

Eddie Jones

BLAZON TWO - FROM THE KNIGHTS OF SAINT FANTONY

BLAZON

Volume One Number Two
July 1975

"THE MAGAZINE OF ST FANTONY AND
SCIENCE FICTION"

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Artwork: Cover - Eddie Jones

Interior Illos - Terry Jeeves (7,10,11,16,20,22,29)

"Nick" (15,18)

BLAZON will be published irregularly (but a twice yearly schedule is still hoped for). Material and Artwork, letters-of-comment and Subscriptions will all be welcomed by KEITH FREEMAN at 128 FAIRFORD ROAD, TILEHURST, READING, RG3 6QP, ENGLAND.

SUBSCRIPTION RATE is 35 pence per copy, three for £1 (or \$2.50). U.S.A. agents are Len & June Moffatt, Moffatt House, Box 4456, Downey, California 90241, U.S.A.

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Still



Rampant

BNF, FIAWOL, fnz, Ghod - like any society fandom has a "private" language and, quite apart from the language, there are things that go on that only the initiated know about. This is not a good thing - nor is it, in fact, a bad thing... it's merely a fact of life. Many societies do, indeed, have initiation rites, ranging from ornate ceremonies through examinations to the simplest of tests - can you pay the dues! Fandom, no matter how highly we think of it, is an offspring from the mundane world and therefore has many things in common with other societies that occupy more important niches in that world.

Many years ago it was generally held that three years spanned the average "fannish life" - from complete neo to gafia. Naturally as an ex-statistician I shivered at the loose use of "average" - but I accepted three years as a modal fannish lifetime. The three years could, of course, be broken down into a learning period, a productive period and a declining period. In the learning period the putative fan gradually realised that he was the person being called a neo - and, if he was lucky, he quickly picked up the other jargon and customs (customs like always taking a bottle when going to a room party; never buying meat pies from Brian Burgess unless your name is Brian Aldiss/Harry Harrison and you're buying them to throw at Harry Harrison/Brian Aldiss; being very circumspect about your real love of SF in all its guises). Usually the productive period saw a lot of letter writing, fanzine activity and some convention/social activity. The decline was frequently a very sharp one and associated with outside interests overtaking fannish ones... girls, exams, jobs, marriage or what have you.

A few fans, as we all know, last much longer than three years - and I'd be interested in finding out what kind of percentage it is (but that's side-tracking the main issue). New blood was the constant cry of the old and tired fen (who almost automatically qualified as BNF's) - and spurred on by Easter conventions that were getting dangerously small the B.S.F.A. was born. In those days the B.S.F.A.'s purpose was simple and straightforward... to get more fans into fandom. It was realised, I'm sure, by the organisers and founders that it would attract many members who would not turn into fans - but it was hoped that some would. The B.S.F.A., in other words, would act as a recruiting agency - and further would ease the new members initiation into fandom.

It is only fair to say at this point that, in my opinion, the B.S.F.A. has, over this last sixteen/seventeen years, done that job - as witness the ever increasing size of conventions and, indeed, now we regularly have two conventions a year. Somewhere along the way the B.S.F.A. also picked up some pretentious "aims" that it has never come near to achieving and it has also become a limited company, but these things are, again, another story. The basic weakness, however, with the B.S.F.A. has always been the small number of fans who actually helped, in one way or another, to run it. This has meant two things, one being that a large number of members have been "carried" and secondly (and far more important) that when any one person resigned from their job it left a large hole in the organisation. It is not

true to say that the B.S.F.A. has thrived on crises - but it has certainly staggered from one to another !

Whether the B.S.F.A. will recover from what can be called the 1974 Crisis is something that the next few months alone will tell. In case anyone needs reminding what happened was that two people (Treasurer and Membership Secretary) became overwhelmed by their jobs and simply ceased to do anything. Worse, in my opinion, even than this was the fact that the Committee failed in their primary task of noting this fact and DOING SOMETHING ABOUT IT. The Committee (and here I make an honourable exception of the Company Secretary, Graham Poole) failed, miserably, to ask for help from the Council - and the Council was there for that express purpose... indeed not only did they fail to ask for help, they even ignored offers of help !

Now we (speaking as a B.S.F.A. member) have a new set of brooms who face a monumental task.... that of reviving the B.S.F.A., overcoming the ill-feeling that has been engendered in the past year and (I hope) setting it on a course that's freer of hazards and dangers. I think fandom, now more than ever, needs some association/organisation/body to encourage sf readers to enter fandom. Potential fans are out there - but their task of "crashing" fandom is vast. I joined a group (Cheltenham) and when I attended my first con I already knew something like ten percent of the attendees.... today the first time attendee cannot possibly know anywhere near that percentage - and hence their initiation period is far worse than ours was. They won't pick up the meaning of queer words by talking to other people who don't understand their meaning either !

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Enough of pontificating, BLAZON 2 is, now, almost all on stencil and I refuse to go into the usual song and dance of explaining all the problems that beset it. Some things in it I'm happy about, others I'm not so happy with - but I realise I'm far too close to it to be able to get an objective judgment (see Florence, I remembered to leave the "e" out), that I rely on YOU to do - and having done so let me know.....

Room, now, for the usual commercial, if you want an issue number three then remember I want articles/art work/reviews and, even, maybe, a little encouragement..... Many thanks to all those who've helped, in so many ways, to produce BLAZON TWO.

SAMUEL DAVENPORT RUSSELL
March 1st 1919 - July 14th 1975
I knew Sam for only just over a year, but in that time I grew to like, respect and admire him. His illness was borne in his own manner, as always he was more concerned that he shouldn't be any trouble to anyone else.
Sam will be missed by many - but most of all by Florence, to her we can only offer our sincere and deep-felt sympathy.

