I think it's true, though, that the better present-day fanzines are a pretty grim lot. In Wrhn I try to set an example of serious constructive insanity and as a consequence an issue may range from discussions of a question of evil to an invitation to blow your mind with the cover. Perhaps that pretty much defines the fanzines of the Sixties.

Our favorite prozines of the 40s like Astounding Science Fiction, Startling Stories, and Planet Stories seem to be having a rather unexpected reincarnation. Planet Stories and Super Science Stories can be seen in the form of "Star Trek" more nights of the week than you might be interested in looking at them (one). Astounding is back as "2001" complete with a mind-bending obsession outside the boundaries of scientific plausibility. And judging from advertising obviously ghosted by Earle K Bergy for "Barbarella", SS and TWS will soon be back with us. A photograph in Life indicates the film will even contain that old stand-by of the Startling Stories covers -- a gorgeous girl borne off by a winged man! Now, where's OOTWA and TCSAS?

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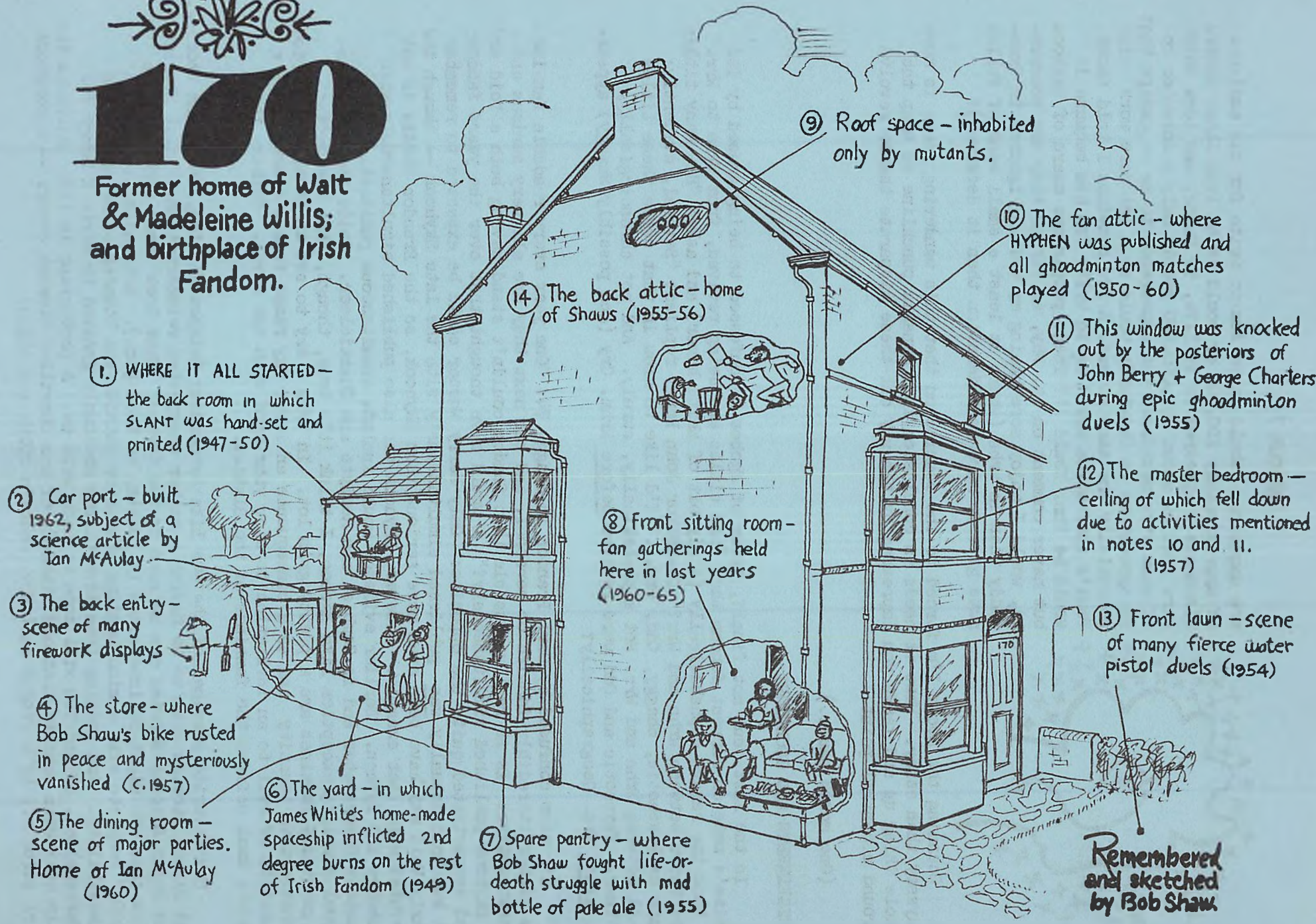
Former home of Walt & Madeleine Willis; and birthplace of Irish Fandom.



A WEALTH OF FABLE

Harry Warner

The press came floating across the Atlantic, Upper Newtowtards Roadward, toward a personality whose earliest years had contained little to hint at the characteristics and abilities suddenly emerging in fandom. Let's backtrack to examine the pre-fandom Walter A. Willis and to study briefly his first major fannish product, Slant.

Willis was born in Belfast on a date that should have impelled him toward weird fiction instead of science fiction, October 30. The year was 1919, the first full year of peace after World War One, the last year before the British Parliament created Northern Ireland as a separate entity. His father was a post office employee, descended from a Protestant family that had left Weford when Ireland seemed on the verge of gaining independence. Walter's mother grew up in a family that had lived near Killinchy in County Down. But the splendid sound of those Irish place names fades rapidly from the fannish ear, when succeeded by a more exciting revelation about the Willis ancestry. One of his grandfathers was a printer. It will be another decade or two before we shall know if this is biologically significant. If impulses to duplicate the written word frequently skip a generation, we have at last an explanation for the comparative scarcity of second-generation fans. Moreover, we can look forward to some monumental achievements by youngsters around the turn of the century, whose grandfathers were the achievers in Seventh Fandom or were kept in the balcony by Dave Kyle.

Walter's education began in a state primary school. At considerable sacrifice, his parents sent him next to a public school, the equivalent of the private school in the United States. Lacking the funds to go to college in a land and a time where there was little free university opportunity, Walter took an examination for Northern Ireland's civil service. He scored first places in four subjects, and went to work as a clerk.

"As a boy, my favorite book was 'The Coral Island' by R. M. Ballantine," Willis recalls. "I also liked school stories, fantasies -- myths, legends and fairy stories -- and any science fiction which appeared in the boys' magazines. I need hardly point out the relationships with fandom and science fiction -- the school stories I liked best were those by Frank Richards who wrote millions of words about the same school, every boy and mentor identified in this microcosm (Greyfriars)." American equivalents might have been the several series of boys' books published by Grosset and Dunlap with school settings during the 1920's and 1930's, or the sports-oriented but even longer-lived sets of novels in the Frank Merriwell and Frank Merriwell, Jr., series.

Later, Willis says, Wells and Joyce became his main literary influences. His style is not normally reminiscent of the latter, and his fanac demonstrated only in the first few years the emphasis on fundamentalist science fiction typified by the former's reputation. But Willis created so many fannish legends, wrote so entertainingly about fans, was prominent in so many fannish activities unrelated to science fiction stories, that it's often forgotten how science fiction-centered were those first fanzines from Oblique House.

In a guessing game, you wouldn't be apt to link this quotation with Willis: "We intend this to be mainly a fiction magazine. We want to be neither a half-baked imitation of a second-rate prozine, nor a mere testing ground for new ideas, a sort of s.f. avant-garde." But it's taken from the editorial of the second Slant. That issue contained one story that was later bought by Wollheim for Avon Fantasy Reader, James White's "The Still, Small Voice". It also presented a clear intimation of different things to come: the first appearance of The Prying Fan, symbolic for the multi-level pun and as the first fruits of a generous later harvest of Willis columns. The third issue also offered something deemed good enough

Part Two

for the prozines: "Swordsmen of Varnis" which Palmer chose for OtherWorlds. Credited to Geoffrey Cobbe in Slant, it was written by Clive Jackson. Slant indirectly hit the prozines again, when Other Worlds also used Ackerman's "Atomic Error", which Willis had reprinted from Shangri-La.

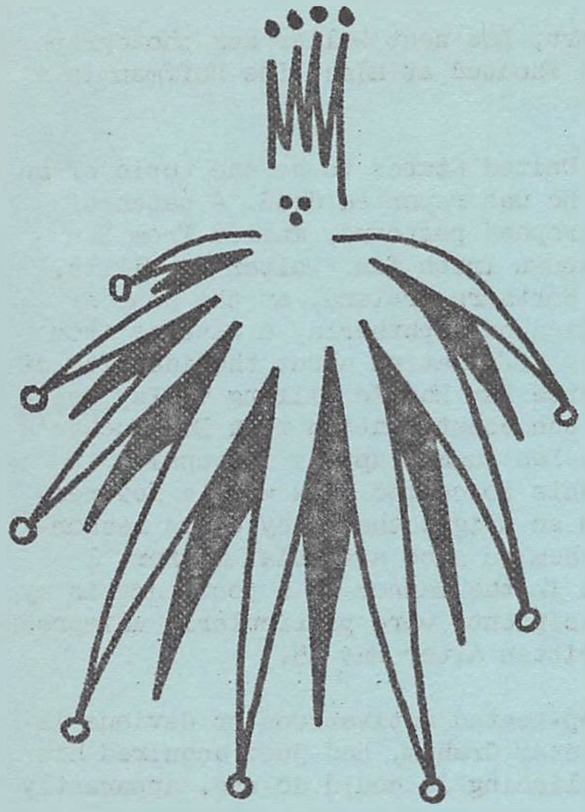
The majority of stories in Slant were short, out of respect to the labor involved in handsetting type. Most of them were quite well-written, but most were not remarkable for experimental aspects. If there was a distinctive trend running through Slant's fiction, it might have been the tendency for these stories not to take themselves or their futuristic subject matter with complete seriousness.

The first four issues had been distributed over a two-year period from late 1948 to the fall of 1950. Then the fifth issue, dated Spring, 1951, was published on the press Bannister had used for the first two issues of Nekromanticon. Simultaneously, fannishness was creeping into the fanzine, making itself more felt in the three final issues. The newly discovered Bob Shaw wrote the first of his Fanmanship Lectures for this issue. Reprinted several times, the Shaw series sought to enable the fan to advance more rapidly up the ladder to BNF status by showing him its rungs and even labeling each with such uplifting topics as feuds and ploys; this general theme could have been a dim foreshadowing of the later Enchanted Duplicator. Willis had by now unveiled to an expectant fandom Proxyboo, Ltd., a service which wrote letters of comment, published fanzines, and provided all manner of other types of egoboo, to save fans the trouble of working their "brain to the bone". Willis quickly began to do things with the new press that haven't been achieved since in fandom on similar mechanism. There was the dramatic innovation of striped ink, for example. It was accomplished by discouraging the inking plate from rolling in its accustomed manner. Lee Hoffman, remembering her backstage duties at amateur theatricals, insisted that it was done with lights. Walter replied that the ink indeed came from the internal organs of animals. The sixth issue of Slant contained an amazing five-color front cover, sixty pages inside, some interior illustrations in color, even some professionally made engravings.

Each of those pages had up to 50 lines of type. For each line as many as 75 pieces of type needed to be taken from the case, placed one by one into the form, spaced properly, and after the edition of the page containing that line was run, each of the up to 75 pieces of type in up to 50 lines on that page needed to be removed from the form, one by one, and returned to the proper pigeonholes in the case for later use. The time and effort involved in this procedure eventually caused Mr. Mergenthaler to invent the lino-type. James' eyes were giving him trouble and preventing him from doing more linocuts. Walter had found that he liked to write for other people's fanzines. "Nothing lasts forever and it was in the nature of things that we should eventually tire of the drudgery of typesetting," he summed up. So the seventh Slant, dated Winter, 1952-3, contained another impressive printed cover , looked like previous issues before it was opened, but inside the only printed material was a few illustrations. The remainder was mimeographed. Walter had invented a way to run mimeograph stencils on the press, then decided to get a mimeo of his own.

The editorial of this seventh Slant contains an editorial which symbolizes superbly the change in intention that Willis, like many another fan, found himself experiencing after a few issues of fanzine publishing, a change that he accomplished so magnificently that many later fans were inspired to begin their fanac with the new outlook, skipping altogether the more sercon preliminary stage. The editorial said:

Some time ago we got wind of this stern comment from the White Horse. 'Slant,' said some anonymous critic, 'is too promaggy.' We were aghast. Could this vile accusation possibly be true? Whitelipped and trembling, we stole a guilty look at the last issue...and reeled away, sick with self-disgust. It <u>was</u> true! No use to conceal the



fact from ourselves any longer; the mag was tainted with pseudo-professionalism. It wasn't just the vile prose we were printing -- the very physical form of the mag was contaminated. Its condition was critical. Not only had it contracted symptoms of chronic legibility, but neatness was breaking out all over it."

That's a splendid example of how far Willis had come to achieving the kind of prose that made him famous. He spoke true words under the veneer of lightheartedness, to prevent them from sounding trite and to soften the impact on anyone whom they might assault. Only the underlinings, exclamation point, and a trace of hyperbole remain as symptoms of the earlier style which Willis was so completely renovating.

The same trip to the Epicentre that Willis found decisive in his outlook and style served another function. It formed the subject matter for one of the first results of his new form of fanac. He told about his impressions of the fabled spot in an issue of Derek Pickles' Phantasmagoria. One of Willis' earliest spectacular and significant contributions to someone else's fanzines was his 15-page report on the first convention he attended, the British Festival Convention of 1951. A dozen years later, he still thought it the best of his conreports. On that visit to London, he didn't know the fans very well, and he tore into the pros without restraint. "I disrupted the London Circle, brought the 15-year-old feud between Gillings and Carnell to a head so that Gillings retired from publishing, and incurred Carnell's eternal distrust." Vincent Clarke assumed, as soon as he read it, that Madeleine was now a widow at the hands of Ted Carnell. Willis estimated that he would have undergone life imprisonment if he'd written that way about an American worldcon. It helped to make international fame for both Willis and for the fanzine in which it appeared, Quandry.

Willis had had some words left over from that monumental sixth issue of Slant. While recuperating from the typesetting effort, he had sent them to a new fanzine which had been sent him by a new fan in Savannah, Ga. That impulse started a train of events that ended in another trip across the Atlantic. The second trip was east-west, however, and the traveler was not an American press, but an Irish fan.

Lee Hoffman had been a fan since 10:30 a.m. on June 9, 1950, when she saw a copy of Speer's Fancyclopedia. She was 17 at the time. It was just 44 days later when her first fanzine was issued. Quandry made Willis famous throughout the United States as a writer, after several years in which scattered U.S. fans had been receiving Slant and failing to realize fully his literary achievements under the impact of such publishing accomplishments. With the eighth issue, early in 1951, came the first appearance in Quandry of "The Harp That Once Or Twice", Willis' most famous column. He thinks that he got the title from Joyce, but has never been able to find the right line on the correct page of "Ulysses"again. Quandry's editor also created the only celebrated instance in which Willis was slow on the uptake. Lee met few fans in person for a while, and her given name was assumed to be that of a young man by those who knew her through correspondence. Vernon McCain even continued that assumption after he received a wire recording from her; he thought her voice hadn't changed yet. In early 1951, she asked Walter if he could keep a secret for a while, and enclosed a valentine. He had "such a clear picture of Lee as a tubby brown-eyed young fellow" that he considered the valentine just another fannish eccentricity. Then she told him that she sat crosslegged

on the bed to type. Finally, in a last supreme effort, Lee sent Walter her photograph. Walter rushed to a telephone, rang up Bob Shaw, and shouted at him: "Lee Hoffman is a girl!"

A year later, Walter was famous enough in the United States to be the topic of an activity that is bestowed on only the finest fans. He was reported dead. A batch of fans received early in June of 1952 a badly mimeographed postcard, mailed from San Francisco. "We regret to inform you that the well-known Irish fan, Walter A. Willis, is dead," it began. "He passed away at his home in Northern Ireland, at the hour of 9:30 a.m. on Thursday, May 15. The doctor said he died of diphtheria, a disease from which he had been suffering for some time." The only information about the identity of the informant was a line at the bottom: "An Interested Fan Who Is Willing To Pay Postage for These Cds." The announcement did not cause the consternation that Bob Tucker's multiple obituaries have created through the years. Lee summed up the impression it made in most places: "The only people taken in by this so-called hoax were a few neophytes and a few people whose contact with Walt was so slight that they could reasonably believe that news of this nature might reach them in such a trivial manner. I found a dirty file card mimeoed sloppily and mailed in the manner of a post card in my mail. I glanced at it and tossed it aside." Some recipients were particularly unimpressed because they had received letters Willis had written after May 15.

The episode seems to have resulted from no deep-seated motivations or devious intentions. A 13-year-old neofan in San Francisco, Peter Graham, had just acquired his first mimeograph. He wanted to see what kind of publishing it could do and, apparently on impulse, ran off this postcard.

But that impulse could have had a serious effect on fandom's history. It could conceivably have fouled up completely a project that had great consequences for fannish lore and letters. This was WAW With the Crew in '52. If the death hoax had disrupted this project, TAFF might never have come into being; there would have been no The Harp Stateside to inspire a long line of monster-size fannish trip reports; the Second Coming of Willis would have automatically retreated into a world of if instead of becoming part of the history of IF; and it's hard to imagine the effect on fanzines, if Willis had been soured sufficiently by the event to cut back on fanac for the remainder of the 1950's.

Shelby Vick, a member of the Quandry editorial staff, created WAW With the Crew in '52, as a project and as a slogan. ("Crew" seems to have meant loosely the fans with whom he would meet if the project succeeded, and has no fannish significance other than its usefulness as a rhyme.) The project was to bring Walter A. Willis to the worldcon in Chicago in 1952. The only previous effort to import a fan from overseas for a worldcon had succeeded only after the most strenuous efforts spread over several years. That was Ackerman's drive to bring across Ted Carnell, the Very Same Ted Carnell who turned out to have not been too implacably angered by the conreport after all. Willis was far less famous as a fan in 1952 than Carnell had been when Ackerman started those efforts, and there was no reasonable hope for success. Neither Willis nor Hoffman thought that the campaign would be won. The round trip ticket would cost $340, and a couple hundred additional dollars were needed for land travel, meals, hotel bills, and other expenses. That postcard from San Francisco had complicated matters by ordering: "Fans who contributed to the WAW with the Crew in '52 fund, send your name and address to Shelby Vick, and he will return your money. All fanzine publishers are asked not to treat this announcement as a hoax." But the money came in. A mimeograph was raffled off. Some of the leading fanzines published Willishes, special issues that plugged the trip, usually containing material by and about the subject of the campaign. Willis himself stirred up extra interest by the novel procedure of writing an account of his trip before anyone knew if it would occur. This was "Willis

Discovers America", a stupendously ingenious piece of writing. It was a hard act to follow when he sat down to write the account of the journey itself. The author called it "a sort of monument to the era which is now known as Sixth Fandom." It was published first piecemeal in Quandry, Vick's Confusion, Oopsla!, Mad, and Fantasias, then reprinted by the author for FAPA and OMPA in 1955 with footnotes, and later reprinted serially again in Void during the publicity for the Second Coming.