((The following first appeared in the Journal of the Institution of Computer Sciences - it was then reprinted in Computer Digest. A third publication might appear to be over-exposing the article; I feel, however, that though some readers of Blazon might have seen it previously the majority won't have. I am, of course, very grateful to the above named publications and the author for their kind permission to reprint it.))

Science fiction and truth on a collision course?

By Christopher Hodder Williams

"... Post History (sometimes called Science Fiction) with its deliciously unlikely terrorisms, used to be enjoyably diverting; but lately it has been blending persistently into reality and we suddenly find that, when the story is too harsh, we cannot end it simply by closing the book." ROBERT M. BAER.

Science Fiction is literature at its most grandiose. An entire species is wiped out by some unexplained force (usually from Mars, a planet that comes out of it all very badly); whole worlds fall apart; galaxies disintegrate at the drop of a super-noval hat. Seldom does anything happen to less than a million people at a time; and when it happens it really happens and no nonsense. Sci-Fi is sheer fantasy and that appears to be that. Which leaves unexplained why the writers are - if only secretly - often in deadly earnest. Have they any excuse for taking themselves seriously?

The process of fiction-writing is akin to dreaming. The more closely the unconscious mind can be linked to the keyboard of the typewriter the more valid the analogy becomes. If the writer succeeds in approaching a kind of 'trance state' then he is virtually translating his dreams into the written word. The result is a subjective comment on the environment in which he lives.

Even so, he does not necessarily claim that so subjective an attitude has any bearing on the real future. His task is to entertain and he tends to leave it at that. The emphasis would be shifted, however, if it could be shown that the subconscious (or 'Unconscious') mind were an input/output system with a processor in between.

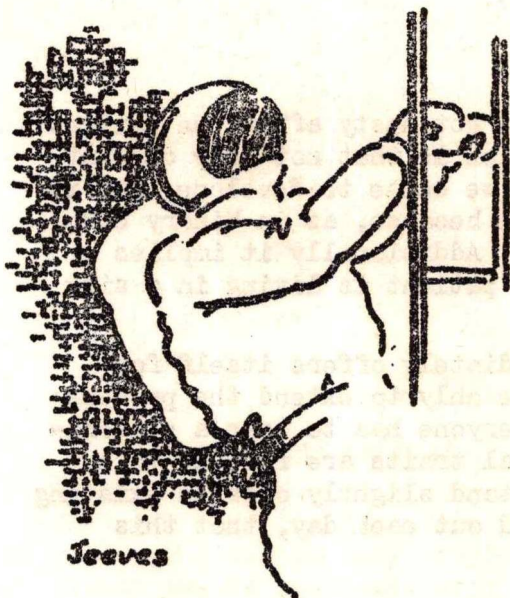
It could be argued that neither dreams nor science fiction offerings have an input outside of the writer's brain. In cases of acute isolation (whether induced experimentally or brought about by some forms of schizophrenia) the Unconscious becomes highly active, grotesque, and unmanageable. Indeed, where the sensory systems cease to convey information to the cortex the brain goes into a state of almost total fantasy.

DREAM PROCESSOR

What happens, though, when the subconscious is reacting to real events? There are many theories about dreaming; but empirically it has been shown that the Unconscious reflects, in symbolic form, attitudes arising from the dreamer's mind which stem from his response to external events. It would be interesting - if only as a source of entertainment - to ponder on the unconscious processes which sometimes result in a science fiction novel.

It is clear that in the unconscious we have a highly non-linear apparatus capable of executing the most complex transfer functions imaginable. It is a mixer, a sorter, an amplifier, a filter, disinhibitor and display unit. It calls up memories associated with the distant past, marries them with recent events where there is some degree of matching, devises a means of dealing with the resulting emotions, then passes data up to the conscious mind for Action.

In the case of the Sci-Fi writer, the action required is to assemble a whole series of subconscious ideas that seem to have a common factor. Thus sorting is carried out at both levels, no writer simply writes down an endless series of



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dreams. He must attempt to use his skills so that a coherent theme emerges. The end-product is unpardonably subjective and surely cannot make a valid contribution to serious prediction. Or can it ?

IMPOSED INFORMITY

Writers are essentially non-conformist. In a society which places ever-increasing emphasis on objective criteria, their offerings are a considerable irritant. If we chose to be pedantic we could observe that the decision to be objective is a subjective decision. But that is not the point. To deliberately cut off the subconscious from our methods of reasoning is wasting brain-space.

Worse, it brings about conformity; for any attempt on the part of a society to use only a strictly 'rational' system of reasoning means (if it succeeds) that the thought-output per person would be identical for any given input data. Or, to take a slight leap, it would be equivalent to presenting a number of different computers with the same (compatible !) program and therefore getting the same answer from each.

This statement is, of course, highly loaded; but it throws light on the fact that so many Sci-Fi writers (myself included) keep banging on about the dangers of conformity - in the end, imposed conformity. It equally shows why such writers are so hung up on the dangers of computers where they are abused.

But even where computers are not abused, we still try to copy them. Unconsciously aware that our brains are being challenged by hardware we try and think more like the 'serial processor'. This isn't as outrageous as it sounds: for one thing if you can't reason like a computer you can't write a decent program. This in turn means that you must be able to convert parallel thinking into sequential form. If you can't, you are deprived of the use of a tool which others, who may be in some sense in competition with you, can enjoy. Paradoxically, when it finally becomes possible to feed haphazard material into number crunchers, they will have reached such an advanced state of development that they will present an entirely different threat.

DEADENING DRUGS

Tremendous stresses are inevitably applied to individuals who can't - or won't - conform. Two decades ago it was widely assumed by psychiatrists in America that treatment should be on the lines of helping the patient to conform with his environment. It was not seen, at the time, that this represented an inward spiral.

Conforming to conformity is like falling in love with love: the fixed parameters get lost in the process. For those who like to talk in terms of feedback loops it is easy to see what is occurring. If you analysed the true action of many of the psychotropic drugs handed out today you would be forced to the conclusion that they are (at least) instruments whereby the stresses brought about by imposed conformity may be reduced and (at most) instruments for actually imposing conformity against the natural leanings of the patient, in order that he might survive.

The process isn't necessarily apparent if you look at it 'objectively' because if you read the blurb on the bottles it appears that the contents are anti-depressants or whatever. To confuse us the more, there are two terms in psychiatry concerning depression: indogenous and reactive. Broken down into English, the two terms really relate to what the age of the patient was when he first became exposed to the forces that depressed him.

Indogenous means -- looked at this way -- that the patient was exposed before

he (or she) had developed; reactive means that things got nasty after the patient was fully developed. The trouble with this distinction is that not only does it pre-suppose that there is a finite point beyond which we cease to develop, but it makes the task of the psychiatrist wellnigh impossible because, as in binary code, the patient has to be either one thing or the other. Additionally it implies that the patient is ill when the chances are that the patient is living in a sick society.

The reason I raise this point is because it immediately offers itself for extrapolation in the science fiction sense. You have only to extend the process by one more step and you have a situation in which everyone has to take a conforming pill so that the stresses of cutting off individual traits are reduced to a level that can be tolerated. And you have only to stand slightly outside existing society to see, from the colossal bulk of pills handed out each day, that this process is already in train.

FACTS AND TRUTH

Conspicuous is the fact that so many science fiction-writers adopt the same basic model. At its simplest, the model consists of a number of outstations (people) linked direct, not to one control centre, but two. The first control centre might be labelled 'visible controls' and the second might be labelled 'invisible controls'. This type of modelling invariable leads to a story in which an increasing number of people are 'taken over' by some external intelligence. The hero of the piece is a man who has succeeded in retaining his individualism and seeks to expose the process whereby the glassy-eyed victims of the takeover bid (they are by this time without scruple and are unanimously forced to fulfil some goal which they would not normally choose) so that humanity might once more thrive in a free environment.

There are endless variations on this theme, which is so universal to science fiction at the present time that it must have a bearing on a 'universal subconscious' common to all the writers involved. It is also shared by their public. The writers are, in fact, attempting to prise out of the readers their subconscious thoughts, so that they will react by saying to themselves "Yes, I always thought that might happen". But the level on which "they always thought it would" may well have been below the threshold of consciousness up to that point.

Perhaps the role of the Sci-Fi writer is to do just that: stimulate other people into being aware, not just of the writer's subconscious processes, but of their own. Then the task of thinking things out is charged upon those who think objectively. Each has a function that compliments the other.

At present we tend to assume that intuition is neither open to analysis nor synthesis. Until the latter no longer holds true we have a repertoire of 'data processing' unique to the human brain. A science fiction writer is one who believes that this particular tool is getting increasingly neglected. He uses it in his working life as almost the sole source of data, the cardinal input for the hidden processor up there in the cortex. He foresees in his mind's eye a nightmare world of the future in which the use of the subconscious mind becomes outlawed and strangulated because facts could eventually become more important than truth.

To the writer, the two terms are not synonymous.

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It just isn't fannish

by Eric Bentcliffe

Someone, somewhere, recently defined fannish material as being "That which appertains to fandom rather than science-fiction"; I'm not sure who it was, and even if I were, would probably not name them for I've a kind fannish heart.... but they are WRONG. In my book anyway.

The definition is incorrect in several ways, for instance, it is possible to write fannishly about sf, and it is also possible to write extremely mundanely about fans and fandom. In fact, an awful lot of what currently passes for 'fannish writing' does just that. I may even quote examples a little further on for my kind fannish heart does occasionally miss a beat or two when my spleen becomes enlarged.

Firstly though, let me hit you with a definition or two. 'Fannish writing is imaginative writing (usually humorous in nature or intent) about fans, fandom and anything appertaining thereto, and is usually at least part fiction'. That last bit is important, so is the 'imaginative'. Like good sf, good fannish writing takes a situation or event (a convention, fan-meeting, fan-party etc.) and then proceeds to extrapolate it into something entertaining - even if it means fibbing a little along the way. This also applies to fannish personalities; the creation of a fannish image on paper.... not all of us have such intrinsically interesting attitudes that they wouldn't benefit from a little embroidering. I'm not suggesting that if you are a Refuse Disposal Operative you tell all your friends you are a Crossbow Tester from Fort William, oh no, I don't want you to lie, just to be more interesting than other RDO's. Find more fannishly interesting things in the dustbins you collect than are present in the dustbins that anyone else collects ! Don't fill the pages of your fanzine with ungarnished garbage.

There's a lot of talk and discussion at the moment about the Golden Age (yclept); it isn't a term I particularly like and I didn't invent it, but I may as well use a few examples from that era to point up the thoughts I'm trying to convey, since most of the better fan writers of that time wrote material which well illustrates my definition. John Berry and Arthur Thomson created 'Goon Bleary', a fictionally fannish extension of John's own personality - John wrote the words and Atom provided further embellishment. John Owen and Stan Nuttall (both of the Liverpool Group) created Sir Wm. Makepeace Harrison and Herr von Neumann from the only slightly more prosaic realities of William Harrison (Bon Viveur) and of Dave Newman. Mal Ashworth embroidered the personality of his brother in much the same way that author G.C. Edmundson built up his Mad Friend persona in his F & SF series. Bob Shaw, James White and Walt Willis fictionalised that which needed fictionalising in the weird and oft-times wonderful world of the Wheels of IF. Vinç Clarke and Ken Bulmer, Ted Tubb and others did much the same sort of service for the London Circle of that time. They didn't just fictionalise their own characters; if the right sort of beanie-twirling, zapgun toting individual didn't exist they were quite prepared to breath life into him - but that fact is hardly relevant to this discussion.