Sixth Fandom did it, and the trip became what Willis considers the highlight of his career in fandom. "Every major project I've done since has been nostalgic, either an attempt to encapsulate the perfect fandom I knew then or a straight recreation of it."

The adventure began with a mad rush to catch up on fanac, then a quiet talk with James on the lawn of Oblique House the night before the journey, about "how far we'd come since we entered fandom and how far I was going to go." Walter sailed on the Neptunia. The first American fan to greet him was Dave Kyle, who had beaten the field with the help of a press pass during customs formalities. Walter rode with Joe Gibson by bus to Chicago, where he fell into the habit of answering his telephone with these words: "Peter Graham speaking." His formal introduction to fandom came in an unexpected manner. The Chicagoan who was handling introductions at the worldcon was suffering from both ignornace about the present generation of fans and bad eyesight. He had to be prompted about the existence of Willis, then didn't see Walter stand and proceeded to introduce him a second time on the assumption that he'd failed to respond to the first one.

Willis spoke at the banquet as part of an impressive lineup of orators: Hugo Gernsback, L. Sprague de Camp, Dr. EE Smith, Clifford Simak, and Anthony Boucher. "I spoke for a few minutes, making three bad jokes that were laughed at and one good one that wasn't," Willis related. The worldcon ended in a manner made famous by Willis' description:

"As the dawn broke we were all quietly happy and talked about how wonderful it had all been and how much we were going to miss each other and how we must get together again some time somehow. As for me, I was as happy as I'd ever been in my life. All the tension of the last few days was over and to look forward to I had the prospect of four weeks of seeing America and after that a return to fandom without the worry and embarrassment that had spoiled it for so long. I had now been just seven days in America without even having had time to think about it, but now a feeling of utter exaltation swept over me to realize that there I was sitting between Lee Hoffman and Max Keasler at the top of a skyscraper watching the sun rise over Chicago. Life can be wonderful. It was one of those moments that has to be broken while it's still perfect, and when the sun was fully up we went down to have breakfast."

(To be continued.)

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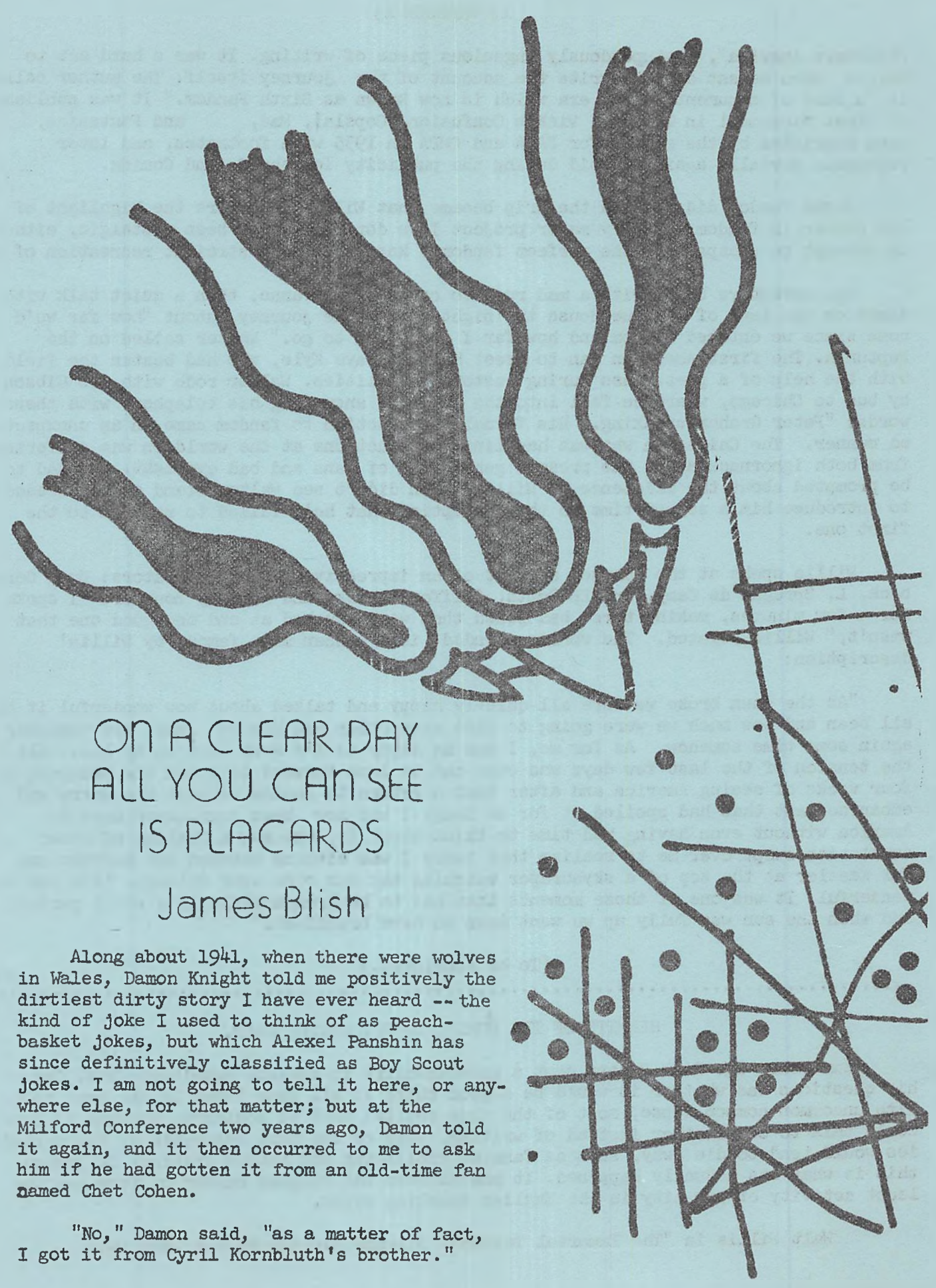
HERMITS OF THE WORLD, DO NOT UNITE, DEPT.

Some years ago Rick Sneary sent a questionnaire to various prominent fans. One of his questions was whether it would be a good thing if all fans lived in the same town. With uncommon common sense, most of the fans replied that it wouldn't, because if fans could talk to one another instead of writing, some of the most enjoyable of fan activities would tend to die away, such as fanzine publishing and letter writing. In London, this is what has actually happened. It has at once the biggest number of fans and the least activity of any city in the English speaking world.

Walt Willis in "The Immortal Teacup", Science Fiction Digest, Nov 1951.



ON A CLEAR DAY ALL YOU CAN SEE IS PLACARDS

James Blish

Along about 1941, when there were wolves in Wales, Damon Knight told me positively the dirtiest dirty story I have ever heard -- the kind of joke I used to think of as peach-basket jokes, but which Alexei Panshin has since definitively classified as Boy Scout jokes. I am not going to tell it here, or anywhere else, for that matter; but at the Milford Conference two years ago, Damon told it again, and it then occurred to me to ask him if he had gotten it from an old-time fan named Chet Cohen.

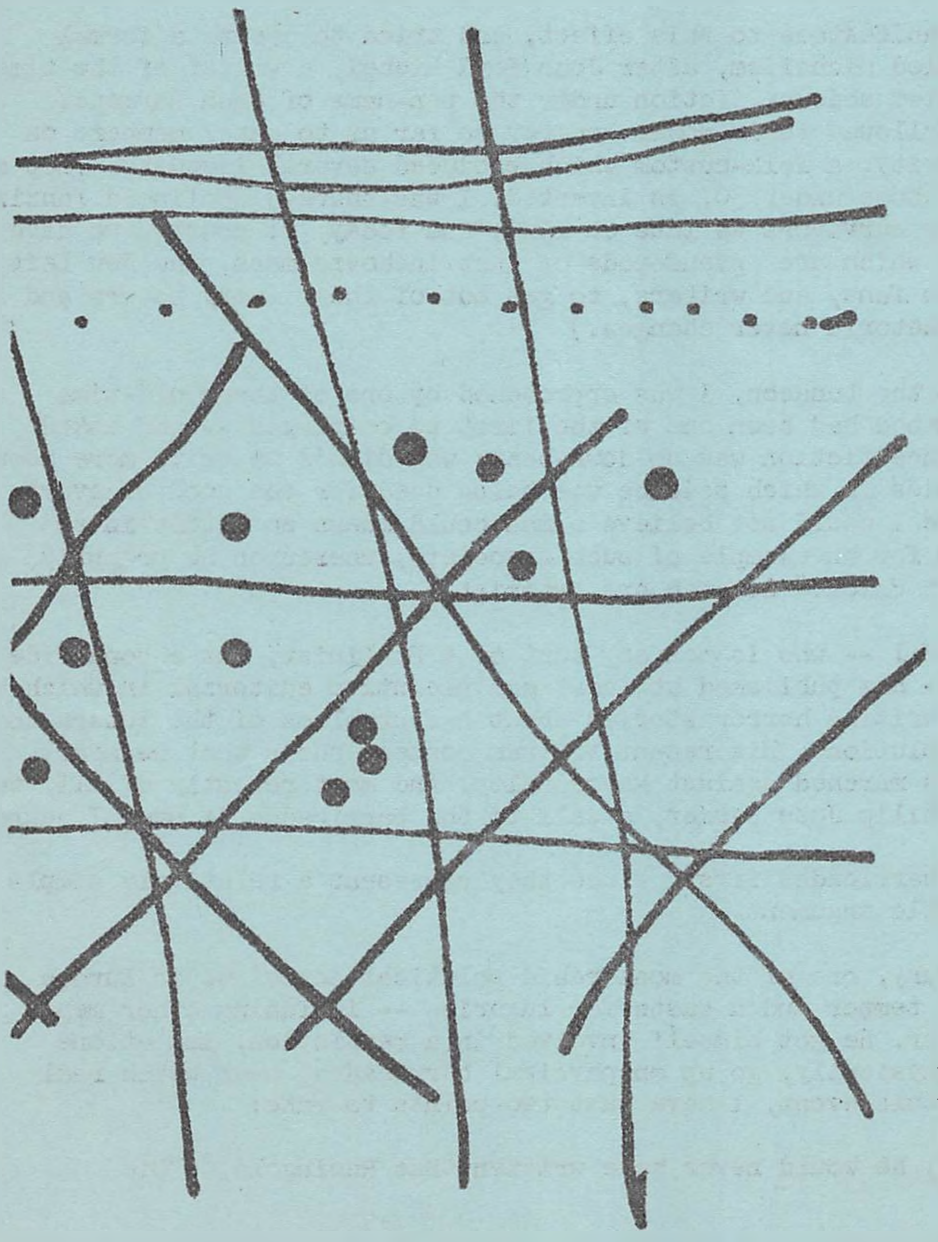
"No," Damon said, "as a matter of fact, I got it from Cyril Kornbluth's brother."

Keith Laumer, who was standing by, then said: "And where did he get it, do you suppose?"

Damon didn't know, so I suggested that possibly he had gotten it off a toilet seat. I now know that this guess was wrong. The fact is that he got it from H.G.Wells.

The story I refer to deals with a large group of hapless characters who live quiet lives until a moment when a gong sounds, after which they must all rush incontinently to the nearest exit, where they meet a horrible doom. In the Wells version, these characters were called Eloi, quite ironically, for this is the Hebrew word for a God. Why Wells didn't use the more familiar plural form Elohim I do not know, and in any event this is not the point I am painfully getting to. Instead, I want to call your attention to a fact which has often been noticed before, that the Eloi in "The Time Machine" were intended to be the descendants of capitalists, and the Morlocks who eat them the descendants of the downtrodden workers.

In other words, a plain case of propaganda. We have seen a lot of this in science fiction since: jumping about at random in the holes that pass for my memory, I adduce the satires of Stanton A. Coblenz, "Brave New World", "Ape and Essence", "Limbo", anything by Kurt Vonnegut except his slick-magazine stories, anything by Heinlein from "The Door Into Summer" on, almost all the post-Kornbluth work of Fred Pohl...well, I am sure that you, too, have got a little list.



Now, using fiction as a vehicle for social satire is almost as old as fiction itself; in fact, specifically using science fiction for this purpose goes back a long time before Wells. Consider, for instance, Jonathen Swift, or Voltaire's "Micromegas". I have no theoretical objection to it, though I observe, I hope mildly, that unless the author is a great writer, no form of fiction so inevitably becomes more dated more quickly. It bores me absolutely green even when the issues it satirizes are still alive, but that's a flaw in my taste, not in the genre.

In times of special stress, however, we often hear calls that all writers must write social satire, or otherwise turn their attention to the great hot issues of their epoch, and sometimes we even

hear cries that they must quit their typewriters and mount the barricades. During the Depression, some Marxist writers considered it their duty to write only about the dreary lives of the downtrodden, more or less in imitation of those humorless Stalinist comedies in which boy meets tractor, girl meets tractor, and together they overfulfill their quota. This attitude, when it penetrated to the critics, caused the temporary downfall of one great fantasy writer, James Branch Cabell, who was excoriated by such then-Marxist critics as Granville Hicks because he preferred writing about medieval France to Chicago breadlines. (This comedy has now come full circle; I myself have just published an article by John Boardman which argues that the current Cabell revival is an anti-escapist, politically progressive event. Well, maybe.)

This attitude penetrated into science fiction to some extent during the same period. Some few of you may remember a story in Amazing called "The Robot Technocrat"; probably still fewer of you remember that Technocracy in those days was almost as hot an issue in the United States as Scientology is in England now. And inside fandom itself, a group was formed called the Futurians, all of whom to begin with were either Stalinoids or outright Party members, who took the tack that science fiction ought not only to speculate about the future, but try to make the future actually go in a given direction. (Guess which. Up? No.)

The Futurians issued manifestoes to this effect, and tried to create a formal movement inside fandom, called Michelism, after John Boyd Michel, a writer of the time who wrote politically oriented science fiction under the pen-name of John Raymond. Eventually, the Futurians followed their model society so far as to expel members on grounds of ideological impurity, a folk-custom which produced several lawsuits. (Not a word of this, I assure all those under 30, is invented. I was there.) Stalinoid fanzines were being circulated by the survivors as late as 1947; and today, of course, we have quite a variety of fanzines which are pseudopods of that inchoate mass, the New Left, again urging science fiction fans, and writers, to get out of their ivory towers and join the good fight. (The rhetoric never changes.)

Only two years ago, at the Lunacon, I was approached by one of those old-time Futurians -- who as it happened had been one of the first to be purged -- and asked plaintively why modern science fiction was so down-beat; why didn't we write more about happy, well-adjusted societies in which science was being used for the good of everyone? Optimistically -- since I could not believe a man could learn so little in so many decades -- I asked him for an example of such a society, whereupon he promptly said, "Well, like the Soviet Union." Scratch one optimist.

Also recently, Fred Pohl -- who is not any sort of a Stalinist, but a bona-fide Democrat the last I heard -- has published at least one plaintive editorial in which he asked writers to knock off writing horror stories about the problems of the future and try to come up with a few solutions. His recent Vietnam contest shows that he meant it. Several of "our" writers marched against Mayor Daley. And most recently of all, we have the Baycon speech of Philip Jose Farmer, a call to the barricades if ever I heard one.

Let us dispose of the barricades first, since they represent a relatively simple case which demands very little argument.

In the nineteenth century, one of the most rabid political activists in Europe was a little man with a bad temper and a taste for luxuries -- including other men's wives -- named Richard Wagner. He got himself involved in a revolution, and at one point in it actually did, physically, go up on physical barricades, over which real bullets were flying. About this event, I have just two points to make:

(1) Had he been killed, he would never have written "Das Rheingold," "Die

Walkuere", "Siegfried", "Die Meistersinger", "Tristan und Isolde", the Paris version of "Tannhäuser", or "Parsifal". His career would have been over with "Lohengrin".

(2) I don't now remember what that revolution was all about, and I'll bet there aren't five persons in the audience who do...or which side of it he was on.

So much for the barricades. As for the trenches, I venture to predict that the only point of interest in World War I for future historians will be that it killed Henri Gaudier-Brzeska, who never knew what it was all about -- and neither does anybody else.

Propaganda is a more difficult case. To begin with, it is any writer's privilege to write about what he believes in, and in fact he has no choice about the matter; it will show through, and in the most unlikely and unpredictable ways. A feeling of conviction, as I said at the Pittcon in 1960, is essential to good science fiction, and may be its most important ingredient. If the author writes against what he believes, the resulting story will be hollow, mechanical, frivolous.

A case in point: When "A Torrent of Faces" was still more or less in the incubating stage, many years ago, I showed about the first 25,000 words and an outline to a magazine editor whose favorite modus operandi was to take the author's point and stand it on its head. Of this novel, he said, "I've seen too many stories about the menace of over-population. Why don't you instead take the tack that we can never have too many people?" And a while later he published an editorial making just this point.

Well, but this was not the point the novel was making; and furthermore, I felt that to write the story to his point would be an anti-social act. Norman Knight agreed, so we abandoned all hope of selling the novel to that man. We sold it elsewhere, our way.

But this same novel shows another aspect of belief on the part of the writer which is more complex. This is the phenomenon called "temporary acceptance." We could hardly believe that in the kind of world we were projecting, either a democracy or a republic would be workable. Hence we organized it as a corporate state, and in the preface to the novel, we called the corporate state by its right name: fascism.

We got some steaming letters from readers who said our set-up was not fascistic, and it was clear from what they said that to them "fascism" meant jack-boots and concentration camps and one-man dictatorship and all the rest of those ugly trappings. These historically have been the consequences of fascism, as they have historically of communism, but they are not fascism itself, which is a form of economic system.

Now, do Norman and I believe that fascism would work under the circumstances? We do not. At least, we think it pretty unlikely; but then, we thought the whole future we were describing pretty unlikely. But we chose to examine the question, and for the purposes of the novel, to make an act of temporary acceptance on the question.

Artists do this constantly. It is temporary acceptance which made it possible for Alexei Panshin, in "Rite of Passage", to write in first person as a young girl, though not only is he not a young girl, but never was one. It is temporary acceptance which made it possible for Wagner to write a great opera about the Holy Grail, although he was a militant atheist all his life.

It is nowhere more important than in science-fiction, because the science-fiction writer must keep open the option to write about alternative futures, many of them, perhaps most, mutually exclusive. He cannot possibly believe all of them are likely; even less can he believe that all of them are desirable.

(Concluded on page xx.)

This is one of the aspects of science fiction that lay readers find most difficult to grasp. Only last year, a French critic writing in Partisan Review demanded that we all get together and agree on some single, desirable future, and then all of us center all our stories around it, and thus help bring it into being. It evidently never occurred to him that nobody would want to write that way, and nobody would want to read the outcome, either.

There are evidently some people inside science fiction who have a rather weak grasp of the point, too. At least, I can see no other plausible way to explain these various calls from editors and writers to "shape a better world" and "deliver the future." Which future? In 40 years of reading science fiction I have yet to see one single suggested future which would not fill me with misgivings were it to be frozen into reality. And if I cannot think up such a society myself, I am going to pay no attention to demands that I help deliver some other man's future.

In arguing on the other side, Phil Farmer cites with approval Marshall McLuhan's dictum that all art is prophetic. I deny absolutely that Mozart's Serenade No 14 in D Flat for 12 wind instruments and double-bass is prophetic of anything whatever except some elements of Mozart's later style. The fact that great artists influence the practice of their successors is prophecy, if you like, but it is a pretty mingy sort of prophecy compared to the world-shaping Mr. Farmer has in mind.