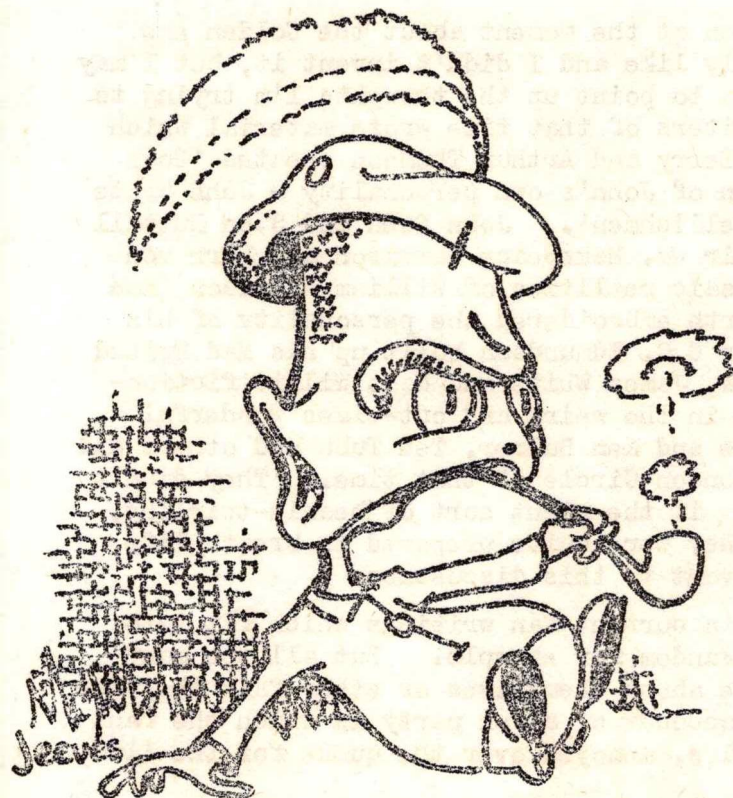
Certainly there are some attempts in current fan writings which fit into this definition of mine - Silly Animal Fandom for example. But all too many fans seem to consider that if they write about themselves or other fans they are writing fannishly. Sorry, but a bald account of a fan party in which the fans present are predictably sick-on-the-stairs, annoyed over the queue for the 'loo,

complain of having their girl-friend seduced by some (other) slob, is NOT fannish writing. A personal-zine which relates your troubles with exams, job and the general unfairness of life (to you), isn't fannish either. It may be of some slight interest to those who know (and love ?) you, but unless you make some attempt to make your writing entertaining to others who don't know (and love ?) you - it isn't achieving anything fannish, it's just mundane.

The reason why the style of fannish writing, or the actual meaning of the phrase, has changed isn't so easily discernable. One reason is that most of the contemporary UK fan-publishers and writers have a fairly short career in fandom before either going bankrupt of money, ideas or both. It seems rare for a fanzine to publish more than four or five issues. Alas, it also seems rare for those who contribute to fanzines in other ways - by producing artwork and material - to stay with the scene long before disenchantment sets in. That this is partly due to the ephemeral life of the UK fanzines of the present is no doubt true.

The sheer cost of fan-publishing is an element to be considered, but this can be a bit of a red-herring. It is expensive to produce a duplicated fanzine, the cheapest reasonably acceptable form of amateur publishing, but not relatively more expensive than it was, taking into account higher wages etc. Laziness is a factor here.... I don't intend to intimate that your average fan-editor is a literary layabout - but he does want to do things the easy way, which inevitably happens to be the more expensive way ! He and his artists want to use photo-litho and electro-stencils in preference to mastering the interesting art of getting the most out of a duper. I don't wish to get involved here in the perennial discussion that litho'd art is better than art cut on stencil - it all depends on the skill of the artist not on the medium used - in my opinion. My statement is that it is better to publish a fnz you can afford than a fnz that is going to force you into the sudden realisation that you can't continue because of its sheer ambitiousness. It's better to contribute ten or twenty legible duplicated issues which gradually get better as they attract more talent than to only produce four or five issues (which are an insufficient number to really make any impact on fandom) that bankrupt you by their (possibly) unnecessary high costs. After all it's the content of the fanzine that really matters and gets praise providing it is neat and legible.

The principle reasons, however, for the divergence in fannish meanings and fannish styles of writing is purely and simply the times in which they are produced. That 'Good Old Fannish Fandom of the Fifties' came about because of influences outside fandom - those were more optimistic times to live in than the moribund pessimistic atmosphere which assails one from almost every media of the moment. The second world-war was just over, "the free-world had triumphed", rationing was coming to an end.... just about all of the individuals who were to become fans during the so-called Golden Age had lived through a very unpleasant period of history. A much more unpleasant period than one in which man's violent nature is 'only' erupting in urban-terrorism and brush-fire wars. Back then the whole damn world was a Vietnam and



Ulster rolled into one ! The apparent arrival of peace-in-our-time engendered an atmosphere of optimism and progress. Times weren't good but they were getting better. The fans and fandom of the times reflected this optimism. They had lived through some pretty shattering experiences, many of them had been in the armed forces and those who hadn't had experienced the bombing, restrictions, being forced into uncongenial jobs important to the war-effort and other aspects endemic to those times. WW2 is hell to read about - it was even worse to live through !