But in science fiction the mistake is easier to make because we are constantly writing about the future. This does not mean that we are prophets. It only defines our subject-matter. Did we think ourselves true prophets, we would write non-fiction prophecies, as McLuhan does.

It has been pointed out many times that the actual success of past science fiction writers in predicting the present has been very low. I have had a little better luck at this than many of my colleagues, but only by the same system used in the field in general: I have depicted hundreds and hundreds of possibilites, large and small, and a few of the small ones have come through. That is strictly shotgun work; the ability to spray birdshot in all directions should not be confused with a divine mission.

If the artist has a positive duty to society, I think it is that of keeping his tools clean and shaping his figures to his own inner vision. And if in defiance of all good sense the science fcction writer insists on joining demonstrations, I think the placards he carries ought to be blank.

As Archibald MacLiesh once said -- though he forgot about it later: Many are the poets that have followed after armies -- and their bones were subsequently found under old newspapers.

(As delivered at the 1968 Phillycon by James Blish.)

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REMEMBER HYPHEN?: Anyone who isn't confused doesn't really understand the situation... It's either stop saying 'You was' or leave off that monocle... He patronises the arts, like he does everyone else... Luxury is a necessity... I hear you've been signing your name to anonymous letters again... We're learning about world history and all that jazzy stuff that happened before there was a fandom... I don't see why everything can't be explained clearly in simple one-syllable words, without obfuscating the issue... I've seen it in colouring books and colouring books don't lie... From Hyphen #24.

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Bill Blackbeard

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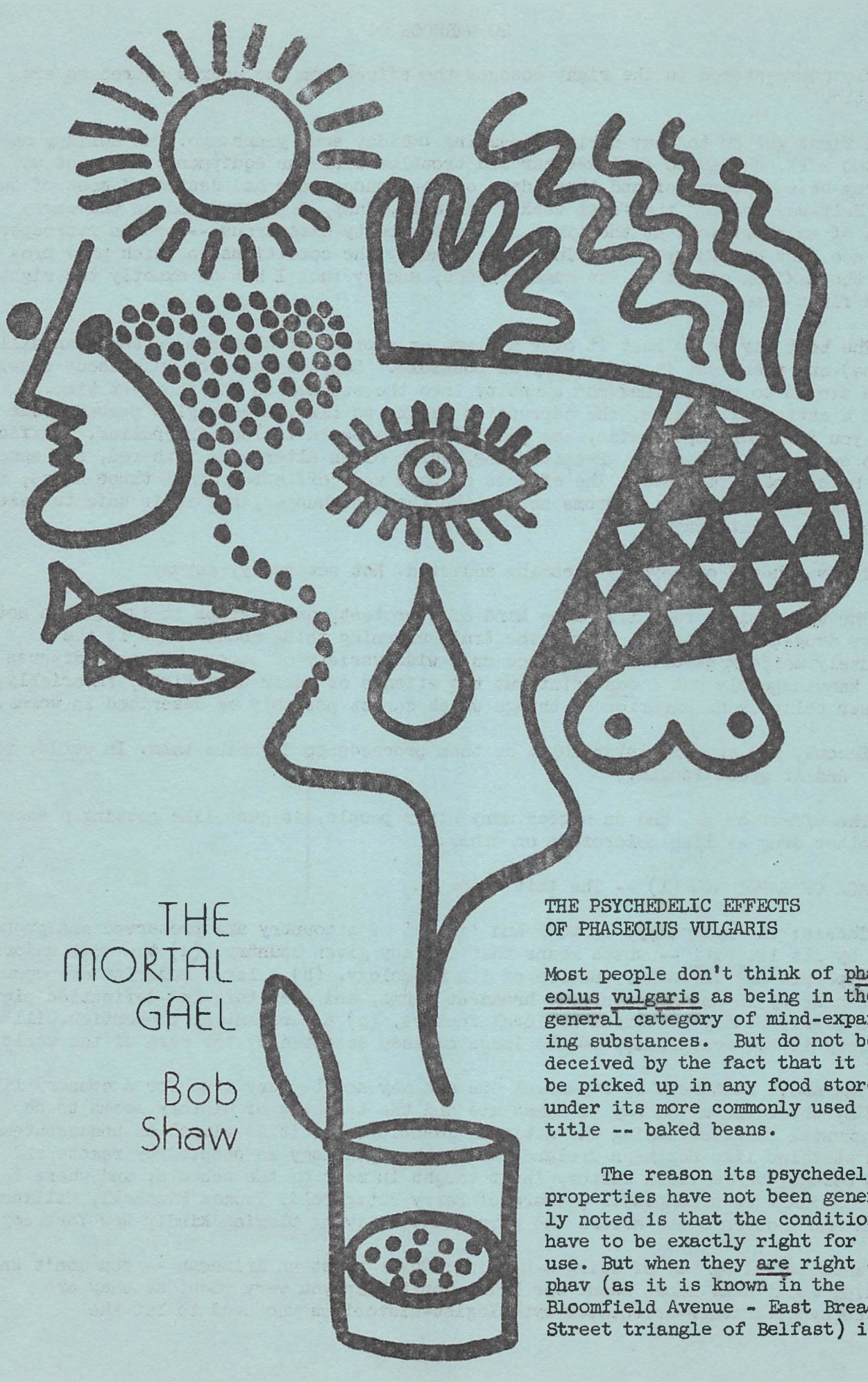

THE MORTAL GAEL

Bob Shaw

THE PSYCHEDELIC EFFECTS OF PHASEOLUS VULGARIS

Most people don't think of phaseolus vulgaris as being in the general category of mind-expanding substances. But do not be deceived by the fact that it can be picked up in any food store under its more commonly used title -- baked beans.

The reason its psychedelic properties have not been generally noted is that the conditions have to be exactly right for its use. But when they are right and phav (as it is known in the Bloomfield Avenue - East Bread Street triangle of Belfast) is

properly administered in the right dosages the effects on the user's awareness are fantastic.

I first got on to phav during a camping holiday some years ago. The holiday hadn't gone too well, thanks to foul weather and troubles with our equipment. The tent was far from being waterproof and three days of continuous rain had destroyed most of our food. Half-way through the first week I was cold, damp, depressed and in the early stages of malnutrition. At the time, it seemed pretty disastrous -- but in retrospect I can see just how lucky I was. These are exactly the conditions in which phav produces the maximum effect on the human psyche, and by luck I hit on exactly the right method first time.

The best way is to heat it over a flame on a piece of aluminum (a saucepan will do fine) and then eat it as quickly as possible. Don't bother too much about chewing -- the aim is to get the maximum quantity into the stomach in the shortest time. Within a matter of minutes, the depression begins to lift, a warm glow pervades the body, you feel more optimistic, and people's faces begin to look friendlier. Traffic lights appear to give off a greenish glow, which often alternates with red, and sometimes both appear together. The effects of phav wear off after about three hours, at which time you will feel symptoms not unlike those of hunger, but it is safe to take another dose right away.

I never heard of anybody becoming addicted. Not seriously, anyway.

The above might read like some kind of a protest, and perhaps it is, though not against drug-taking itself. To me, the truly alarming thing about drugs is the absolutely uniform effect they produce on a wide variety of people. I can't discuss drugs knowledgeably but I can point out two effects of their use. First, invariably, the user tells us he experiences things which cannot possibly be described in words.

Second, and equally invariably, he then proceeds to describe them. In words, no less. And at great length.

The effect on me, and on a good many other people, is just like getting a shot of some other drug -- like chloroform or ether.

THE SAGA OF SANDY ROW (1) -- The Initiation

Thesis: The mythology, history and 'image' of a country are preserved and propagated by its literati -- which means that for any given country: (a) the vast majority of the people are virtually unaware of its mythology, (b) a large majority are unaware of its history in anything but the broadest terms, and even this low-definition picture may be significantly distorted by local factors, (c) a substantial proportion will bear very little resemblance to the image of them accepted by the rest of the world.

The above statement is a general one and may not be very true for a country like the USA, where the mythology is immediate and the teaching of history seems to be instrumental in establishing the national identity. But it is almost an understatement for a statelet like Northern Ireland, where the mythology is peopled by remote and alien beings, where Irish history isn't taught in most of the schools, and where the national image is a composite picture of Barry Fitzgerald, Thomas Mitchell, William Bendix and a dozen other actors who earned their living playing kindly New York cops.

This is all by way of being a warning: Never trust an Irishman -- you don't know anything about him! Books about the Irish won't help you very much, as they are written by literature-orientated mythologist-historians who tend to let the

Unrepresented Irish, as I call them, remain that way. Yet the UI form the bulk of the population, occupy most of the dwellings that aren't in the romantic castle class, do most of the work, catch most of the diseases, and fill up most of the graveyards. They read nothing but newspapers, aren't interested in writing, spend no time brooding about terrible beauties; so they remain unknown to everyone except themselves, and have no desire to have things any other way.

It's a good thing for them I came along.

I began my study of the UI some years ago in a pub in Sandy Row. You've never heard of Sandy Row? That's an example of what I've been talking about -- for, to anyone who is in touch with the Irish scene, the name of that shabby Belfast thoroughfare is evocative of our whole politico-religious tangle. The reason you've never heard of it is that Sandy Row is important to the people who are the Irish scene, but not to the people who do all the writing about it. So, on deciding to become the champion of the UI, in a modest way, I eschewed the study of abstruse works about the plantation of Ulster etc, and headed for the Sandy Row pubs. (When tackling a problem I model myself on Einstein. It wasn't a huge IQ that made him a famous scientist, it was his simple child-like approach -- and for all I know I might be even more simple and child-like than Einstein.)

The study project didn't go too well for a longish time. I had selected one pub -- George's -- and began to patronise it two or three times a week, but while the clientel accepted my presence, they didn't quite accept me. For one thing, I'm over six feet and weight 210lbs -- and I projected up out of a sea of cloth caps like a mastiff that had strayed into a poodle show. For some reason, the average height of the UI is about five five. (There were two of the regulars who were regarded by the others as giants, and both of them came up to just over my shoulder.) For a time I even tried to make myself smaller and less conspicuous by sagging a little at every joint, but one evening a drunken postman named Trevor cured me of the habit. He claimed to have contacts in the white slave trade and had just promised to get me £200 for my wife, sight unseen.

"It doesn't even matter if she hasn't got much accootermints" -- he said generously, making a vague fluttering movement a few inches in front of his vest -- "as long as she's got that flawless white skin."

Fascinated, I drooped even lower so as not to miss a single word, but Trevor gave an accusing stare, and said severely, "Hey! You're not a cripple, are you?"

I straightened up without a word, increasing the distance between my ears and Trevor's mouth to such an extent that I never did find out if having been married to a suspected cripple would have affected Sadie's value in the Oriental flesh markets.

But eventually I began to fit in; and the big breakthrough came one Saturday morning when I found myself befriended by Wee Jack, an elderly shipyard worker who was the doyen of a select band of Guinness garglers. It happened when I had just poured a bottle of stout, and was about to take a drink when I noticed a small piece of foreign matter nestling in the oatmeal-coloured froth. I went to fish it out, but a bony and calloused hand seized my wrist.

"Complain to George about that," Wee Jack said. "Don't let him get away with it."

"It isn't worth complaining about." George wasn't at his customary post behind the bar, and I genuinely didn't want to cause any fuss.

"Ye can't let him get away with it," Wee Jack insisted. "The like of thon could turn yer stomach."

"But George isn't there."

"He's only out at the back." Wee Jack jumped to his feet and began demanding the owner's presence -- a development I didn't welcome because 'out at the back' is a local euphemism for being at the lavatory, and the architecture of the Irish pub rarely allows for washing facilities. A few seconds later George burst out of the toilet in a cloud of urine-scented air and enquired what was amiss.

"Big Bob's got something in his drink," Wee Jack said indignantly, in spite of my efforts to restrain him.

"Christ, no!" With an apologetic look on his face, George advanced on me -- still buttoning his fly -- and fished the speck out of my Guinness."A thing like that could turn yer stomach."

I nodded mutely.

"There y'are," Wee Jack said triumphantly. "Always complain. Never let them get away with anything." He beamed at me and pushed the glass of stout a little closer to my hand. The other regulars nearby nodded their approval.

I hesitated briefly, then thanked him, and took a drink. The membership fee had been high -- but I had finally been accepted at George's.

THERE'S A HOOLEY ON...

On the evening of August 28, I arrived at James White's house for a meeting of Irish Fandom; and the sight which greeted me in his living room (it isn't really living, of course -- even the electric wiring has perished) made me wonder if I'd come to the wrong place.

Before describing the scene, I should mention that, since Ian McAulay returned to Dublin, there is virtually no shouting, swearing or drinking of intoxicating liquor at IF gatherings. The custom is to sit around decorously sipping tea from bone china cups while we languidly exchange chit-chat which may vary from semi-intellectual to half-witted, but is at all times calm and dignified.

On this occasion, however, something was different. Those present -- James & Peggy White, and George Charters -- were not actually being uproarious, in fact they were pretty quiet, but the potential was there. They had sort of raucous expressions on their faces. James was barely visible behind a row of beer cans, bottles and glasses. And George -- eyes gleaming through his pre-National Health spectacles with the hand-carved lenses -- was nursing a luridly red, rectangular object which turned out to be an accordian.

While driving over to James's with Sadie I had paused at the Red Lion only long enough to relieve a slight but irritating tickle in the throat by swallowing four quick pints of Double Diamond, and thus was in the mood to appreciate a leisurely drink. But what was going on?

"It's Irish Fandom's twenty-first birthday," James explained. "We're having a celebration.

"With free beer?" I said in wonderment.

"With free beer," James confirmed.

And a right good celebration it was. The talk and liquor flowed with equal facility, and the evening passed merrily with shafts of humour and fannish good cheer lancing through a cosy alcoholic fug, like the rays of the sun as it sets redly in the mists of Innisfree or some other God-forsaken ass-hole of nowhere.

When Peggy brought the food in, James handed out the sandwiches with the traditional cry of, "If anybody wants a plate let him speak now or forever hold his piece." ('Piece' is an Irishism for sandwich.)

We sat around for a while nibbling sandwiches (I managed to toy [illegible]way through about a dozen) in the informal atmosphere we most enjoy. Some groups make their meals far too formal, with place settings and everybody having to sit where he's directed -- but in Irish Fandom every man can sit just wherever he chews. Having finished the ale, I managed to rescue a good part of a bottle of sherry from the risk of evaporation, and the evening grew even merrier...

Suddenly, from a dim corner, came the sound which a gorilla might emit while passing an unexpected kidney stone.

George -- carried away by the spirit of the evening -- had given us a burst on his accordian. The ensuing silence was broken only by the sound of frightened children whimpering upstairs in the sleeping quarters. (They aren't really sleeping, of course, although the carpet has a nap.)

Emboldened by our looks of astonishment, George gave a devil-may-care yodel, stamped his foot, and gaily launched into one of the few tunes he knew. Unfortunately -- in view of the fact that James lives in a solidly Nationalist district -- the tune was 'God Save The Queen'.

After James had tactfully quieted him down, by the expedient of giving the accordian a sort of bear's hug and thus preventing it from drawing breath, George apologised for his political gaffe. Being a raw beginner he couldn't squeeze out a tune from memory and worked -- like a humanoid player piano -- from long strips of cardboard covered with dots. This time he had lifted the wrong strip.

"All those bloody dots look alike," George commented defensively, as we waited, white-lipped, for the Molotov cocktails to come crashing through the windows.

And so it went on, far into the night. Watch this space in four years for a report of IF's twenty-fifth anniversary celebrations. They should be even better, and George is fairly sure he'll have mastered "Rule Britannia" by that time. --Bob Shaw.

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THE MEASURE OF TRUE WORTH, DEPT.

Burbee once told me that the best time in the life of any fan editor is the moment when he can stack the entire run of the issue before him, light a cigaret, open the topmost copy, and riffle through the pages, reading his own work with a glow of accomplishment. This is surely true. The fan editor must please himself first and most of all. Egoboo is just gravy, and if the readers praise a fanzine that you know in your heart is not good, not worthy of your time and effort, the gravy is pretty tasteless after all.

Redd Boggs in Gambit 25, no date.

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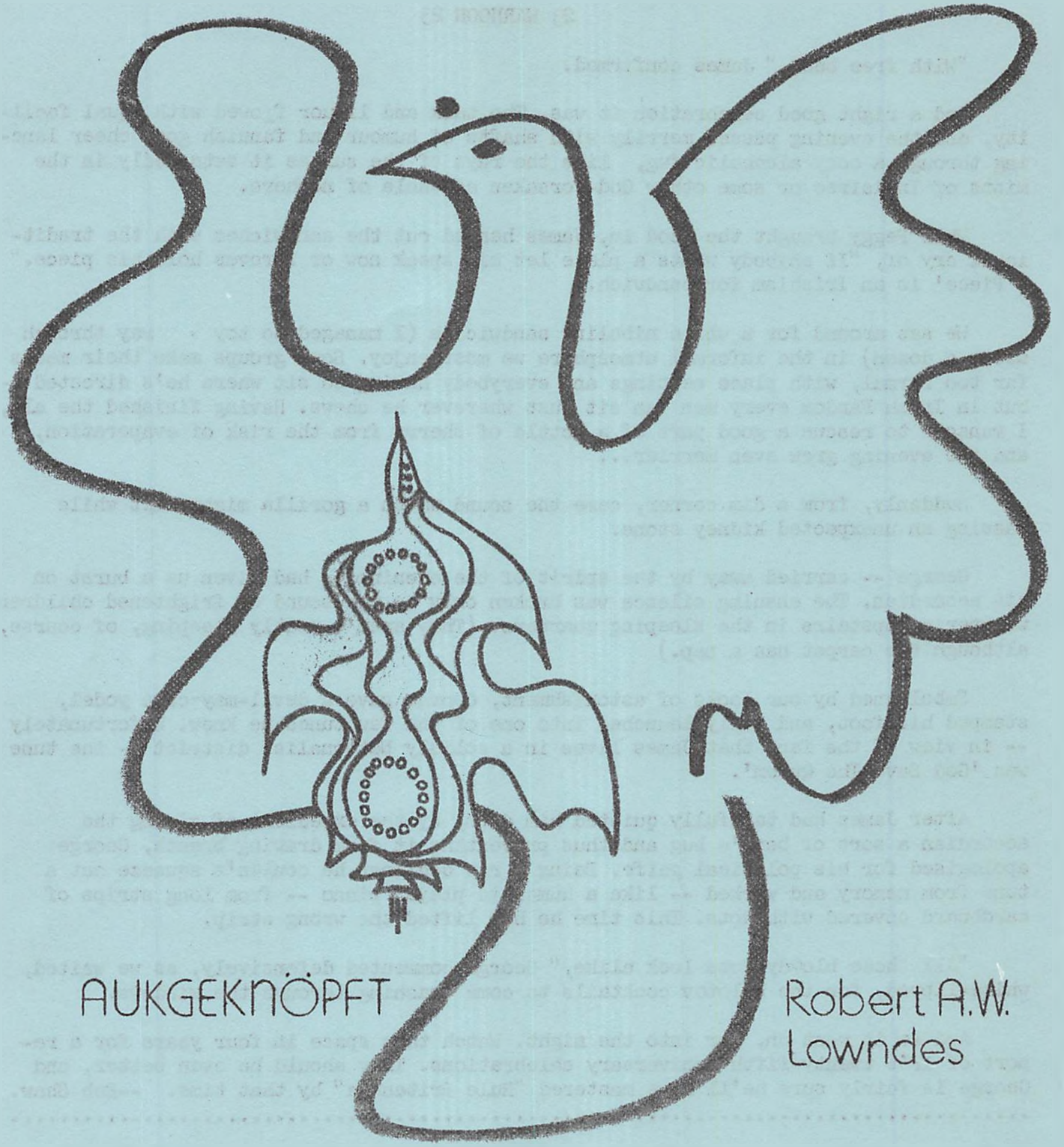

Recent publications from the Science Fiction Writers of America have dealt with the question of criticism, of what use it may be (Who Needs It? is part of the title of a separate booklet), and there is also an attempt to distinguish criticism from reviewing. These are all matters which I've thought about, and written about, for a number of years.