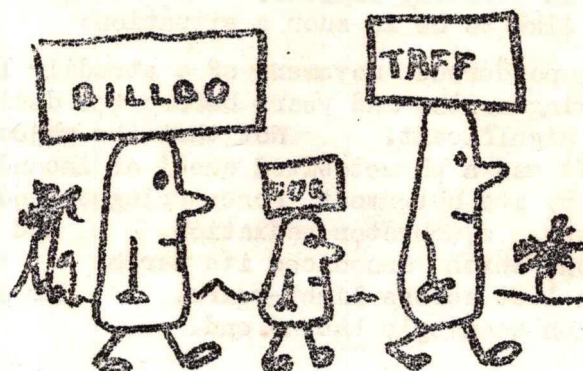
Many of the fans of that period were still in low-paid, often boring, jobs - but things were getting better. Fandom (any hobby) was something to be enjoyed, something to have fun with. So they did. The individuals themselves were possibly more mature than today's average fan - I'm not equating age with maturity (says he hurriedly before anyone leaps widdershins this way), but they had experienced more of life; they hadn't (in the main) the lengthy leisurely education of today's fan, most had been forced to leave school at 14 or 15 and go to work to support their science-fictional, fannish and other vices. They hadn't a great deal of money and they had to improvise; to use their imaginations to overcome shortage of cash and materials. Once having started using their imaginations they continued to do so in their writings and other fannish activities. Gestetner and Roneo learned that fandom was doing all sorts of things with their machines that they shouldn't have been able to !

Obviously the current wave of fandom grew up in a completely different atmosphere and a different type of fandom had to develop. I recall a few years back going to an exhibition of art produced by 11-12 year olds. The overriding impression gained from it was one of imminent doom... atomic explosions were prominently featured, the colours used were sonorous and gloomy. Bad news is 'good news' and it was (and is) obvious that the mass media (never before such an integral part of life) was having a considerable effect on the minds of that and contingent age-groups. It still is. Never before has mankind been subjected to such a constant barrage of pessimistic forecasts of the future in such large doses so effectively presented. If armageddon isn't going to be today it will be tomorrow ! Any wonder that there's a lack of wit and humour in current fan writings ? It takes one hell of an acute sense of humour to stay cheerful in the face of such over-accentuated mentions of menace.

Possibly the cure for fandom's ills (mainly UK fandom's - there has been a greater continuity of fannishness in the States; possibly due to a more isolationist mass media ?), is to switch off the tv, burn all papers before reading (OK, if you're an ecologist pulp them) and to look around a little at some of the good things inherent in being alive in the Seventies. There are some, despite the prophets of doom.... no other era has had so many opportunities open for so many of its people - and, indeed, this is probably obversely reflected by The Theme of Today: PROTEST ! That's a thing you can't have from so many throats unless they have somewhere comfortable to shout from in freedom. Which may be cynical, but also happens to be true.

It Just Isn't Fannish, this article. And it doesn't intend to intimate that fandom then was better than fandom now, just that it was more fun... and to define certain of the reasons why

NB Some of the words used in the latter part of this article were used in more or less the same order in a loc to LURK, however since in my copy (at least) they were illegible you'll excuse the self-plagiarism I trust.



((The following article was, originally, a talk given to the Reading Science Fiction Club - it is perhaps unfortunate that the discussion which took place after the presentation cannot be included here)).

Poul Anderson

an appreciation

by Mike Healy

Poul Anderson was born on the 25th November, 1926 in Pennsylvania, America, of Scandinavian origin, hence the spelling of his first name. He commenced writing SF in 1944 while studying for a degree in Physics, which he gained in 1948; however, by then he was doing so well at writing, and has done so ever since, that he has never used his degree as such. He has written approximately 30 books and nearly 300 short stories, the quality of these stories has remained constant and not steadily deteriorated as has the output of some long standing authors. He has written SF, fantasy and crime novels and has won several Hugo and Nebula awards.

The themes of his stories are usually varied, ranging from time travel (Guardians of Time, The Man who came Early, There Shall be Time) to space adventure (Tau Zero, The Star Fox, The Byworlder) to, as I have mentioned, fantasy (Three Hearts and Three Lions, Operation Chaos, Hrolf Kraki's Saga). He has also mapped out a possible future history, starting with today's space shots, continuing to star travel with trade empires being the order and law of the day. These empires, however, start to disintegrate under their own impetus - but Earth forms an empire to save the remains. Like most empires it has the seeds of its collapse already within itself and it goes down before the Aliens which surround it, this leaves the far flung colonies to find their own destinies. Nicholas van Rijn, the trader emperor, and Dominic Flandry, the Terran Intelligence Officer, are two of Poul Anderson's creations within this history.

No matter what Poul Anderson writes about he always produces a good story with considerable style and a sound basis in science and logic. One of his award winning stories Tau Zero is a prime example of this. One of the first star ships, while accelerating, discovers a cloud of dust in its path. Whereas another author would have had the ship do a miraculous manoeuvre to avoid the cloud Poul Anderson shows that this is impossible, at least according to the laws of physics as we know them, and the ship ploughs into the cloud. It is not disabled but the crew are unable to de-accelerate using their engines. They attempt to stop the ship by passing through the clouds of hydrogen pervading the universe but to no avail. Hydrogen has become scarce as the universe grows old outside their ship due to the increased time rate of the universe compared with their decreased rate. When the universe finally collapses in upon itself, into a primeval atom, they manage to ride the storm of re-creation to find a new world and start life afresh. This story covers an immense span of time and space, his characters are true to life - eternally optimistic and pessimistic as events tell on them - and his science, although based on the 'big bang' theory which we, at this moment, are unable to confirm or deny, is strictly logical. He also gives the feeling of knowing what it would feel like to be in such a situation:

" The stars saw the ponderous movement of a steadily larger and more flattened mass, taking months and years before the deviation from its original track was significant. Not that the object whereon they shone was slow. It was a planet-sized shell of incandescence, where atoms were seized by its outermost force-fringes and excited into thermal, fluorescent, synchrotron radiation. And it came barely behind the wave front which announced its march. But the ship's luminosity was soon lost across light-years. Her passage crawled through abysses which seemingly had no end.

In her own time, the story was another. She moved in a universe increasingly foreign - more rapidly aging, more massive, more compressed. Thus the rate at which she could gulp down hydrogen, burn part of it to energy and hurl the rest off in a million-kilometer jet flame... that rate kept waxing for her. Each minute, as counted by her clock, took a larger fraction off her tau than the last minute had done.