As I see it, criticism consists of three elements: reporting, interpretation, and evaluation.

Reporting is a matter of simply telling the reader what is there on the page that everyone who can read with any degree of proficiency can see for himself. It is the

easiest place where the critic can be proven right or wrong, for what he says is there either is there to be seen or isn't -- in the text he is reporting upon. (We do have to make allowances for variant texts at times.) Since I have never read the work of anyone who did not, at times, err in this respect, and I myself am no exception, we cannot utterly condemn the critic who misquotes once in awhile; and one needs to remember that a misquote can either be a case of reporting words, phrases, etc., that are not there on the page, or omitting words, phrases, etc., which are there on the page, where the absence makes a substantial difference.

Every quotation is "out of context". Using this phrase as reproof or refutation, then, is justifiable only when you can show that the quotation is being used to promote an interpretation which just does not apply when you see the excerpt in its full context.

Interpretation is the critic's performance of putting various elements together and coming to some sort of conclusion about what the various combinations may mean. This can be objective, and therefore subject to a simple check for accuracy on the part of the critic's readers, but for the most part it is a subjective thing and therefore open to debate. If I agree with a critic's interpretation, there is no difficulty; if I disagree, there may be. It is still possible for me to find an interpretation with which I disagree valuable, however worthless it may be as an interpretation of the work the critic is talking about. Some misinterpretations are hilarious, some induce anger, but some, then, I am grateful for -- they throw light on something else.

Evaluation is the critic's judgment not whether what he has been discussing is "good" or "bad" but his reasons for coming to this decision. This is what separates the men from the adolescents in criticism. If I find the critic's reasoning convincing, or even adequate on its own terms, then this criticism has been worth reading; if I am convinced, fine -- but, as with interpretation, a well-reasoned-out conclusion with which I do not agree can be of value to me. The best critic (again, suspending the matter of agreement) states his ad hoc assumptions, or at least makes it plain what they are, even if he has not set them down explicitly. I cannot, of course, agree with a conclusion, however impeccable its logic, that is founded on initial assumptions which I reject. But I can admire and obtain value from seeing clearly reasoned conclusions which proceed from these assumptions, if for no other reason than the fact that I reject them may have left me unacquainted with some of the conclusions which follow acceptance. And there is always the fascinating possibility that a critic will arrive at a conclusion which which I agree, but from quite different assumptions.

Ideally speaking, "reviewing" should be done by persons who have mastered the elements of criticism, using them to tell me briefly why they recommend that I read or do not bother with this particular new book or story, etc., while "criticism" is an exploration in depth, at considerably greater length, than a review, and is more for the person who has already read the book or story. Although, again speaking ideally, the person who reads a critical essay about a book or story he has not read should find the article generally comprehensible and should also be able to decide, after reading it, whether he wants to read the material discussed.

Reviews belong in the book section of a newspaper or magazine, their purpose being to inform the reader about the current crop of books, the making of which there is no end; criticism belongs either in the body of magazines, as regular contents, rather than departments, or in scholarly journals entirely devoted to criticism of the arts, or in publications like Warhoon, where adequate space is provided.

In the actual, as opposed to the ideal world, we find innumerable reviewers who know (or care) little or nothing about the elements of criticism, let alone having

mastered them; we find such malfeasance as enthusiastic praise or equally enthusiastic condemnation based upon considerations entirely extraneous to the book itself; we find such misfeasance as gross misquotations, interpretations derived from cursory reading; and we find such non-feasance as flat sometimes dognatic evaluations without any hint of the reasons for them.

And since, 99% of any sort of human effort is bad (I derive from Sturgeon's Law, but am not sure that this is the actual percentage Ted cites), then 99% of published criticism is bad. However this does not mean that 99% of the published criticism you have read is bad. The percentage refers to the full amount, and no one of us has read all the criticism published, not even all the science fiction criticism published; therefore the percentage of good criticism that you or I may actually have read could easily be much higher than 1%.

Of what use is criticism to an author? Of what use are readers' comments? I can speak for only one author.

Actual criticism of my own writing that I have seen has been so scanty that I have very little to talk about there. There is, however, enough of it in Blish's review of "Believers' World" ("The Issue At Hand", by William Atheling, Jr., pages 59-61) to be of some use. What this tells me first of all is that the critic has read the book carefully, and has grasped what I was trying to do: therefore what he has to say both in praise and dispraise is worth paying attention to. Whereas a highly flattering review which did not show this was of no use, however heart-warming otherwise.)

It tells me one thing that I was totally unaware of: that "...everything happens in a hell of a hurry...". I really believed, when writing the novel, that I was moving along at a slow, in fact leisurely pace, and wondered at times if the persons who want fast action would finish the story at all. Re-reading it, I can see that there really is some basis for this comment, though it still seems to move at a leisurely pace to me. However, I can see now that the results of the "hurry", to whatever degree it is actually there, are just what Jim says they are: "...and a profusion of insights, ironies, comic strokes, plot turns, inventions, epigrams, and paradoxes goes hurtling by before the reader has half a chance to savor them."

Of course, being human, it is easy for me to see that one of the things that is wrong with "Babel-17" is that Sam Delany did the same sort of thing there: tried to jam as much as he possibly could into one story, where the length was predetermined. (I'm assuming that Chip was writing to Ace's standard length.) It's still a little hard to see that this is no less damaging to my own effort. Partly because, living with this story inside me for the length of time that I did (The original novelet was written in 1952, the book in 1960, but the Spengler inspired joke on which it was based I first wrote as a short-short in 1961, and am grateful now that Galaxy rejected it. I've been told that it got to the final conference stage and lost in a 2 to 1 vote.), it is still difficult to see that a lot of what I knew about the worlds of Ein, and which I believed I had gotten down on paper in one way or another, actually didn't get there. I'd still be willing to swear that every shift of scene is clearly identified -- that the careful reader is told in one way or another just which world we're on in each episode. (The lead has to be continually aware of it, and of the subtle differences, but at times he is bewildered himself and I try to show this.)

I remember that Jim and I had the same sort of difficulty with "The Duplicated Man," where scene shifts were frequent, but it was vital that the reader know where the present action is taking place. We worked this aspect over and over again; and again I'd swear that this vital information has been presented clearly to the reader who is paying attention. Yet, the same complaint has been heard from persons who, so far as I know, weren't reading it and trying to watch TV or listen to the ball game, or music, at the same time.

Jim's comment on "Believers' World" (Avalon's title was wrong -- it was supposed to be Worlds) also tells me that, notwithstanding these flaws, I did manage to get across to the careful reader a great deal of what I was trying to present.

So, what good is all this? The book stands as it is. Just making a few changes for a new printing, if there were to be one, wouldn't do. What is needed is something like twice the length -- not a couple dozen more plot elements added at the same pace, but the leisure (a) to explore more thoroughly aspects which could be given only in spot shots -- which would necessarily lead to the introduction of new material (b) to write the story in a style more befitting to its Arabian Nights mood and let my poetic talents come out -- the length to which I was confined forced suppression of them. I agree that the story wants as much of the poetic element as the writer can give it. Well, if the occasion for re-writing ever arises, then this criticism will have been directly and immediately valuable; since I shall then make direct and immediate use of it.

But its indirect value remains nonetheless. These flaws it points to have been characteristic with me, both as to writing and procedure. If I'm going to do as good work as I can, then I cannot afford to contract for a story where I am immediately confined to a relatively short length -- unless the story I have in mind can really be accomplished in that length. There are a couple more novels in Spengler for me to do, if I can ever get to it and feel that I can let myself write 80,000 words or more on speculation. I say this, because both will require that length. (It's always possible that someone else might do science fiction novels on these two elements from "The Decline of the West", but from what I've seen and heard, I feel reasonably confident that no one else reads Spengler the way I do, so that I run very little risk of being pre-empted.)

Well, so much for the one genuine criticism of any of my books, although Fred Pohl's review of "The Duplicated Man" in the pre-Pohl If was both perceptive and pleasing to read, in a very few words.

What about readers' comments? Well, I've been very fortunate in the last year or so with magazine stories. Some readers requested I reprint some of my old tales, such as "Lure of the Lily" (which had never been published in the USA), "The Leapers", and "The Long Wall". Rereading them, determined not to reprint if I was not satisfied that they were at least adequate, I found myself (a) unsatisfied (b) moved to take advantage of the opportunity of re-writing, or extensive revising. "Lure of the Lily" (published as "Lilies", in Magazine of Horror #15)was expanded, revised, and cut -- I think it comes out now a little longer than the original, but not very much. "The Leapers" (published as "Leapers", in Magazine of Horror #23) went through a similar process. "The Long Wall" (published as "Settler's Wall" in Startling Mystery Stories #10) was completely rewritten from beginning to end; where with the other two pages of fresh mss were interspersed with paste-up photocopies of the original, slightly edited. The original version of "The Long Wall" was used only for reference and the new version is quite a different story -- at least as different as Blish's "Witches Three" rewrite of "There Shall Be No Darkness" is from the original version in Thrilling Wonder Stories. In both instances, new elements have been added which lead to a new ending, so that the person who has read the earlier version will find the story familiar, but may be surprised at the end; he'll find that the original ending is only part of it.

It's nice to be praised, and all three stories brought forth a lot of praise from readers' but what helps is comment which shows that the reader caught exactly what you were trying to convey in a particular episode, or through a particular character. And no less helpful is the reader who says he didn't like the story because... and

(Concluded on page 54.)

THE RATS THAT ATE THE RAILROAD:

THE HARP THAT ONCE OR TWICE

Walt Willis

Subjectively, Ireland is bigger than the United States. Whatever geographers may say, the effective size of a country is measured in the time it takes to get from one end of it to the other, and in those terms Cork is further from Belfast than Los Angeles is from New York. However desperate your urgency, you simply cannot get from one of these provincial capitals to the other in less than six hours, and you can only manage that if you are able to use both the express train services that run between them and Dublin. The journey across the country in the diagonally opposite direction is more dauntingly complex than the one from Seattle to Miami, and would take more than a day by any combination of public transport. Ireland has no internal air services because the population is too few, too dispersed and not rich enough to support them: handicaps which have plagued all modern forms of transport in the country.

In 1787 there were 257 private sedan chairs in Dublin, a statement I offer for the delection of connoisseurs of utterly useless information. However it is illuminating to know that they were still in use as late as 1840, as evidenced by a popular joke of that period which will now be told for probably the last time. A countryman visiting Dublin expressed wonderment at the sedan chairs and his Dublin friends offered him a trip in one of them, from which they had first removed the floor. After trotting him up and down several dirty streets they asked him what he thought of this mode of travel. "Well," he said, "only for the honour and glory of the thing, it was mighty like walking." In fact transport was unknown to most of the population: they walked where they wanted to go. Every winter farm labourers walked from Connaught to Dublin to find work, a distance of well over 200 miles. By contrast Ted White another connoisseur of useless information who is also a light railroad enthusiast, told me that at one time in the early 20th Century it was possible to travel all the way from New York to Chicago in three days using only urban trolley car systems.

The first and probably the only man to have run a really successful transport undertaking in Ireland was an Italian called Bianconi, who introduced the first "long car" stage coach. Even he had some difficulty at first in persuading the natives to make use of his newfangled contraption, until he hit on the bright idea of buying another coach under another name and racing against it. The excitement of a breakneck race was more appealing to the Irish than the mere saving of time, but having experienced both, the middle classes gleefully accepted the new tempo of life and soon a profitable Bianconi service covered the whole country: demonstrating that only the brave deserve the fare.

When the railways came Bianconi bought shares and, with the sound commercial instinct which had marked his entire career, died while they were still rising in value. The promoters who followed him suffered from the disadvantage that many of their potential passengers were now clambering onto trolley cars in America, and the Irish railway bandwagon ground to a shuddering halt.

However it was exciting while it lasted, particularly in the narrow gauge country of the West. The West Clare Railroad, the one that used to carry Kate O'Brien to Kilkee, had started off with the distinction of being one of the few railroads to have one of its locomotives sunk. During trials it fell off the track into a bog and was never seen again. The railroad itself died only a few years ago, with a song in its heart. In its heyday it had carried many stage personalities to entertain the holiday crowds at Kilkee, and one of them was the comedian and song writer Percy French, who wrote "The Mountains of Mourne" and other stage Irish songs. He wrote one about the West Clare railroad, called "Are Ye Right There Michael", which alleged that among other unbusiness-like practices the company required its passengers to get out and gather fuel. Highly indignant, the Company sued him for libel. Unfortunately for them their witnesses did not turn up for the hearing in time, the train having been delayed. Rather than proffer this ignominious explanation, the company hastily settled out of court.

Even more unfortunate was another company in Galway who lost their whole railroad overnight. Their line was to run from Shannon Harbour to Portumna, but had reached only halfway when the money ran out. For some years the track and stations and equipment lay there untouched, and then a vagrant was arrested by the police for stealing a lantern. The local population showed a peculiar interest in the case. At the trial nobody appeared on behalf of the company to prove ownership of the lantern, possibly because it owed money in the district. Next morning the entire railroad had vanished off the face of the earth, and to this day tactless visitors are prone to remark on the unusual solidity of the farm outbuildings and fences in the area.

Which reminds me of a man in Belfast who worked for the city trolley car company and was not averse to bringing home for domestic use any item of equipment or furniture for which his employers did not seem to have any immediate use. Bob Shaw said of him that if you were to ring a bell in the street his whole house would move off.

An even more shattering misfortune happened to a canal company. Canals were a great way to travel in those days, in luxurious barges with dining accommodation, and one thriving company decided to expand its operations into the limestone region north of Clare. They hewed the new canal out of the rock and a beautiful job it was, all clean and neat for the opening ceremony. After much speechmaking and mutual congratulation the water was let in, foamed along the canal for a few yards, and disappeared from view. No doubt it reappeared again somewhere else after traversing some subterranean channel, but it left the canal as high and dry as the company.

But possibly the most poignant of all was the fate of the Atmospheric Railway, invented in 1840 by Samuel Clegg and Joseph Sands. Irish adaptation to the Industrial Revolution tended to be erratic, since machines do not respond readily to eloquence, nor are they easily moved by flattery: so with the exception of the pneumatic tyre, invented by John Dunlop of Belfast, the contributions of the native Irish have tended to be impractical, or as they would prefer to put it, in advance of their time. So certainly it was with the Atmospheric Railway.

The motive power for this ingenious contrivance was supplied by two pumps, one at each end of a long metal tube about fifteen inches in diameter, running the whole length of the track between the rails. A pump at one terminus sucked air out of the tube, the other one at the other terminus pumped air in, and between them they propelled along the tube a piston to which the train was attached. To permit the coupling between the train and the piston, a slot ran the whole length of the tube, sealed with strips of metal and heavily waxed leather rather like a zip fastener. On the underside of the train there was fixed a fork to prise the zip open: immediately after that the iron arm by which the train was coupled to the piston: immediately after that rollers for closing the tube up again: and finally, just to make sure, a little coal furnace to melt the wax and ensure an airtight seal.

The model worked beautifully and everyone was tremendously impressed. Speeds of up to eighty miles per hour were said to be theoretically possible. The great railway engineer Brunel recommended this new type of railroad for the line between Croydon and London. The English Board of Trade, more cautious but still enthusiastic, gave twenty-five thousand pounds for the construction of a track between Kingstown and Dalkey, near Dublin. This was duly built, and was opened on March 29th, 1844.

It was "a triumphant success", climbing the 1 3/4 miles of sharp curves and steep hills up to Dalkey in 3½ minutes, and coasting back to Kingstown in 4 minutes by gravity. Dr. Kane, in his Industrial Resources of Ireland, published in 1845, acclaimed it as a "remarkable mechanism of locomotion. The more intimate connection with the line by the pipe and piston gives steadiness to the atmospheric train,

enabling it to traverse curves too steep for the safe passage of an ordinary train. Besides that the absence of the locomotive, from which in most cases of accident the injury is sustained, presents an additional source of safety." Two hardheaded Belfast businessmen floated a company for the construction of a similar line from Belfast to Holywood, Co.Down.

Fortunately for them, they took a close look at the maintenance problems of the Kingstown-Dalkey line before actually spending any money of their own. There was already visible a cloud no bigger than a man's hand. No doubt to us the Atmospheric Railway seems a harebrained scheme, but it did work, and I wonder how many of us sophisticates could have anticipated that rats would take a fancy to the wax that sealed the tube. The Belfast businessmen guessed what was going to happen and hastily sold out to the Belfast and County Down Railway Company. Sure enough word got around among the rat population that there was a one and three quarter mile long banqueting table spread with food all the way from Kingstown to Dalkey, and soon the leather flaps were being gnawed away faster than they could be replaced. The railroad profits were being eaten up, closely followed by the railway itself, and now all that is left of it is a street sign in Dalkey reading mysteriously "Atmospheric Road".

It is tempting to think that if in those days synthetic materials had been available the Atmospheric Railway might have become as important as steam, but the speculation is impractical because all the components of a technology march together. That was not the time for plastics and prosperity, but for rats and disaster.

Or was it. Only a few miles from the rapacious rats an Irishman had just accomplished what a modern astronomer refers to as "a scientific miracle". Completely unaided he had built the largest telescope in the world and was making discoveries fundamental to modern astrophysics.

This contemporary Mount Palomar was at Birr Castle, County Offaly, and was the work of the Earl of Rosse. Hitherto the largest telescope in the world had been the 49 inch reflector made by the great Sir William Herschel in England. The Earl of Rosse determined to make one of 72 inches. In those days it was not possible to use glass for such a huge mirror, so the Earl cast one of metal, in a specially designed forge. It was nearly six inches thick, weighed four tons and took four months to cool down. Then it had to be ground down and polished, and this the Earl did singlehanded. Simultaneously he supervised the construction of the tube in which it was to be mounted, 54 feet long and so wide that a man could walk through it carrying an open umbrella. We know this because in fact the local Dean did just that at the opening ceremony.