Inboard nothing changed. Air and metal still carried the pulse of acceleration, whose net internal drag still stood at an even one gravity. The interior power plant continued to give light, electricity, equable temperatures. The biosystems and organocycles reclaimed oxygen and water, processed waste, manufactured food, supported life. Entropy increased. People grew older at the ancient rate of sixty seconds per minute, sixty minutes per hour.

Yet those hours were always less related to the hours and years which passed outside. Loneliness closed on the ship like fingers."

Other examples of the variety in his writing comes in the time travel stories. His protagonists range from the distant past to the far future and you are left with the feeling that this is how it may have been, or will be. Humans are still human and will fight and die for what they believe is right. An example of this is the time war being fought in The Corridors of Time; both sides have their own philosophies which have their merits and faults but the view, from the future of the era in which the war is fought, is that it is the nadir of civilization. Further, Poul Anderson does not put forward the comfortable view that one of today's men, transported back to the past, would have re-invented the gun, the car and other amenities of today. His theory is that they would have lived on others sympathy until finally running afoul of the customs of the time. The following shows the despair and futility which would be involved:

" Gerald said something about making a gun like his own, but bigger, a cannon he called it, which could sink ships and scatter hosts. He would need the help of smiths, and also various stuffs. Charcoal was easy, and sulfur could be found by the volcanoes, I suppose, but what is this saltpeter ?

Too, being wary by now, I questioned him closely as to how he would make such a thing. Did he know just how to mix the powder ? No, he admitted. What size must the gun be ? When he told me - at least as long as a man - I laughed and asked him how a piece that size could be cast or bored, supposing we could scrape together so much iron. This he did not know either.

'You haven't the tools to make the tools to make the tools,' he said. I don't understand what he meant by that. 'God help me, I can't run through a thousand years of history by myself.'"

In stories of space his human protagonists are naturally understandable, moreover the aliens are also believable, but they still retain their hint of 'difference'. This is shown by the noga, krippo and nika which, combined, form the intelligent inhabitants of the planet 'Dido'. The noga is a form of rhinoceros, the krippo a bird and the nika a chimpanzee - these terms are for the Terran animals resembling these creatures. When all three are joined, the krippo and the nika by 'tongues' into the noga, full intelligence is attained. The possibilities of this are, of course, enormous - different combinations bringing different characteristics into play. This combination, while being totally alien, is also human, as shown by this extract:

" I/we remember.

The Feet is old now, slow to travel, aching in flesh when the mists creep around a longhouse that stands at the bottom of a winter night.

The Wings that was of Many Thoughts is blind, and sits alone in his head save when a young one comes to learn. The Wings that was of Cave Discoverer and Woe is today in another of Thunderstone. The Hands of Many Thoughts and Cave Discoverer has long left his bones in the western mountains, whereto the Hands that was of Woe has long returned. Yet the memory lives. Learn young Hands of those who made oneness before i/we came to being.

It is more than the stuff of song, dance, and rite. No longer may We of this communion feel that Our narrow lands are the whole of the world. Beyond jungle and mountains is the sea; beyond heaven are those stars that Cave Discoverer dreamed of and Woe beheld. And there are the strangers with single bodies, they who visit Us rarely for trade and talk, but of whom We hear ever oftener as We in Our new search for enlightenment explore further among foreign communions. Their goods and their doings will touch Us more and more as the years pass, and will also make changes elsewhere than in Thunderstone, which changes will cause time to stream back across Us in different currents from that steadiness which i/we hitherto found easiest to imagine.

Beyond this and greater: How shall We achieve oneness with the whole world unless We understand it ?

Therefore lie down at ease, young Hands, old Feet and Wings. Let wind, river, light, and time flow through. Be at rest, whole, in my /yourself, so gaining the strength that comes from peace, the strength to remember and to seek wisdom.

Be not afraid of the strangers with single bodies. Terrible are their powers, but these We can someday learn to wield like them if we choose. Rather pity that race, who are not beasts but can think, and thus know that they will never know oneness."

Poul Anderson has also used less peculiar forms of creatures for his aliens - Chee Lan, a cat type alien, from his trader team stories and, from the same series, the huge 'dragon' Adzel. When I first read these stories I automatically assumed that a dragon would be ferocious, but Adzel is peaceful and prone to meditation of the higher aspects of life. This, of course, shows Poul Anderson's logic - if you're the biggest creature on your planet what need do you have of fear and its attendant aspects of hate and anger. There is also the reptilian type bird from The People of the Sky. An article concerning the creation of this particular type of alien appeared in Vector 64; this article is interesting as it shows the thought that goes into writing a book, not only by Poul Anderson but by many other writers too. Poul Anderson is probably, however, the only author to make teddy bears into aliens that are believable and funny - he does it in Earthmen's Burden very successfully.

His 'villains' are never truly 'black' - they sincerely believe in their actions and the philosophies that shape those actions. Comedy has only played a small part in Poul Anderson's work, it is generally drama and it stands out clearly from his work that there are no miracle cures for the problems posed. As James Blish states in his criticism of Poul Anderson's work "He knows that the entropy gradient goes inexorably in only one direction." An example of this is Sister Planet; humanity is preparing to exploit the Venusians, a peaceful amphibious race with no malice. The hero knows that they will become either extinct or, like the American Indians, second rate citizens living on reservations - unless they learn suspicion. To achieve this the hero bombs their temple and by his action creates a hell for himself which finally destroys him.