Photographs could not be taken through the telescope, but the Earl's drawings of what he saw excited astronomers. He had discovered the spiral nebulae, a vital clue to the nature of the universe. Scientists came to Birr from all over the world. The telescope remained the largest in the world until near the end of the Century, and was still in use until 1908: having been used among other things to measure the heat radiated by the surface of the Moon. The great metal mirror is now in the Science Museum in South Kensington, London, but the rest of the telescope and the massive walls that support it can still be seen in the grounds of Birr Castle, a memorial to he fact that Irishmen can sometimes make their impractical dreams come true. --WAW

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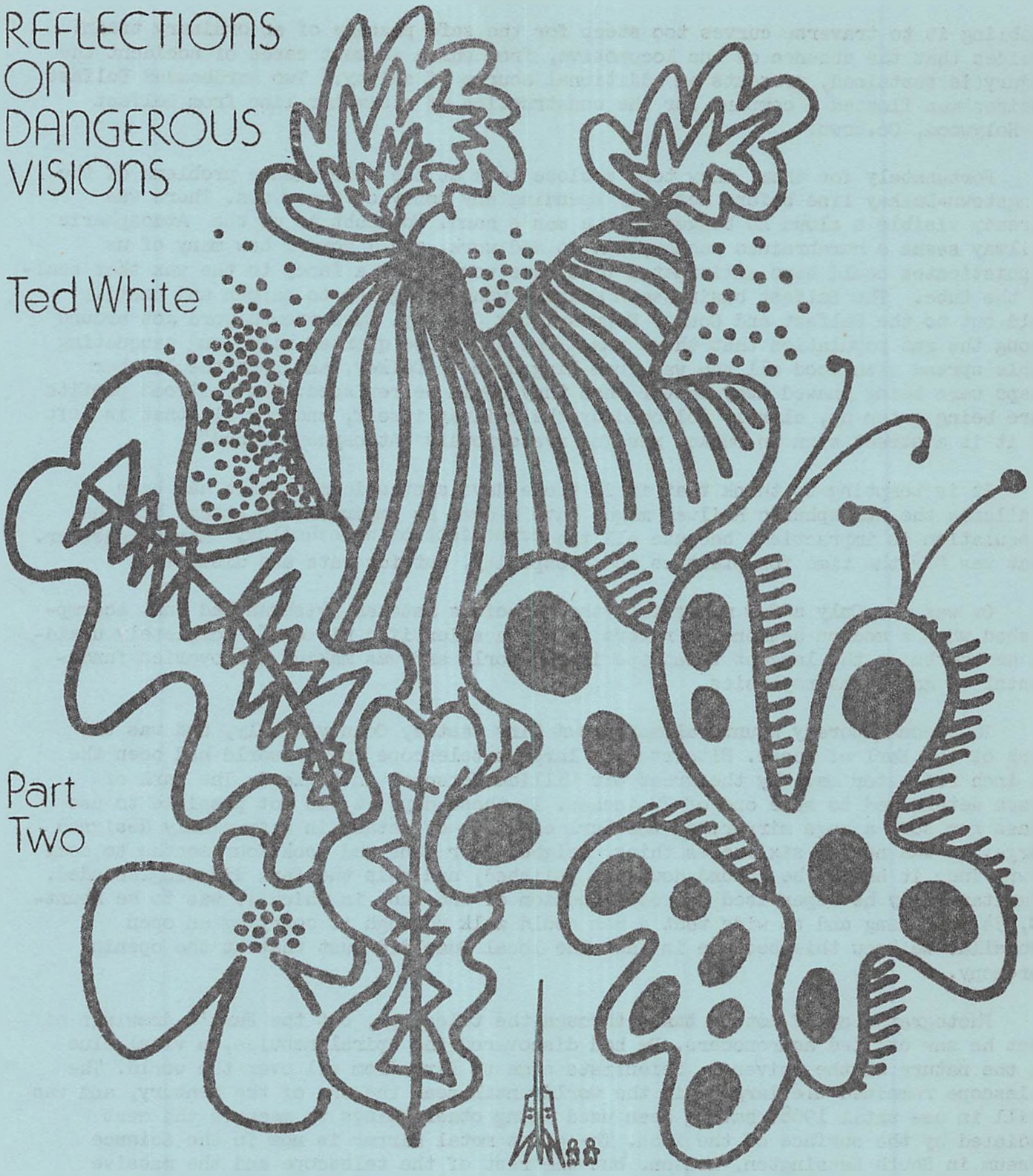
REMEMBER HYPHEN?: My theology, briefly, is that the universe was dictated but not signed... There is West Coast jazz playing right now on the hi-fi to help me get into the proper mood for despising Ted White... Ain't it hell? Here it is Christmas and us out here chasing a star... If Ghod had meant us to be nudists we'd have been born without clothes... I <u>am</u> a BNF, but nobody knows it... From Hyphen # 22.

REFLECTIONS ON DANGEROUS VISIONS

Ted White



Part Two

As you will remember, we were discussing the stories in "Dangerous Visions". Each story. One by one. Exactly as listed in the table of contents:

I first heard about Larry Niven's "The Jigsaw Man" at the 1966 Westercon, where he outlined the idea of body-banks and death penalties for even minor crimes. I didn't buy it then, and I don't buy it now. Niven says, in his afterword, "It's only an accident of history that Red Cross blood banks aren't supplied by the death house." I think he's wrong. It wasn't an accident at all. And that, I think, is where "The Jigsaw Man" falls apart.

There is a valid question open to speculation, one that has grown out of the recent heart-transplants: "How do you establish time of death?" and its corollary: "If someone is dying, should you help them along in order that they may become doners?" This is a question many doctors are wrestling with. But Niven's story doesn't deal with this question. Instead it begins with the simplistic premise that, given organ-banks, soon the need will demand more than the supply can offer, and not only will criminals give up their bodies at death, but minor crimes will be punished with the death penalty, for this reason.

You have to disbelieve in Man to give any serious credence to such a notion: all of history points in the opposite direction. But if his afterword is any indication of his feelings, Niven really does intend his story as a genuine warning of a future he feels impending. But why weren't Red Cross blood banks supplied by the death house?

Despite this shakey foundation, the writing in Niven's story is solid.

Well, almost solid. I don't know whether "breath" for"breathe" was a typo, but "?" is a comic-stripism, and "?" does not indicate any vocalized sound I know of. Still, Niven structures his story in terms of action and plot, and that counts in his favor with me. I gave it a C+.

I have no idea what "Gonna Roll the Bones" is doing in "Dangerous Visions", or why it won a Nebula from the SFWA this year. As a tall-tale in the traditions of European myth-fantasy, it's a B+ story. But it's not science fiction, nor is it "speculative fiction". It is a more modern version (with some fine crap-shooting thrown in) of "Jack And the Beanstalk". Leiber has been analyzing the structure of myth archetypes lately (see his article in Lighthouse last year; he also spoke on the subject at the Nycon 3), and I think he's into something solid and compelling. Certainly, "Bones" is one of the strongest stories in the book.

But why is it in this book?

Several years ago, Joe Hensley collaborated with Alexei Panshin to write "Dark Conception" (as "Louis J. A. Adams"). It was largely Alex's story, but it was a strong one. Rejected by Rogue with the comment "I don't think we're ready yet for a Negro Christ," and bounced back to its authors by Hensley's agent (Scott Meredith), it was almost a genuine "dangerous vision." Except that when it came to F&SF (in the slush, since no name was on the envelope), it was quickly snatched up and bought. Which illustrates my thesis that this book was totally unnecessary because if a story is good it will sell no matter how controversial.

"Dark Conception" dealt with the virgin birth to a Negro woman of the New Messiah -- and left the reader with thought-provoking speculations about the impact upon the life of the Negro in America...

"Lord Randy, My Son ", is in a way Joe Hensley's solo encore. It is surprisingly good, but its theme -- that a "retarded" child is simply a slower-maturing Messiah who may some day Do Something (violent) about the evil in mankind -- is less immediate, and curriously old-fashioned. It is, in effect, simply a wild-talent story, not unlike -- for all its superficial differences -- "In Hiding," or "More Than Human" (by implication). Even the notion that a child who is slow to develop may actually be developing greater Talents is not new.

What is new (and earned it my B+) is the depth Hensley brings to it. He is less concerned with the impact of the idea alone than with presenting it on a three-dimensional stage, with well-fleshed characters. The setting makes the story, for it provides a tired idea with fresh impact. There is absolutely nothing revolutionary about this at all. But I'm glad Joe did it.

Poul Anderson's "Eutopia" earned an A- from me in spite of its ending. The ending is supposed to be a surprise -- even a shock. It isn't. And if Poul hadn't been building towards that ending, he would've written a better story, maybe even the best story in the book. Because it's there, peeking out from between the lines on the pages: a fresh approach to the "paratime" idea of branching time-streams, and the development of a character who is too newly exposed to some of the cultures he encounters, and must wrestle with their problems. This could have been a deeply satisfying story, and even as it is it is an excellent example of Poul Anderson's rich talent. But Poul slights one his character in order to withhold as a punchline his homosexuality, when integrated in the story it would have made more sense.

This is a problem with writing a "shocking" story: if you hold that the punchline revelation of the protagonist's Hellenic boy-love is "shocking", then I suppose Poul

has written a story that will satisfy you. But it's a little cheap: Poul is saying, 'here's the shocker, folks: his beloved is a boy!' -- when, if Poul had simply built the same story on the early revelation of this aspect of the protagonist's character, he'd have given us a more honest story and undoubtedly a better one. Poul chose to play it for sensationalism, as does Sturgeon, in a later story with a different theme. Farmer, by contrast, mentions casually that two male friends "still blow each other occasionally," but has his character add, "And why not?" Such a matter of fact approach to this supposed 'taboo' is by far the more honest, and far less offensive to those who, like myself, ceased to regard homosexuality qua homosexuality (or etc.) shocking some years ago.

David Bunch, I have been told time and time again, is not to everyone's taste. But those who love him (like Harlan) love him very much. If the two Bunch stories here -- "Incident in Moderan" and "The Escaping" --are supposed to be typical, then the adulation Bunch has received makes no sense to me. They do prove he has more than one string to his bow, but not much more. They are each indulgences, not stories.

"Incident," which I gave a D, is the better of the two, since it has at least some form to it. The armored warlords of Moderan stop one of their wars while a detail is taken care of, and a grovelling all-flesh-and-blood human comes along to thank the warlord closest at hand for the chance to bury his son. They chat, and finally it dawns on him that the warlord couldn't have cared less about his son. End of story. Competant, but next-to-pointless.

I won't say "The Escaping" is pointless. F in the book from me. It appears to be an allegory in which someone tied to a lifetime of drudgery daydreams. That's it: the daydreams are "the escaping." Spending even a thousand words on such a thin subject-- particularly in a deliberately obscure fashion -- strikes me as slightly more time-wasting than engraving the Lord's Prayer on the head of a pin. The curiosity value, however, is about the same.

"The Doll House", by "James Cross" (whomever he may be) is an over-long, very well-ornimented version of a standard 1952 EC horror comics plot. It involves the usual cast of characters: a man who hates his wife, a wife who spends over their income, a dying uncle who takes his revenge on the husband, and a Supernatural Object by which this is accomplished. In this case, the Supernatural Object is the Doll House of the title, because it is inhabited by a very ancient Oracle. Naturally, the evil-minded husband can't let well-enough alone, and in the end the cat eats the Oracle and the Husband goes crazy. Reading stories of this sort, even when as nicely detailed as this one, is tedious for me. There is no punchline, and one only waits to watch the obvious tragedy played out. Like Leiber's story, this story is not "speculative fiction" by any definition I can think of. Unlike Leiber's story, it's not very good at being anything else. A C, for craftsmanship.

A common preoccupation among the literatti so beloved by New Thing enthusiasts is navel picking. Find the smallest piece of lint in your navel. Got it? Fine; now hold it up and look at it through a magnifying glass. Isn't it marvelous? My ghod, look at at the tiny fibers! Wow. Etc.

In "Sex And/Or Mr. Morrison", Carol Emshwiller took the linty notion of the way people hide the genitals in pseudo-nudism ('nude' ballet, baby dolls, etc.) and blew it up into a story about a female of indeterminate age who spies on a fat man while he undresses. It is an excrutiatingly well-examined job, and she leaves no stone unturned, but it is totally empty. Like the ballet dancers in their "naked suits", it has no genitals. It also has no element of sf or fantasy at all. I presume Harlan included it because it seemed so damned avant garde and He Needed One For His Book (punchline of an old Ellison joke, circa 1953). I shouldn't rate it, but I will: C.

Damon Knight, in his afterword to "Shall the Dust Praise Thee?", states, "The question asked in the story is a frivolous one to me, because I do not believe in

Jehovah, who strikes me as a most improbable person..." The story itself, which I gave a C, is one of the few unsold stories that gathered dust until Harlan turned it up. It's easy to understand why: perhaps it is true that a devout Christian would find it shocking and unprintable, but my reaction was closer to Damon's -- Jehovah strikes me as improbable too. And since the punchline question ("We were here. Where were you?") seems just as frivolous to me , what are we left with? Not much.

On the other hand, Harlan provoked Theodore Sturgeon into writing a new novelette for his book, no mean accomplishment. And "If All Men Were Brothers, Would You Let One Marry Your Sister?" is the one story in the book I find myself incapable of rating.

It is Sturgeon.

It is all that is best in Sturgeon, and it is all that is worst in Sturgeon. It is gratifying (new Sturgeon) and disappointing (not good Sturgeon). Saddest of all, it is falsely profound.

The point of the story is that a planet of motherfuckers, although an absolute Eden, would be left completely untouched by all the people on all other planets. That's just plain unbelievable.

I said "a planet of motherfuckers," but Sturgeon doesn't. He hints around the word and the concept (incest) for the longest time, as though it would be an overwhelming revelation.

"'Master, I wonder if I should use the word.'

"'How necessary do you feel--"

"'Oh, I guess I don't have to; you know it. On any ship, any construction gang, in any farm community -- anywhere where men work or gather, it's the one verbal bullet which will and must start a fight. If it doesn't, the victim will never regain face...'"

And, at the end:

"...Charli said, 'Why? Why? How did human beings come to hate this one thing so much that they would rather die insane and in agony than accept it? How did it happen, Vorhidin?'

"'I don't know,' said the Vexeltian."

Sturgeon is talking about a planetary society in which incest is not only tolerated, but encouraged. He marshalls plenty of genetic facts to prove his point. But why, I wonder, does he think incest is so totally taboo? Why does he have all his non-Vexveltian characters react so violently against it? (And why, if all the rest do, should Charli accept it so readily?)

It has always seemed to me that Sturgeon was a profoundly honest writer -- that he would not distort basic human characteristics to make a fictional point.

But I am afraid he did, this time. The concept of inbreeding to improve the race is not unknown to animal breeders here and now. Incest is practiced (covertly) quite widely in this country alone, and I have no idea what its incidence is elsewhere in the world. Indeed (he said, blushing modestly and scuffing his bare toe in the dust) the arguments dvanced by Sturgeon in favor of incest are (coincidentally, I'm sure) not unlike those I used in a discussion of the subject in the Cult in 1960.

"The love that dares not speak its name" incest is not. Many more primitive societies accept it openly. The famous clans of the southern hill country are known for it.

Where did Sturgeon get the notion that incest was so taboo that even total greed and the prospect of raping the resources of a rich planet won't overcome it? (I'm surprised he didn't choose the reverse: a hatred for 'a planet full of motherfuckers' that would enrage others into destroying its incest-based society; both are overblown and extreme reactions, but this would be the more likely of the two.) Again -- turn back to Farmer's story: it accepts incest casually.

But it's Sturgeon. You can't dismiss it. Even bad Sturgeon is memorable. I simply cannot -- will not -- rate it.

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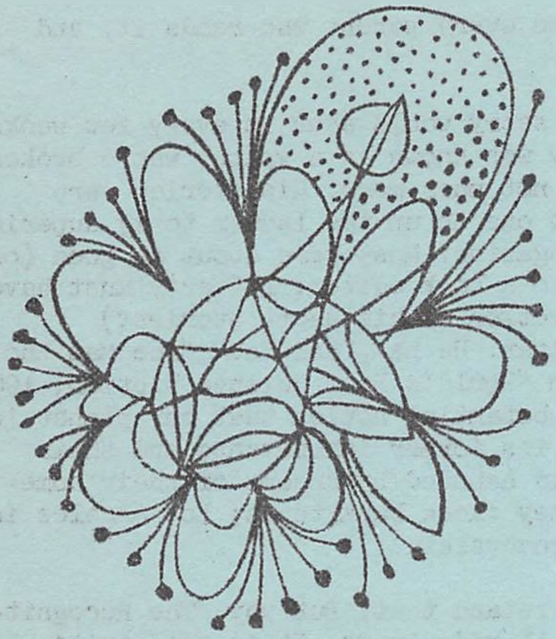
Congratulations to the Hugo winning Fan Writer and new Managing Editor of Amazing! -rb



When I read "What Happened to Auguste Clarot?" by Larry Eisenberg, I felt like asking, "What happened to the supposed basis for this anthology?" A D story in my book, this little confection is a mildly humorous satire on French mystery stories, and only peripherally a fantasy. What's it doing here? (Is that a refrain?)

I remarked on Henry Slesar's "Erasatz" earlier: Harlan's introduction is not only longer than the story, it touts Slesar as the best "short-short writer working in America today," something I simply can't believe if "Erasatz" is supposed to be an example. The story is between two and three pages long, and a page from the ending, I caught a flash of the punchline in "He didn't notice how lovely she was..." You guessed it: she's ersatz. Like everything else in the story, the punchline also is ersatz. Oh well. C-.

On the other hand, Sonya Dorman's "Go, Go, Go, Said The Bird" is a bright and brilliant gem. It is also cold, hard and perfect. Its theme is totally repellant: apparently post-war savagery -- but it is written with surgical precision which I could only admire. It isn't a story I have any intention of reading again, but I will give it a B+ for doing it to me once.

John T. Sladek is supposed to be one of the brilliant new New Thing writers. His "The Happy Breed" is very old thing indeed. Basically it is a prosaic version of "With Folded Hands," and minus any real sense of horror. It is also sloppily written. Thus, in one paragraph, Sladek contradicts himself:

"There were no jobs, only Happiness Jobs -- make-work invented by the Machines. In such a job, one could never find an insoluble or even difficult problem. One finished one's daily quota without tiring one's mind or body. Work was no longer work, it was therapy, and as such it was constantly rewarding."

That's a complete paragraph of third-person narration: the author speaking directly to his readers. Can he not see what he has written? Couldn't Harlan? Or Larry Ashmead? Or a proofreader"

C+ for the characterisation.

In "Encounter With a Hick," Jonathan Brand tells us yet another version of the God-is-just-a-big-realestate-developer joke. To his credit, the tells it unpretentiously and well, but it's a thin joke in any case: C-.

Kris Neville's "From The Government Printing Office" is pretty close to a tour-de-force. It isn't, quite, because the opening is clumsy and poorly structured to lead you into the fact that the narrator is supposed to be three-and-a-half-years-old. His vocabulary is a bit rich for such a young narrator, too. But the story he tells is one of the few genuine 'dangerous visions' in the book, and that is the story of a child being raised, with both intended and unconscious cruelty, to be a scientist.

Unlike most of the notions in this book, this one -- deliberate warping of a child's personality to fit the stimuli some of our great scientists endured, with the hope of producing yet more great scientists in the process -- is closest to reality. Anyone who watched the "21st Century" two-part series on infant education last fall (rebroadcast this spring: CBS) has already witnessed the first steps in this direction. "Give me the first six years of a child's life and he'll be mine" has been attributed to both Adolph Hitler and the Roman Catholic Church.

"From The Government Printing Office" speaks to every parent who reads it, and it tells a painful truth. B+.