I consider Poul Anderson's style of writing very concise; consider the space battle fought in After Doomsday. It is described in a poem which, in the

story, was to have been used as a signal for other Terrans throughout the known universe. Whereas other authors would have probably described the entire battle and the creation of the poem Poul Anderson describes both in eight pages, at the same time making it very readable, no mean feat. Another example of this conciseness is found in The Dancer from Atlantis; a battle is raging, everything seems lost but rescue is achieved in a mere seven words. A brief outline of how is fleshed in later and even this is done in only one paragraph. This is a method I find particularly effective as the denouement is so sudden. His descriptive powers are excellent, the phrase "He drank smoke" is an example of this - it is an alien describing a man smoking. One of the criticisms levelled at Poul Anderson is that he makes his characters lecture each other. I, personally, have not noticed this occurring and even if it was so I would state that in an SF novel, due to the fact that background material needs to be filled in, this is a necessary style of writing which, if done well, does not seem intrusive.

I would, therefore, say that Poul Anderson is a skilled craftsman of his art, writing stories that will survive and may provide a basis for the future legends of space. His tall castles peopled by aliens who are all too human, his sleek spaceships ranging the universe in search of new worlds. The Terrans who love, hate, fight, die. These, then, become symbols of what mankind is capable - compassion, understanding and co-operation with those different from us; to try, at least, to make better worlds for all to live in.



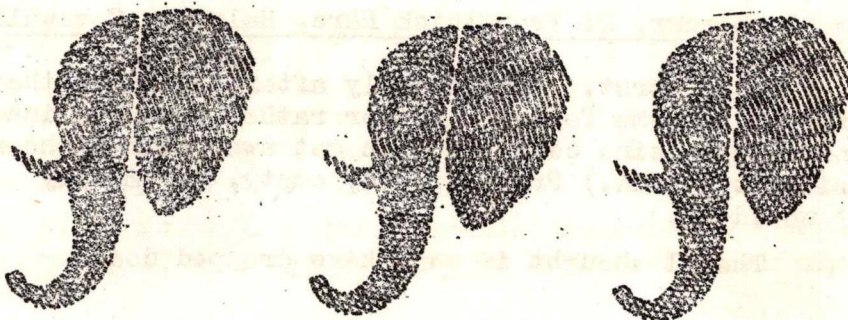
Whilst the non-intellectuals (?) are looking over there on the left here's something to think about:

Science Fiction, or rather its fans (and authors), frequently boast of the predictions made "before anyone else realised it was going to happen". Recently, in fact, I saw something to the effect that the environment/ecology trouble and energy crisis had been written about (in sf) in the late forties and in the fifties. The two statements below were made within a week of one another..... have a guess at the year.

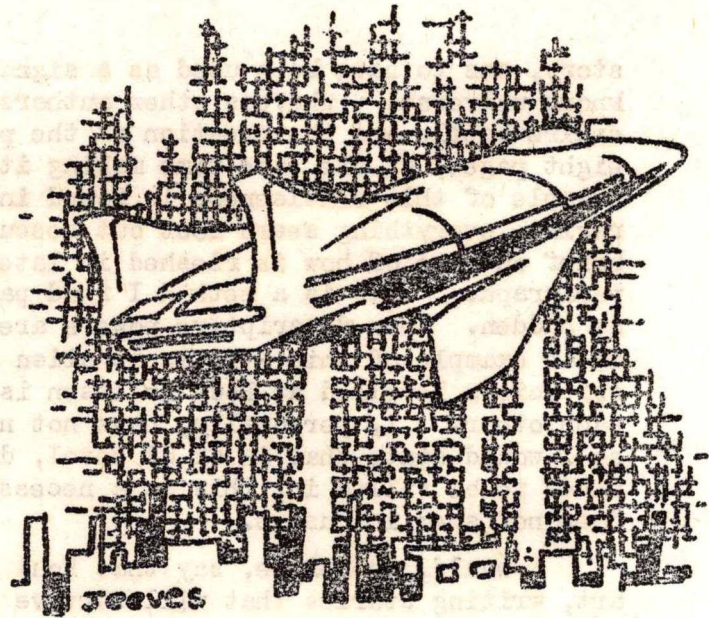
"While we blame our forefathers for wasting our coal resources, our own generation was to blame for the wastage of oil."

"The warning is that the increase in population poses the most serious problem of the 20th Century."

Who said these statements (I'm not guaranteeing the actual words) and when is revealed on page 26.....



locutory



((As Principal Perpetrator of BLAZON ONE it is only fair, and possibly right, that I, Eric Bentcliffe, punster of this parish field the brickbats, and arrange the Bouquet received. Future letter-columns will, of course, be conducted by that Autocthone of the St. Fantony Archives, yer veritable Editor, Keith Freeman.))



Dave Rowe, 8 Park Drive, Wickford, Essex.

The first thing that hit me, is the size of the thing, its so unwieldy. Often I picked it up, and the sheer ungainliness of the thing caused me to put it down again without reading it. ((Okay, so next issue we'll run a course on body-building. And have you tried it as a Ghoddminton Bat ?)) This is a great shame because the articles are generally above par, or is it they're average and we've had a bad season for fnz ? No, damn it, I quite enjoyed Blazon, thank you Eric, even tho' it seemed at least two years too late...but, then again, wots that with fnz these days ?

Ramsey Campbell may have a legitimate point about fans complaining that SF isn't taken seriously and then acting like kids at cons, but, a Con is a Convention not a Conference, for most people its the only one or two times a year they meet, so what's wrong with letting your hair down ? Nowadays, con-committees separate the room-parties from the non-party goers rooms, ((SHAME!!)) so the case of the girl who couldn't sleep has become irradiated. ((You sure that's the word you were thinking of, Dave. Y'mean she couldn't sleep because the radiant-glow from Norman Shorrock and assembled cohorts of LiG made her room too bright!)) As for criticising the fen for heckling "Demon with the Glass Hand".....does Ramsey really expect us to revere such standard U.S. tv Kitsch!?! Did the audience at the same con heakl the film "Charley" ? No, they did not, because it was a powerful and well made film, which is a damn rarity in SF.

Archie Mercer, 21 Trenethick Parc, Helston, Cornwall.