When I was reading F&SF slush, a R.A.Lafferty story would show up every few weeks, sometimes every month. Back in those days, Lafferty was known as a writer who'd broken into the field in Lowndes' Columbia magazines, and not much more. His stories were whacky, and just this side of absurd. I passed each one on up the ladder to my superiors. Most were bounced. Few ever showed up in another magazine. Most were about as good (or as bad as "Land of the Great Horses," here. (Memo to a book editor: Lafferty must have trunks full; why not put together an original collection of his short stories?)

Which is not to say that he hasn't written better. He has, and both "The Man Who Never Was" and"Thus We Frustrate Charlemagne" are in "World's Best Science Fiction: 1968."

"Land of the Great Horses" deals with the insubstantial notion that our planet is being "sampled" and while a land-slice is missing, its former inhabitants and their descendants are doomed to wander the remaining world haunted by dreams of their homeland. The Gypsies have their slice returned, and they flock back to it; Los Angeles is taken instead. Cute, a straight C, and hardly controversial.

J.G.Ballard had to be in this book. I can understand that. But why "The Recognition"? This must be a long-mouldering reject from Ballard's trunk. It is told quite straightforwardly, without pyrotechnics and without a punchline. It needed one, however.

In his afterword, Ballard states, "'The Recognition' expresses a cordial distaste for the human race -- not inappropriately." Thus, bearing out my intuitively felt contention that what is wrong with the New Thing writers for whom I have no use is their lack of love for Man. "The Recognition" is a tawdry piece of goods, a sort of muted bronx cheer. "The most important characters, whose motives are a key to the story," Ballard says, "are the young woman and her dwarf. Why do they take this dismal circus on its endless tour?" It seems a shame Ballard could not himself answer this question.

The story deals with the arrival of the "dismal circus" of a few cages on wagons in a town. There develops a mystery about the animals in the cages. On page four, the narrator notices "a strong and obscurely familiar smell," in the cages. On the next page he decides "this familiar smell was a clue to the strange nature of the circus." However, he leaves. Two pages later, back again, "I was about to ask what animals the cages held -- the smell reminded me of the chimpanzee house at the zoo -- when there was a commotion..." Finally, at the end of the story: "The angular grey bodies were indistinct in the darkness, but as familiar as the pungent smell that came from the cages." They are people, and one shouts an obscenity at him. He "began a careful walk around the cages, satisfying myself for the last time as to the identity of their tenants." The penultimate line is "At last I recognised the smell that came from the cages."

How's that for a roaring anticlimax? Why do the woman and the dwarf take this circus on its endless tour? Why indeed? Why bother? Who cares? Ballard is not merely sick; he's inept. A D- for his efforts.

I can usually count on John Brunner to provide a workmanlike story. If it is not always top-drawer, it is at least entertaining. I regret to say that "Judas" was the exception to this rule. The notion of a computer/android taking Godhood upon itself is among the most trite. This story exists solely to make the point. A C-, it was a waste effort.

Harlan introduces Keith Laumer's "Test To Destruction" as a"serious" work. It isn't. His "It Could Be Anything" (Amazing, January, 1963) is a genuinely serious story, and just possibly a genuine 'dangerous vision'. But "Test To Destruction" is a ham-handed action-format superman story. In it, the Leading Figure in the Underground Revolution Against The Dictator is found out and on the run. He runs up the stairs of an old building. "Three flights higher, the stair ended in a loft stacked with bundled newspapers

and rotting cartons from which mice scuttled as he approached. ...Mallory...scanned the ceiling for evidence of an escape hatch, saw nothing." The room is broken into and he kicks out the one window and steps onto "a rusted firs escape." He's five storeys up."He put his back to the railing, looked up. The fire escape extended three, perhaps four stories higher." Somehow, within the space of a page, that old building has become a hotel and grown three, "perhaps four stories" taller. That's a tall story. Or storey.

He gets caught. The Evil Dictator catches him. He's shown a machine and told that he has his choice: cooperate in revealing All about his confederates, or suffer the machine, which is some kind of mind probe. "'If you resist, it will destroy your mind -- but not before you've told me everything: names, locations, dates, organizations, operational plans -- everything. It will be simpler for us both if you acknowledge the inevitable and tell me freely what I require to know.'"

Aw, come on! That's dreadful! If the machine will rip it all out, and with guaranteed truthfulness, why waste time trying to bully the jerk into confessing "freely" and letting him chance telling lies?

But fear not: into the machine he goes.

As it happens: Out in space an alien race makes contact with Mallory's mind simultaneously. He ends up in mental control of both aliens and earth, a superman whose ambitions are already outgrowing his ideals. Was that the whole point, Harlan? That becoming a dictator turned Mallory into the same sort of ruthless man he'd vanquished? Don't tell me: let me guess. "Power corrupts?" Is that the 'dangerous vision'?

Pretty thin: C-.

(Judy Merril put it on her list of Twelve Best; "thoughtful," she termed it.)

Harlan's introductions singe the writers introduced; he was unbearably coy introducing Damon Knight, for instance, and he turned Joe Hensley into an oafish ape. But for Norman Spinrad he pulls out all stops. Beside the third paragraph of his introduction to Spinrad I have added a single comment: "Garbage." He says of Spinrad that "His first novel (The Solarians, 1966) is so bad it cannot be read. His third novel ("The Men in the Jungle") is so brilliant it burns like the surface of the sun." Skipping over an inquiry after the whereabouts of Norman's second novel, may I venture that the third burns a little more like an old rubber tire? Harlan says of Norman's current venture into The Big Time, "Bug Jack Barron", that it "is, chiefly, awfully dirty." I don't think Harlan thinks being "awfully dirty" is being good -- not if his indignant letter to me when I sent him a "dirty" story when he was editing Rogue is any example. I think Harlan is being cute again, at Spinrad's expense.

It wouldn't hurt if only "Carcinoma Angels" was a good story.

...Well, if "Carcinoma Angels" was a story...

It isn't. The first third of the story is precis buildup; the rest is a fair outline of an unwritten story. The basic plot, what there is of it, is a man taking a "trip" (the drugged sort) inside himself, a sort of hallucinagenic "Fantastic Voyage", if you will, hunting down and killing cancer cells. It isn't very funny, but it isn't a cancer story either. ("...a funny cancer story" -- Harlan Ellison) It might be considered wishful thinking, if Spinrad really had cancer, or knew someone who did. (But if he simply knew someone else with cancer, it would be a very cruel sort of wishful thinking.) Mostly what "Carcinoma Angels" is, is it's Dumb.

In his afterward, Spinrad says "Cancer has become a whisper-word, a myth word, a magic word, a dirty word." Apparently "cancer" is Norman's 'dangerous vision'. Sigh.D+.

I first heard "Auto-Da-Fe" when Roger Zelazny read it to me in an impromptu public reading at the 1966 Eastercon. It wasn't written for "Dangerous Visions", but it speaks to many of the stories in this book: primarily to all the Machines Are Taking Over, Machines Are Evil stories herein. (There are quite a few, unfortunately.)

When I read the story it was with the faint echo of Roger's voice in my ear -- have you ever had that experience after hearing an author read his own material? -- and I cannot say I was totally unbiased by this. However...

Ostensibly, this is a bullfight story, with cars substituted for bulls. It is clever on this level but I commend you to read further, to the last two paragraphs of the story. They transfigure it, and enlarge it, and make it obvious the mechador and his fight transcend the ring. Zelazny too is Saying Something about machines, but he is saying it indirectly, in myth-form. His point is almost whispered, and apparently too subtle for some readers who were overwhelmed by the frenzied shouts of other stories in the book. Zelazny is a poet. Good poets don't scream. B+.

Samuel Delany closes out "Dangerous Visions" with "Aye, And Gomorrah." Harlan insists this story"would have been difficult to market to the established periodicals," but I notice he didn't say it would've been difficult to sell.

It won a Nebula, for Best Short Story of 1967. I will not debate it's merits on that score here: I liked it well enough to rate it an A-.

I would've left off that "-" if not for the fact that I cannot swallow the story's basic assumption: that spacemen must be "altered" because "'Up beyond the ionosphere, baby, there's too much radiation for those precious gonads to work right anywhere you might want to do something that would keep you there over twenty-four hours...'"

But if we ignore this basic assumption, what Delany has done with it is brilliant. As in "The Star Pit," with its strange ones who risk insanity to escape our galaxy, this story is about the relationships that grow out of this new "breed" of people: the "spacers" and those who masochistically 'love' or are fascinated by them, the "Frelks". It's a kind of "Beat me! Beat me!" "I won't! I won't!" sort of relationship, but Delany makes it meaningful; he makes it work.

If horizons are to be legitimately expanded in sf, this is one way. Delany has sought out new kinds of people, and portrayed them in genuine depth. My only cavil (aside from not buying his reason for the "spacers" here) is that too often he seems in different stories to be describing the same sort of people: root-free aimless drifters -- happy-go-lucky, but losers. The descendents, in their way, of Kerouac's "On The Road" crew. Bohemian, messed up. It goes just so far, and then it will require rethinking, Chip.

33 stories:
Two A stories.
Two A- stories.
Seven B+ stories.
One B story.
Two C+ stories.
Seven C stories.
Five C- stories.
One D+ story.
Three D stories.
One D- story.
One F story.
And one unclassifiable story.

The average is just a decimal point under C+. Is that good? It's a passing grade, but I don't think it's "good". Twelve stories make my B-and-above list. Twenty stories are C+ or below.

I would have weeded them out. If it had been my book, I would have let all 33 stories pile up on my desk, and then I'd have weeded out two-thirds and rejected them.

Who cares if all your best friends, or the guy who put up $750 on the book, or all the Big Names are in your book -- if they wrote poor stories.

I've always considered Harlan Ellison a knowledgeable editor, but I can't think that of him on the evidence of this book alone.

Mind you, it's only my own opinion. Of the twelve stories Judy Merril admired I thought six rated C, C+, C, D-, D+ and C-. Opinions vary.

But I called a couple of the stories in this book "indulgences," and that, I'm afraid, is what the whole book is: a fat, fraudulent indulgence. It doesn't shock, it doesn't scare, it's not even very controversial, although Harlan's seen to it that it's been much-talked about. Something close to two thirds of the stories in the book are slush, and no one will ever convince me that they required a special anthology of 'dangerous visions' to justify them. Of those twelve I thought better than average, more than one was a little spoiled by the attempt of its author to make it a "shocker"

when it needn't have been, and several were not properly sf or "speculative fiction" at all: they were simply well-updated fairy tales.

A gawdawfully large number of authors responded to Harlan's "all stops out, no holds barred, just say it!" request with drivel. Having read the slushpile for F&SF for several years (1963-66), I can say that their "dangerous" themes closely parallel the themes of most amateur writers. I.e., "God is dead," "the computers are taking over," etc.

Prompted by Isaac Asimov's first introduction to the book, I went back and read (for the first time) Weinbaum's "A Martian Odyssey." And you know, that story compared well, in theme, content and execution with the bulk of the stories in "Dangerous Visions.

I'm no Sam Moskowitz; my nose is not buried in the sands of the old dime novels. Despite the fact that Harlan has more than once characterized me as a reactionary, I'm not. My reading standards outside sf are much higher than the average attained by these stories (one reason why I read outside the field for pleasure these days). And I'm dismayed that after two or three years of blaring clarion-calls, this bloated collection is the best Harlan could produce.

Perhaps it's not Harlan's fault. Reading his own story, "The Prowler in the City at the Edge of the World," I can see very clearly what kind of story he really wanted (within the differences of other writers' conceptions, of course). He just plain didn't get it.

He got a handful. I imagine the Farmer was the most satisfying. But only a handful. Not thirty-two others. Not even two dozen others. Mostly he got sad, superficial examples of what the author was grinding out for other markets. In at least one case, he got a moldy manuscript which would've been better left unexhumed.

I feel sad for Harlan. I tell myself that he got too close to the project and lost sight of his standards. I know that if he knowingly compromised with them it wracked him to do it -- and I suspect that he must have done so in at least a few cases. He wanted to get everyone in, and he wanted to give everyone something to be proud of.

Most of them let him down. Maybe that's why some of his introductions sound snide and sneering; maybe his disappointment was eeking out. I don't know.

But "Dangerous Visons" is not a revolution; not even an unsuccessful one. It's a rout. The proud manifesto lies tattered and trampled in the dust.

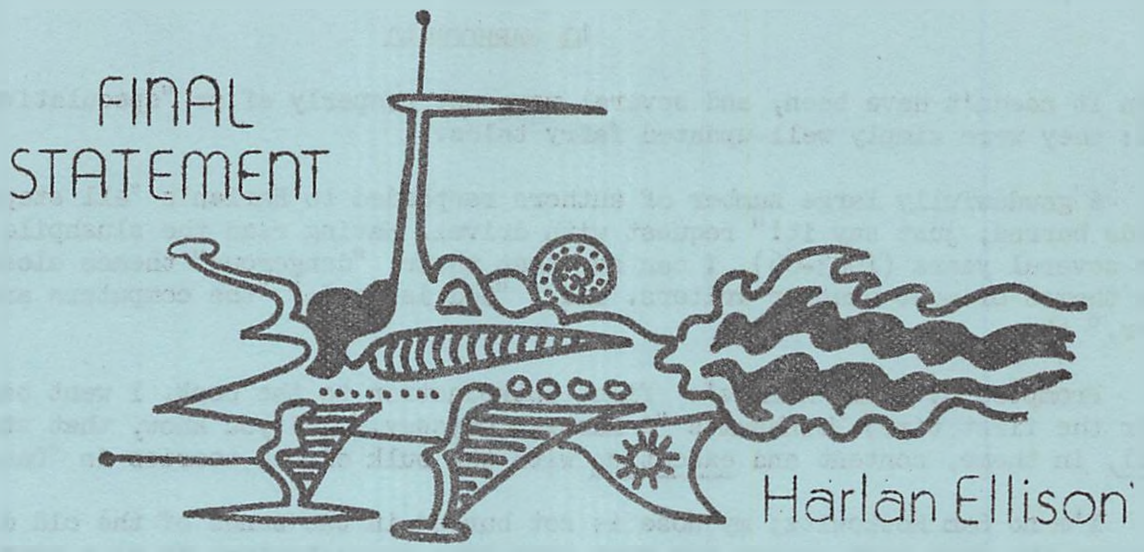
Exit one New Thing.

Next? .

--Ted White

.....

PETER SINGLETON vs. the cover on Wrhn 24: "As for the delightful psychedelic double cover, I did somehow manage to open the fanzine flat in order to view both at once before being made aware of your specific instructions on page 3. I didn't enhance the effect by reducing the distance between the double image and my staring eyeballs by slow degrees, but I moved it around in a circular fashion. The general effect was an intense dizzyness with distinctly queasy side-effects. Not a very inspiring trip, but it could have been worse, I suppose. When I did see your detailed instructions moments after my hesitant experimentation, I was on the point of doing exactly as directed when I observed someone observing me with an air of speculation written all over his face, so I retired to a toilet cubicle where, unobserved, I watched the double pattern slowly enlarge. The result was entirely predictable -- my 'lary eye' rebelled and I ended up with four overlapping images, which is progress of sorts!"



As an open note of gratitude to Mr. Ted White, Critic Emeritus -- and as a last and final statement of my position on the still-raging "Dangerous Visions"bruhaha -- these explicit comments:

It has been said the visions were not dangerous. It has been said my introductions were too long. It has been said many of the stories were weak. It has been said many of the stories have been overrated. It has been said I ballyhooed too much. It has been said the book is obscene. It has been said the idea of doing a book of "unpublishable" stories was a stupid one. It has been said too many important writers were omitted. Many things have been said.

My response is that "Dangerous Visions" accomplished everything I intended it to do. It started a genre-wide controversy; thereby opening many people's eyes, forcing many closet reactionaries to voice their musty opinions in an undisguised manner that revealed them for what they are. It sold better than almost any other sf book in recent memory -- over 50,000 copies in Book Club and trade editions. It garnered the highest paperback advance of any sf book (until recently, when two others plucked higher advances; thereby leading me -- perhaps erroneously, but nonetheless happily -- to believe that the book opened the door to higher advances for all sf writers). It started Fritz Leiber and Joe Hensley and Ted Sturgeon writing again. It prepared the groundwork for many other original collections now being assembled. It created a more liberal atmosphere in which the stylistic innovators emergent these last few years could have their work accepted. It copped a disproportionate number of awards. It shook people up, and is shaking people up.

What more than that could an editor ask of a project? So let the critics dissemble and let them second-guess, and let them harangue. The book is a milestone, that much is apparent. It feels good. It feels as if I've done a good job. It feels like an important contributinn to our field. And when I've spent the next two years editing "Again, Dangerous Visions" (a companion volume, not a sequel; whose contents will be made up of writers who were not represented in the first volume), I will be done with editing sf anthologies. I wanted to do what no one had ever done before, and to my mind I've done it. So, with all politeness to those who could never have brought the project to fruition, and who now buzz around the fait accompli as though their Monday Morning Quarterbacking actually means something, gentlemen...go fuck yourselves.

(This does not mean Mr. White, whose analysis is basically informed, though highly-colored by his own blind spots; as for Mr. White, all I can suggest is that he put his talent where his mouth is, and submit a story for the second volume that will prove he is capable of writing a story worthy of the project.) -Harlan Ellison

DISSONANT DISCOURSE

I couldn't have invented a more delightful demonstration than the handful of beautifully written articles by Dean A Grennell scattered throughout the last mailing of my observation that one of the fascinations of a Fapa membership is one never knows which of our illustrious deadwood is going to burst into a few twigs of activity next. At the other extreme is the morbid suspense of wondering which of our slumbering timers will collapse and reveal internal evidence that it long ago surrendered to termits: if all the unpleasant indicators hold true the latest horrible example may be this decade's stormy petrel Redd Boggs who may have gone the way of GMCarr. This would be unfortunate indeed for Redd in his many years in fandom set an example of quality few fans have ever matched and demonstrated the opposite side of Walt Willis' coin of serious-constructive insurgentism -- the side which was serious but which you were always aware was being played for the fun of it. The Fantasy Amateur will be turned to with a degree of expectant sadness this mailing and reveal Ghu knows what. :: Brief comments on Fapa mailing 124:

THE FANTASY AMATEUR: A quick glance through this revealed no check marks but cleared up the mystery of why I received something called Festula from one Jon White. He's at the top of the waiting list I see and often the need of activity credentials to qualify for membership is enough to force one into publishing something. A further glance at the names of the next 20 applicants is sufficient evidence of my contention that the present system of admission is designed to select ex-fans for membership -- most of these people gave up active interest in fan-publishing two, three, four, and, for all I know, 20 years ago.

MOONSHOT - Len Moffat: Your suggestions for the reorganization of Taff seem to overlook the principle that in fandom the more people there are to do a job the less likely it is to get done. And the comment "I don't think that the long wait decreases the interest of that many waitlisters" is directly opposed to my impression. I had thought more drop off than get in -- but my mailings are in no condition to check this.

DAY TRIPPER - Main: This was entertaining in the best Rotsler tradition and I find more sense of wonder in watching Main find his way in the world than in most of the science fiction I've read.

NULL-F - White: On page four you "think anyone who can last five years on the waiting list has demonstrated the staying-power we want", but on the other hand (page five, really) you observe that "a lot of new FAPAns don't last out their first year." ? This confirms my diagnosis that arteriosclerosis sets in in the upper half of the waiting list and results in strokes and other unpleasant side-effects when the new member trys to publish something.

SERCON'S BANE - FMBsuby: It's interesting that we officially laud the democratic people's regime of South Veitnam and ignore how they surpress their press and toss political opposition into jail. Anyone who is willing to die for that kind of democracy can find several fascist and communist governments that will be able to use his services. :: Your comments on how various post offices will accept widely varied rates on the same piece of mail suggest the need for a short "Guide To Saving Money At The Post Office". A fanzine recently arrived with 56¢ in postage on the envelope -- only 19¢ less than I paid for it. The first mailing of the non-Fapan copies of Wrhn (64pgs) were posted at 16¢, but the following Saturday when I returned with more there was another teller at the window who wanted 36¢ a copy. When I pointed out what I had mailed them for a few days earlier at the same window he merely shrugged. So I said, "Then I'll mail them somewhere else. Apparently there are cheaper post offices!" I purchased 16¢ stamps at another window and mailed them in a postbox outside the building. They didn't come back.

HORIZONS - Warner: I got quite a charge out of "The Worst of Martin" this time. It's so totally out of character for Horizons (in which I don't recall ever seeing so much as a faint damn) to close on a lewd joke that it completely broke me up. Was this one of the 'retold' jokes that figured in Martin's eviction? :: But I think you overlook the point of my cover (much as the speaking spaceman did!): that the surface of the planet was completely covered with evidence of intelligent life. The design was so large that it was completely overlooked. Did you notice it? :: Harry, if I didn't have the evidence of Spaceways and Horizons to dispute it, I'd think you were a bad editor for thinking you were "creating a lethal bore" with the issue devoted to your fanhistory notes. And I find your surprise at the praise that issue drew surprising in view of the years you've devoted to working on the fanhistory -- you must be well aware of the high interest in the history of fan activity. On the other hand I then find puzzeling your evident assumption that fandom finds interesting the long articles you've done on serious music (when only a dozen or so fans have shown enough interest in classical music to write about it in their fanzines) or your assumption that fans are interested in the minutia of small-town life (when few fans have shown any evidence of interest by writing on the subject in their own publications). Surely this is a triumph of your own writing ability over your subject matter -- unlike the case in your fanhistory writing where we have the perfect writer for the subject. :: Other contradictory signs that you are an excellent editor is this brilliant selection of quotes from VOM,which I found fascinating from beginning to end and which reveal why you are such a good historian -- you have an uncanny ability to select the revealing and entertaining detail. I hope I'm around in 20 years to read your profile of Wrhn in "All Our Yesterdays" (I'm referring to the column, not the second volume of the fan history series, which I hope to see in less than 10 years.). :: This issue of Horizons touches on more projects and ideas for articles that I have in my secret files than I will reveal here, but I was interested to note the comments on the letter-zine -- a fanzine form I've often thought I'd like to publish because it seems to me that the only problem involved in its success is to keep a regular schedule -- all other editorial problems automatically solve themselves. I would cite Cogswell's PITFCS as the most lively and best fanzine of this type since VOM.

RUBBER FROG- Eklund: I also thought your early writing was quite funny. But not the review of "Bonnie and Clyde" which you thought so similar to your early work. Perhaps your early writing was funny.

ESDACYOS - Cox: The best line in the mailing seems to be Grennell's wistful remark about Willis: "His output is matchless; his silence is about the same as any one else's." :: Dean, did you receive that photo-slide taken at the Museum of Modern Art of the very Edd Cartier style hand-gun?

TAFF PROGRESS REPORT - Stiles: Used.

HORIB - Lupoff: Does any group have a world convention of 18,000 people?

SAMBO - Martinez: I don't know if the phenomenon of amateur publications has ever been analysed on a serious level but I do recall a fine article by Henry Miller addressed to amateur publishers full of fascinating information about writing for the things. :: Yes, I believea 3-D cover was published in SAPS many years ago. If I recall correctly it was mimeographed and run in two colors and included the 3-D glasses.

A PROPOS DE RIEN - Caughran: You omitted Skyhook. :: Your remark about not objecting to a horse being a member of Fapa reveals that you are a fine and liberal person.

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James White

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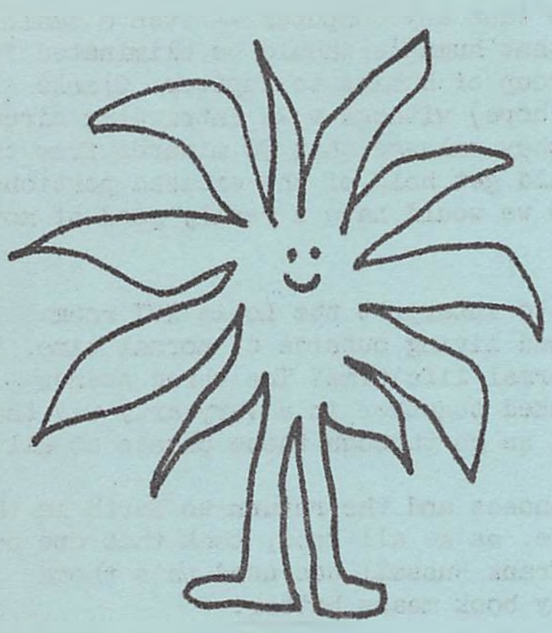


THE SNAKE PIT

BOB SHAW: I was reading Wrhn 24 in the kitchen the other day, trying to 'sink slowly into the cover' in spite of the danger of a nasty injury from the staples, when the phone rang. I set the mag down on the fridge and when I came back I found that Sadie had set a pan full of chips down on it. Some of the oil is now busily sinking slowly through the cover, and one particularly intellectual spot has even worked its way right through my own article. It must be glutinous for punishment. As the oil was intended for my assimilation I imagine that, by proxy anyway, I'm the only fan who literally took your advice. I loved the cover as a design, but wouldn't like to comment on whether Kubrick was right until I've figured out what it was he said, or indeed if he said anything.

Harry Warner's lovely "A Wealth of Fable" filled me with admiration and awe. It's amazing how detailed his picture of early Irish Fandom is, and the accuracy is astonishing considering the way in which it must have been pieced together over the years from articles which weren't really intended to convey coherent information. The only point on which I could fault it, factually, is that the Epicentre in London was shared by Vince Clarke and Ken Bulmer, not Ken Chapman. And as a piece of entertaining writing I couldn't fault it at all.

Walter Breen's piece about "2001" reminds me of the time an English fan worked out the full system for classification of alien life forms used by James White in his Sector General stories. This fan, by dint of careful study of all the stories, had managed to work up a very good and thoughtful article about the system, the philosophies behind it, etc. He even sent it to James before publication in case he had slipped up anywhere, and James obligingly wrote back that he couldn't find any mistakes in it. And this was true -- because James never had any system of classification! Each time a new alien cropped up at Sector General he simply snatched a few letters at random and tagged them on to it.

Walter admits at the start of his article that there is a danger of this kind of thing happening, so I guess that the piece is really a conscious demonstration of how imgaination and education can enhance a person's experience of anything. For my money, the enigmas 'built into' "2001" can be explained much more easily. The explanation, in my opinion, is simply that the original movie was going to be about four hours long, practical difficulties arose, and somebody had to prune about 90 minutes out of it in a hurry.

Signs of this surgery are abundant, although it is two months since I saw the movie and would need to go again if I wanted to catalogue them properly. One example is the build-up which was given to the 'unusual circumstances' surrounding the beginning of the Jupiter flight. HAL and Dave discuss this, and refer to the publicity it got. I noted that you didn't actually see the other crew members -- just fancy caskets which could have been filled with analogue computers piping out the sort of signals that HAL would have expected had there been humans inside. Arthur Clarke has always been a storyteller, and if that wasn't the lead-in to a sub-plot or twist in the main story line, I'll eat my beanie.

Related to this is the great play that was put on the fact that no HAL 9000 had

ever made a mistake. Frankly, I find it incredible that any computer -- even a small 1968 model -- could make the mistake of deciding that human's should be eliminated from a voyage the sole purpose of which was to get a group of humans to Jupiter. Clarke wouldn't countenance that sort of thing either (I hope) without some intriguing circumstances -- which we will never understand unless they salvage that 90 minutes from the cutting room floor. Come to think of it, if we could get hold of the excised portions and hire Walter Breen to write a story around them we would have a really good sf movie on our hands.

As for the climax of "2001", there's no need to interpret the Louis XVI room sequence as meaning that Dave is physically dead and living outside of normal time. Why not take it that he is alive, imprisoned for a normal life time? The three scenes showing him as young, middle aged and old were linked together in a very arty way,that's all. In fact, if he was physically dead why should he go through these phases at all?

Then there's the final scenes of the metamorphoses and the return to Earth in the form of Homo Superior, or human being Mk.II, Clarke, as we all know, took that one out of his files -- nor is it exclusive to him. Eric Frank Russell has used this theme several times, and more entertainingly, which in my book means better.

The glossy programme (which cost more than a visit to the cinema used to cost here) says that Clarke and Kubrick spent 2,400 hours on the script. And in a fanzine Clarke is reported to have deliberately made the dialogue banal. Putting the two together, Arthur must have worked hellish hard to achieve his aim.My fervent hope is that if he ever again sets himself such a task he will take it easier, work maybe only a hundred hours, and let some of his normal writing style show through.

What can I say about Walt Willis's article? I've already said he's the greatest fan writer of all time. He has already said that about me. There's a danger of us straying into an Aldiss-Harrison type relationship. (6 Cheltenham Pk,Belfast6 N.Ireland)

JAMES BLISH: Breen on "2001" -- or rather, about what he sees in the film -- was more interesting for its further insights into Breen than those into "2001", perhaps because I had come to some of the same conclusions (say 60%) independently. If Walter will take my appreciation as given, I'll go on to some dissents. The several references to the atmosphere and landscape of Jupiter are in error. In the film, the "Discovery" goes into orbit around Jupiter, and Dave's pod does not approach the planet itself, but the orbiting slab. No part of the film takes place on Jupiter; the famous light show is a faster-than-light interstellar trip. I can buttress this from three extraneous bits of evidence: (1) In the parent story, "The Sentinal," it is plainly stated that the extraterrestrials are not based and did not originate on any solar planet; (2) In the novel, which I've reviewed in the December Amazing, a ftl journey is spelled out in detail; (3) Clarke in person: "Yes, it's a ftl trip -- our old friend the spacewarp. The real thing, if there ever is one, may be rather dull after Stanley's, eh?" But it is also visible in the picture: The first streaks of ruby light (geodesics?) appear in mid-space far to the north of Jupiter and the terrific impression of motion is all away from Jupiter (and, since it is at an angle to the plain of the ecliptic, away from the Sun as well). Furthermore, before we see the mysterious planet, the trip shows us approaching a globular cluster (very convincing) and then a spiral galaxy (not nearly so convincing) as well as a nova explosion and several other recognizably stellar, not planetary effects.

Breen also says, in support of his belief that the light show is an internal responne to environmental shock, that "Dave does not appear himself during the psychedelic visions". This, however, is also an error; We see him not once but many times, in a series of increasing closeups of his helmeted head shuddering with the violence

of the journey (one of these is used on the jacket of the hardcover and on the cover of the paperback), culminating with no less than three extreme closeups of one of his eyes in various color-substitutions. One may of course also invoke LSD if one wishes, but as William of Occam said, why multiply entities without reason? The evidence for the light-show as a ftl trip is abundant and convincing.

I saw the movie twice and neither time did I see the wine-glass (not a water glass, Walter, please!) reassemble itself. Since I take this to be the shattering of the vessel of life, having it reassemble itself would have been an interesting precursor of the rebirth scene, but I don't remember its actually happening, nor does my wife.

I agree with Walter that the film is a flawed masterpiece. Its flaws for me, in descending order of importance: (1) Huge logical jumps in the argument, some of them bridged by the astoundingly primitive device of title-cards; (2) an ending so telescoped as to be difficult to understand even on the overt level (not a flaw in a poem, but a serious one in a film); (3) a piece of idiot plotting for the sake of drama -- the parking of the pod on the repair mission so far from the "Discovery", and the repairman's venturing forth without a safeline; (4) Since HAL can and once does control a pod in free space (for the first murder), a failure to show that the human operators can exercise some kind of over-ride; (5) Two outright astronomical errors in the Jupiter sequence -- it would never be possible to see so many moons of Jupiter at once as discs (I counted seven in the final line-up!), and the non-Galilean satellites are all shown much too large. :: In general, though, a great achievement.

Bob Lowndes seems to be saying, at greater length and with more analysis, exactly what I was trying to say. To go to the opposite extreme, I'll try to summarize: the core of the mystic position is that no amount of secular knowledge can ever be sufficient, that insufficient knowledge is an actual impediment to union with God, and that the mystic should therefore divest himself of it as best he can. The Faustian tradition further holds that some kinds of knowledge are forbidden, and the possession of it either therefore evil in itself or a pathway to evil, or both. :: I was not attempting, in my Atheling piece, to explore all the ramifications, since the matter has been discussed by theologians for many centuries; in any event, exploring the ramifications is one of the purposes of the three novels (and, of course, dramatizing them) -- as I tried to point out -- and had I felt myself able to do so in, say, a few pages of Wrhn, I probably wouldn't have felt the need to devote 250,000-odd words of fiction to them.

I read Willis, Shaw and Warner with delight. All in all, Wrhn continues to be the best written and the most interesting fanzine I have ever seen. (New York)

TED WHITE: Breen's piece disturbs me deeply, because it represents the first major article Walter has written with which I not only disagree, but which arouses hostility on my part as the basic reaction. This article is not only factually incorrect in almost all its axiomatic suppositions, it is amazingly wrong-headed in its thinking.

Fallacy #1 is "We cannot assume that anything here is merely accidental or the result of slipshod thinking." I suggest Walter compare the entire HAL sequence in the movie with the one in the book (now a 95¢ Signet paperback) for an example of slipshod thinking in the movie (whether accidental or deliberate I hesitate to say). He might note a great many other divergences between book and movie which underscore the movie's failure on its own terms.

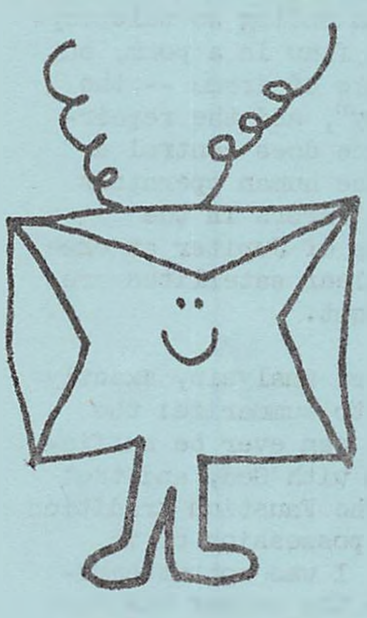
Fallacy #2 is "Clarke is probably to be credited with more of the finished film than he would admit... Clarke is also too sensible a writer to succumb to the common temptation of confusing obscurity and profundity." The book -- clearly Clarke's execution -- is neither obscure nor profound; the movie -- very obviously Kubrick's handiwork -- is definitely obscure, if only debatably profound.

From these two fallacious assumptions: that everything is calculated for effect

(a not entirely false assumption; merely a false emphasis: Kubrick calculated most of his scenes for visual effect, not for any deeper psychological implication) and that because Clarke is the controlling force (wrong), the movie most be profound in its apparent obscurity, Walter draws a set of conclusions which are as yet unparalleled for their inappropriateness. And "2001" is a movie which has drawn out the Obscurantists in swarms to pose their own special pleadings for the movie's supposed riddle.

There is no riddle to the movie at all. Clarke's quote about showing the audience "What the universe is really like out there" is a dead give-away, if you take it within the context of Clarke's other writings, both sf and factual. The movie is intended literally. It says exactly what it seems to be saying on the surface. If anyone doubts this, I suggest he read the book, which buttresses the point.

I am amazed that Walter has followed the lead of the mundane critics and has written off the "light show" as a psychedelic episode on the way to Jupiter, or assumed the monoliths originated upon Jupiter (or anywhere in our system). Not only is that set of special effects quite unimaginative (it is a simple mechanical process with color treatments), it is obviously intended as a literal vision of hyperspace. The sense of movement is accute. It begins as a hole in space. It leads through galactic clouds, and ends upon the surface of a planet transparently unJovian.



"The psychedelic visions -- why are they there at all?" Walter asks, ingenuously. Why, indeed? The protagonist, Dave, is a totally unimaginative sort and unlikely to undergo a spontaneous, untriggered, undrugged psychedelic "trip". There are no "visions" -- only a visualization of a literal trip through hyperspace (a pure sf concept: why did Walter reject it?)

Other points: Breen explains the secrecy about the Moon monolith as "surely a satire on 'security' precautions..." but Clarke re-emphasises the point in his book that the security cloak is because of fear over "cultural shock" due to the exposure of such an artifact. Clarke apparently believes in the possible danger of such a revelation...

Walter asks "Is it an accident that HAL's initials are a single-letter displacement of IBM?" According to Clarke and Kubrick (in public statements) it is indeed an accident, and one thay were not aware of until it was pointed out to them.

Etc. What Walter has done is to take a rather unimaginative, literal, dead-panned movie and read significance into each and every one of its principle failures. Where Kubrick and Clarke (or Clarke, at least) were being earnest and serious, he reads satire. Where they were being literal, he reads a psychedelic experience and a metaphysical exposition. And where they unwittingly formed an accronym that was one letter removed from IBM, he reads deep profundity.

Needless to say, in doing this Walter pushed all my buttons: he hit my pet peeve. And I wish he hadn't, because I have enough respect for Walter as a perceptive critic that it hurts to see him fail so miserably and so completely. Worse, I feel like a bystander watching a tragedy unfold: in the Phil Dick article and in this one, I feel I am watching Walter being taken over by his biases, still blissfully certain of his own objectivity. (Even his awareness of the Strauss "Zarathustra" music's special effect upon him is spurious: he throws out this example in order to demonstrate to us that he is aware of his own subjective reactions and can differentiate between them and his more objective findings, but all too soon he is not only discussing the astrological significance of Jupiter's choice over Saturn, but wondering aloud over the possibility for the use of music from Holst's "The Planets" in the Louis XVIth room. It is pointless to insist, at this point, that the room was on neither Jupiter nor Saturn, but on the face of a red giant in another galaxy... Walter is too locked-in to his astrological Jupiter/Saturn symbolism.)

One sign of this is the strong drug-bias, which leads him to such identifications

as the characterization of Joyce's "Ulysses" as "another experiment with time involving overtly psychedelic sequences." Everything is related to the Drug Experience, and this experience is presumed to be one that underlies everyone's most important expressions. Thus: "Dave in his little shuttle craft, confronting the unseen (?) in the Jovian atmosphere, has a psychedelic experience culminating in the famous White Light." This isn't even an accurate transcription of the scenes shown on the screen, for Christ's sake. Another is the astrological/mystical bias. Thus: "...then out of the body (apparently after his own unrealized death) finds himself in the Inner Planes undergoing an uncomprehended aging/death/rebirth..." and: "We are therefore in the middle of a frankly esoteric or occult frame of reference: ancient Jupiter and Saturn symbolism, the law of karma, Inner Planes after-death survival (and note that the type of experience of the newly dead matches that reported independantly via thousands of mediumistic communications)." The sound you just heard was Breen, still chuntering along in his usual apparently lucid style, falling off into the deep end. The topper is when he adds, "It is no surprise, then, to find other esoteric material in '2001', and it is consistent with Clarke's other work." Emphasis mine.

It is true that a gentle form of mysticism can be found in Clarke's writings, and also in "2001". It is not true that his work contains what Breen calls "esotericisms" -- by which he seems to mean all the superstitious nonsense of the Rosicrucians, Theosophists, Masons, and, for all I know, Dixons... The mysticism in Clarke is a very scientific sort of affair -- and for its analogy I refer you to "The Double Helix", and a good description of the sense of wonder scientists often feel about their work and its "beauty". For Clarke the universe itself is quite awesome enough, without the added clutter of the Wisdom of the Ancients and their mumbo-jumbo. This is what Clarke was talking about, and it seeps from the pages of the book -- as it does from many of Clarke's earlier works as well. (339, 49th St., Brooklyn, N.Y. 11220)

TERRY JEEVES in a letter forced out of the last issue commented, in part, on Breen's article on Philip K Dick: "again, the hunt for what the author had buried in his subsconscious and just couldn't get around to saying outright ... when the references to Kant, Sappho and Uncle Tom Cobley start flying, I quit."

WALTER BREEN -- charter subscriber to the Warhoon Clipping and Forwarding Service -- observes: If Terry Jeeves likes to read criticism solely of the "I like A because of x,y, and z, but dislike n,d,g" variety, let him write it himself; any barely literate, hardly perceptive, person can do that much, and perhaps even hit some of the best and worst features. But I thought we'd gone beyond that level. Really, what does it matter whether fan P,Q or R likes this or that story? The whole purpose of literary criticism is different,especially in this age where novels, music, films and almost all other media of art manifest multiple levels of meaning and attempt to state or solve problems of which the creators in previous centuries were hardly aware. I see criticism as essentially a viewing afterwards in tranquility, ideally a kind of meditation on themes and an evaluation on the basis of what a creator has done, making overt what was often concealed. I see its major pitfall as reading into a work what was not necessarily there (as in Freud's famous study of daVinci based on a poorly-researched historical novel and nothing else); I see its major virtue as communicating to audiences and potentially other creators the problems and their solutions -- essentially a kind of translation work.

On risking disaster: surely any artist, whether creative or performing, is risking disaster everytime he Does His Thing. For the built-in difficulties in any artform, together with the circumscribed rules and existential limitations of the particular medium, together render each artform and each work in a given form or medium a type of game. The object of the game is to communicate to (ideally, sensitized) spectators part or all of a world of relationships not earlier wholly known to them; to surmount the mentioned difficulties not only with competence but with finesse; to explore the

possibilities of the chosen medium. Formal analogy with games more commonly recognized as such is complete but would take much more space to demonstrate than is suitable here. And in particular, in arts as in any other game, the possibility of failure always exists. Usually in games recognition of success or failure is inherent in the results of the performance; in most arts, however, we find judgments of success or failure getting on record on the part of reviewers, who may or may not be expert in the particular medium, or even cognizant enough of what a given artist is attempting to do, to be competent as judges. So disaster here may be a result, forsooth, of factors as irrelevant to quality of performance as the critic's digestive state. :: I know you meant something entirely different, but it seems to me that the generalization to all arts whatever is justified and that sometimes it extends to any writing -- even routine journalism or fanzine contribution.

It is in much that spirit, I suppose, that I must shake my head at TEW and Bosh for totally missing the point of my "Philip K. Dick: Inner Space Astronaut" in Wrhn 23. The title was, I suppose, a little misleading, but I could not then think of a better one. I was not attempting a definitive study of Dick: indeed, that could hardly be done in eight pages, even by White. I was principally interested in studying certain aspects of the creative process itself and used Phil's work to provide a magnified example of how these aspects manifest themselves in practice. Had I been writing in a different publication I might have used Paul Hindemith or Gustav Mahler or your idol Picasso as a comparable source of instances. :: I am shocked by Ray Nelson's elucidation of the PKDick worldview, which at least is far more of an explanation than what TEW provides; but insofar as it genuinely represents Ray's collaborator's basic thesis, it points to a psychotic process underlying many of the recurring themes. We cannot even blame LSD for that. The LSD view of God, as reiterated thousands of times in the Haight-Ashbury, in the Oracle and its congeners, is Something Else: We are all part of God and forgetting this fundamental realization is responsible for so much intolerance, provincialism, xenophobia. God is the cosmic force towards increasingly broadly adapted evolution (bio- and otherwise), the titanic energy which creates and modifies, at once transcendent and immanent, and personalities are only a series of minute fragments split therefrom, trying in the long run to merge again with each other and rejoin the Eternal Flux, the Eternal Now. Whatever Phil Dick saw that made him conceive of God as a monstrously evil entity, it was not God; if it was a god, it sounds like some hideous thoughtform like Moloch, a creation of the created.

Lowndes: Lovecraft's view of evil is not primarily that of forbidden knowledge, it is instead "Whatever contributes to allowing survivors of the Elder Races to resume destructive contact with modern man is evil". His Elder Races are evidently to be equated with one of the ancient root races of the theosophists. (This is not falling into the trap I described in my study of "2001"; HPL derived much of his worldview from Arthur Machen, himself a member of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn and consciously using little-known data handed down in the German Rosicrucian and theosophical lodges.) :: On the other hand, there are areas of knowledge which, as you put it, must be destructive. I can offhand name three and probably others can add to the list. (1) Methods of torture. (2) Methods for brainwashing or otherwise enslaving human minds. (3) The ancient mantras used for causing storms or earthquakes -- a large-scale use of cymatics, only now being explored on the smallest scale by IBM and some other outfits with beaming soudwaves at liquids or powders to produce geysers or other patterned disturbances. Chladni patterns are the most elementary example; tsunamis are a natural instance on a larger scale. :: "Unknowing" is evidently a passive psychedelic state in which one is tuned in to cosmic forces, in the terminology of "The Cloud of Unknowing". I can cite parallels in many other mystical writings; most were trying various techniques to get to the same place, mostly unfamiliar with independent efforts in the same direction. :: "Knowledge as evil of insufficiency" is of course the Faustian problem. This remains a problem only if one assumes (1) reincarnation as

impossible or at least recall of memories from previous lives as impossible, (2) inaccessibility of the akashic records, (3) the single-factor experiment as the sole permissible method of achieving empirical knowledge. I cannot prove it in the brief space here, but there is evidence that all three assumptions are contrary to fact. :: A good introduction to the so-called "hidden" teachings of the ancient mystery schools can be found in the writings of Dion Fortune, published by Aquarian Press, London, espicially "The Mystical Qabalah" and "The Cosmic Doctrine", but not limited to those. They are not easy reading and they require a great deal of analytic/synthetic work, more so if one attempts to put the Qabalistic system into practice and thereby learn more about one-self, the cosmos, and God. But they do reward respectful attention, and they do not contain even 0.01% of nonsense, unlike 99.99% of writings purporting to deal with secret wisdom. (c/o Lester Merkin, 65 East 56th St., New York City, 10022.)

MED BROOKS: The new Wrhns are suberb, especially the columns by Willis and Shaw. I can hardly wait for the next part of Harry Warner's "A Wealth of Fable". :: I remember Shaw's "Cosy Universe", but I am afraid it is about gone for me, at least in a general sense. Jorge Luis Borges' stories just aren't cosy - the enjoyment in them is of a different sort. I do still get something of the feeling he mentions in reading certain all-too-rare fantasies like C S Lewis' "Chronicles of Narnia", where you really know how things will turn out, and that there will be a happy ending, and can enjoy it immensely anyway.

SETH JOHNSON: It must be fifteen years now since the late Ralph Holland, president of N3F gave me credentials with which to visit all the pro eds to try and get publicity for the Fanzine Clearing House. And since then I've tried a lot of things to keep something I consider essential to the well being of fandom. An open door whereby the general sf reading public can learn about fandom and get a chance to join. :: Well, anyhow your Wrhn goes out to some deserving potential fan with Mondays mail.

ROBERT LOWNDES: Two serials in one issue of a quarterly! Well, I'm an old-time serial fan, so I can't object too strenuously. Again, Breen makes fascinating reading, although my not having seen "2001" makes it impossible for me to follow him very intelligently. Not that I might not have seen it by the time the next issue appears, though I have sworn by something that I shall not see "2001" before I've seen the six-hour version of "War and Peace" -- and I just haven't gotten around to getting a ticket for that yet. So White's first installment on "Dangerous Visions" had more meaning for me, although we may not be in agreement on specifics. My feeling is that "Dangerous Visions" is valuable for writers as a whole, and contains a few stories worth excerpting for a shorter collection. I've stated my admiration for Ellison's own story elsewhere, but it's worth repeating; and agree with Ted on the excellence of Dick's. Farmer's is so impossibly bad in some respects that it is priceless. I consider it well worth the cost of the hard-cover edition alone, and thoroughly enjoyed it. It belongs in a collection like this, though, which is chiefly a collection of experimental errors. There's no reason why authors' experimental errors should be published, but once in a while something like this is definitely worth doing; and if it is to be done, it should be done with artistic enthusiasm -- than which there ain't much around that can beat Ellison's. But if this had been done with intellectual, high critical standard taste, it would have had all the appeal of a rubber pancake. :: I'm familiar with the objection: But people will read this and think that this is the way stories should be written! Yes, perhaps some will, if you want to call that "thinking" in the first place. Stupidity will out, like murder -- in fact, better than murder, since no one hears of the genuine "perfect crimes", at least not in time to pay the proper amenities to the culprit. The risks are more than made up, in my opinion, by this massive opportunity for writers who are willing and able to think -- and you can find some if you really look -- to discover for themselves what is really dangerous in the volume, a valuable finding even if it does no more than confirm what they already believe they knew. :: Thanks to Walt Willis for his column on Flann O'Brien, obviously an

author to read. Strange it is how I keep on finding that more of my favorite English writers are really Irish. Just another one of those subtle hints that all is not what it seems, and one fine day the world will awaken to find it is now too late to deal with the Mick Menace. Meanwhile, Walt, keep after lulling us into a false sense of security with that fine charm of yours. (New Jersey)

JERRY KAUFMAN: Bob Shaw's cosy universe is still there for some, since Ted White points out that the ordinary person is most likely to be reading the galaxy-leaping novels of EESmith. The cosy universe is cosy to them for the same reason that it was cosy to Bob -- it's not as complicated as real life in any case. Van Vogt's assembly-lines may be mind-staggering -- but the reader doesn't have to know how they work to be staggered by them. Galactic politics may be terribly complex -- but Asimov is going to tell us the major trends and we won't even have to figure out how our heros will be affected because Asimov will tell us. Of course that's much cosier.

Warner was superb.

To say that "knowledge is in itself evil" is not the same as saying that "evil is knowledge" as Lowndes seems to think. The first statement is not commutable to the second. The words "a form of" are as inferrable as the word "all". You see, "Knowledge is evil" is the first line of a syllogism. The second line could be "X is knowledge", the third, "Therefore X is evil". Not "X is evil, therefore X is knowlege." I can't remember which term is which, so here's the standard example for this sort of logic, "All men are mortal, Plato is a man, therefore Plato is mortal." Match up the terms with those in Lowndes' implied syllogism, and you'll see that if you use his, you'll break the rules. ("Knowledge is evil, X is evil, therefore X is knowledge.") So I say that he is playing with words, that the difference he thinks is caused by three words ("a form of") is non-existant because the logical consequences of the word order in the two sentences are exactly the same.

Ted White's remarks constitute the first good review of "Dangerous Visions" that I've yet seen, and welcome. I think that the introductory material that Harlan washes the book in is harmful...in his books, his own anthologies, they are among the best parts of the books, but in this collection they obliterate many of the stories, ranging as they do from personal recollections to comments on the themes the stories are written around.

Willis was much better than last time -- his "review" of these strange books is the first of its type to make me really want to try the books. By "its type" I mean that sort of review that goes into usually unwanted detail on some obscure writer and his (often) deservedly obscure works. (2769 Hampshire Rd. Cleveland Hts, Ohio, 44106)

RON WHITTINGTON: "A Wealth of Fable" is fascinating. Yes, fascinating. Warner may have written better things, but if so, I have not seen them. His sense of timing in ending part one with Willis having been sent the Nekromantikon press is superb. I could curse him for it. I await the next installment with ill-concealed impatience... don't suppose you have any plans for going bimonthly? In my opinion, Warner's biography of Willis is Wrhn 24's best feature. (308 Park Drive, Festus, Mo. 63028)

G.M.CARR (of all people): As of now, aside from a cursory skimming of the contents, I have read only Lowndes' "Aufgeknöpft". This extrapolation of the old saw, "A little learning is a dangerous thing", (which he has developed, apparently, into "a little knowledge is an evil thing") impresses me very much. That is, it gives me the impression that what he is saying is worth considering further. What's more, I find it a great deal more to my taste than some of the so-called "modern theology" I have been reading lately. (The reason I mention that is because I have just finished reading a book entitled "Honest To God" by one John A.T.Robinson in connection with an evening course

on the Death of God Theology. In my opinion his book is neither honest to God nor to the reader, for he admits to being "tone deaf" when it comes to spiritual approaches such as Prayer, and says it was a great relief to him when he stopped believing in a God "up there...) (5319 Ballard Avenue, Seattle 7, Washington)

R. BRZUSTOWICZ JR comments on Lowndes' piece on Delany and Ballard in Wrhn 23: There are so many people who really enjoy Delany's work and really abhor (despise, dislike, get sick at, misconstrue, are annoyed or bored by, to mention a few things) Ballard's: I began to wonder about the state of my head at one point. I suppose that one's taste is influenced by the same things that influence one's other pleasures: I find Delany amusing, nice light reading, and Ballard very enthralling, very hard to understand at times, and very worth the effort. :: Delany's work (I have not yet seen "Nova": all his novels up to that) strikes me as somehow not solid: his playing with archetypes, for example, is for me just play: very rarely does he manage to do anything with them that looks into my own being and devastates me, or in any other way moves me. His books so far are essentially exhaustible in a reading or two. "Nova" may be different. The best things in them are not the things that everyone notices and praises him for: they are small scenes, crucial, but not really related to the dazzle that is so well loved. In his trilogy -- the first book of it -- I remember a scene in which a young girl acrobat had her elbow smashed by an Evil Queen; in another book the wife of a poet-gangleader was killed very messily... These two scenes were for me very effective confrontations with injustice-pain-evil, more real than anything else I have read of Delany's work. It is precisely because of this breaking through of humanity into the prettiness and dazzle that I find his work at all memorable: the fact that Delany knows pain and can write it is probably one of the main reasons I have a green corduroy jacket. {? -rb} :: Ballard's work, on the other hand, has not only intellectual crossword-puzzle qualities (Delany's dazzle), but also immensely effective use of not the concept of archetypes but the fact of archetypes: a Ballard story engages me at a number of levels. Ballard's work is extremely involving. And it is totally about/concerned with human realities. Not "normal" ones -- but very real ones. His early work was much easier; his present work needs (for me) at least two or three readings to sort itself out. But the readings are not chores: they are conversions, reformations: when one realizes a Ballard "story" one realizes a mode of being-in-the-world. :: Some people have suggested that Ballard is an acid-head: his stories, they say, are pure acid. I can't say, but, if that is true, Ballard's is certainly one of the best, most comprehensible bodies of work on or in the subject. I think the best word for them is hieratic: not Godly -- daemonic. (Box 5455, River Campus Station, Rochester NY)

BOB PARKINSON made some interesting points on "2001", but, enough is enough, gentlemen. However: With regard to HAL 9000, my conclusions were quite other than Breen's. To me it seemed that HAL was the only human being occupying the film for more than two minutes. The astronauts are machines, doing things expected of them, unmoved by anything. The second astronaut (Poole) does some sketching, true, but it is representational work of the things about him -- ie, no more than might be expected of a camera. :: HAL, on the other hand, suffers from hubris and through that proves himself human. Further, his crisis comes from an ability to extrapolate a current situation into the future. The astronauts by and large act only on present data. The "Discovery" sequence is a tragedy of a human being, HAL, trapped by his past (his upbringing that has emphasized that he never makes a mistake). Writing that, it occurs to me that his predecessors may be found in the plays of Tenessee Williams. :: Anyway, HAL ain't the villain but the victim. IBM probably were very aware of what they were doing in their co-operation. :: Information to Walt Willis. (This takes temerity). You are wrong. In missing the first of Flann O'Brien's books you have really missed something. Indeed, for me the whole article is unbalanced by the fact that Walt has not read "At Swim Two Birds." The extrapolation theory "From our point of view I probably have not missed much in the first..." will not work. All the other books were an attempt to get back to the first book, which possibly stands as one of the classics of its age --

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a mixture of (get this) Jimmy Joyce in "Portrait of the Artist", DeCamp and Pratt in "The Incomplete Enchanter", Hubbard's "Typewriter in the Sky" and other unlikely things. It mean, it isn't simple to describe, but combines mundane, fantasy and imagination in an invention difficult to compare elsewhere. (106, Ingram Ave Aylesbury, Bucks., England)

PETER SINGLETON: I rate Harry Warner's detailed and perceptive insight into the early history of Irish Fandom as definitely the best item in the entire issue, which is quite a compliment in view of Wrhn's high standards. History reports like this should be produced on a regular basis in order to reduce the generation gap in our microcosm. A surprisingly large number of young faneds have never even heard of WAW and this is certainly a distressing state of affairs. If Warner keeps up with this idea, he could develop into the fannish equivalent to prodom's SaM, which would be a great asset to fandom, without a doubt.(Block 4, Broadmoor Hospital, Crowthorne, Berkshire, England)

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AUFGEKNÖPFT:- conclusion: that "because" shows that he, too, got what you were trying to convey; he just didn't like it. What all this has told me is that certain techniques I was using in these revisions work; I have no intention of repeating any of them exactly, but future stories will draw from various aspects of them. Had all three stories come out in the reckoning department in first place ("Lilies" did; "Leapers", took second place to the 1st part of Dr. Keller's novel, "The Abyss". "Settler's Wall" has a fair chance of finishing first, as I write this on the first day of autumn, 1968, but I won't know before this issue of Warhoon is printed whether it beats out the Seabury Quinn, Jules de Grandin story in the same issue -- "The Isle of Missing Ships".) I'd have been gratified. I took pains to run stories which I thought were at least as good if not better in those same issues -- but if there had not been specific comments, just being liked would have been of little value. If I must choose, I'll settle for comments rather than a top rating.

Reading competent criticism of other authors' material is sometimes more valuable to me than criticism of my own -- partly because, no matter how diligently I try to be objective in relation to my own writing, there are some -- possibly very true -- comments which I cannot accept. Either I don't understand, or I reject them. But at times I've later been able to comprehend, at least, when I read criticism of other authors who had done the same thing substantially. Which doesn't mean that I accepted, repented, and reformed in every instance -- although I may have gotten some ideas upon how to improve my unregenerate ways.

Critics err, and not always without malice (although the polemic, which sometimes passes for criticism is not criticism; polemics can be destructive, while genuine criticism cannot); readers frequently show a distressing lack of ability to read; authors all want to be praised and understood. Virgil Thompson once noted that criticism has serious faults, but it remains the only antidote to advertising. This is the consumer's position. It is also the only antidote to complacency on the part of an author, where editorial rejections have not applied a sharper remedy. -rawl

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Bob Shaw
for Taff,
of course.