Frankly, I had feared the worst. Particularly after I'd heard that BLAZON was to be printed in some form or another rather than duplicated. (To my mind, only one fanzine could and can get away with litho-style production, and that's AMRA.) Pretentiously empty, or emptily pretentious, I thought it would be.

Then I thought it must have dropped dead.

Finally, it happened. The printing is a waste of money - the text comes out all right, but the detailed illos - the one thing that might have justified printing the thing - are mostly very much messier-looking than they ought to be. Which is a shame, because I doubt if Jim Cawthorn could draw something messy-looking if he tried. Only the Cover for some reason and the line-drawings, besides the photo-page, have come through OK.

The size, too, is all wrong. It might have been justified had the larger illos filled their pages - but they don't. Perhaps the production team didn't have access to a more powerful stapler - because smaller pages would have meant more of them of course. But this size is extremely awkward to hold, unless one is in the habit of reading while sitting at an otherwise empty table - which I am not! ((Valid criticism, Archie, and whilst I don't intend to go over the sequence of events and non-events which did, eventually, produce BLAZON ONE; I will just explain the size-guise. Eddie Jones, before having to give up work on the 'zine beautifully laid out something like a third of the magazine in this size; his intent was that it would be photographically reduced. The cost of this process would have been such that Harry and myself decided to complete the mag same-size; the additional paper required being far cheaper than that process. The only other course open being that of scrapping Eddie's work and starting from scratch....the work was too good to be scrapped, and even more delay would have resulted!))

The above accumulated deficiencies aside, BLAZON 1 is an excellent fanzine that deserved a much better debut. I realise that since I did not help in any way - even by offering material - I am no doubt partly responsible. Still, I must take BLAZON as I find it - and the size it is, it's hard to lose it! ((And if you don't find it suitable for a Ghoodminton Bat; put legs on it and use it as a bedside-table!))

Ken Bulmer's piece makes excellent reading, except that one keeps wondering - yes, very good indeed, but what has he actually said? By the end of the (most enjoyable) article I came to the conclusion that he must have been trying to excuse himself from writing fiction of the sword-and-sorcery genre - which surely needs no excuse! Still, it made a readable article. ((Well, Ken did once patent STEAM, y' recall.)) I don't think I've ever seen a W.C. Fields film - to me, W.C. Fields is either Lincoln's Inn Fields, London W.C., or otherwise the place where one can find a W.C. Handy. ((You got the Blues, Archie?)) So I'll pass on to Doc' Weir. Uncommentable - I took it all in, but am incapable of comment since all I know about it is there in Doc's article.

Bob Shaw's conrep was too brief (most conreps seem to be, of course) but probably the best thing in the issue, run hard up by Larry Niven's impromptu speech. Ramsey Campbell's and Ron Bennett's contributions require simultaneous ((Nice word, that!)) consideration. If Ron was to see the film he describes in Ramsey's presence, Ramsey would doubtless consider that Ron was reacting offensively. I'm not a film-fan by any stretch of the imagination - in the four years I've lived in Cornwall I've seen precisely one film (Waterloo). ((So that's why you have this thing about W.C. Fields!)) So having pointed out the discrepant viewpoints, I'll leave it there.

Ted Tubb is also highly readable and very much to the point. The things I haven't mentioned are not really unmentionable - in fact they may be considered as having been enjoyed, though to a somewhat lesser extent.

Terry Jeeves, 230 Bannerdale Rd, Sheffield.

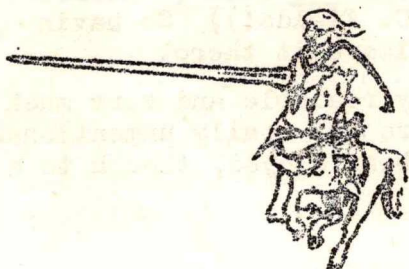
Possibly because of the pre-publicity of Blazon, and the grandiose proposals explained to us by a certain character, I must confess that the reality was a disappointment. NOT because of any innate fault in the material...but the presentation put me off. Had I not been led to expect a rival to the pro-mags, I might not have felt this way, so my comments are probably too subjective to be of real value. Nevertheless, for what they are worth, here goes. Size, an obese A4, or foolscap with middle-age spread..either way, it makes the thing too hefty and floppy ((Well, you do have to soak well in starch before you have your ultimate Ghoodminton Bat!)) - I didn't like the king-size Analog's, S-F Plus and likewise either - a smaller page size would have made for a thicker and less floppy zine. And, as a bonus, would have given a better layout to many of the pages.

Cover art...the illo I liked, the adoration I didn't. Interior art was in almost every case (with the exception of the heading to Ted Tubb's piece) very good...but though I liked Frost's inside-the-bacover swordsman, I chuckled against the lack of forethought which supplies us with a supply of left-handed swordsman far in excess of the number statistics lead us to expect. ((Yes, Terry...but he was a Black Knight, a sinister-blackknight...he'd have to be left-handed!))

Bulmer's article I liked, and no doubt many will find meat for much criticism and argument therein...which is all to the good. Warner on Fields...a good case, but I'm not convinced...fantasy maybe; but not real s-f. Weir and the following Harrison saga were both nicely contrasting pieces, and I thoroughly enjoyed Bob Shaw's Chester piece. On the other hand, Ramsey Campbell got me a bit steamed up. It takes all sorts to make a con...serious and silly...good-mannered and bad...and all stations inbetween. I tend to agree with him that it is bad manners (and bad chairing) to allow natterboxes to rattle on during panels, when other rooms are available for rapping. I'm 80% with him here....but I must make one little point. If said panel(s) had more interest to those present, then the talking would have died very quickly.

Smith's book reviews...although he has opinions which differ from my own, I liked. Reason, he tells you what you might be buying instead of treating you to a philosophical essay on some esoteric item before getting down to the nitty gritty. When I want an essay, I'll look for one, but when I want a book review, then I expect to find one....and KKS supplies that want. ((From the depths of his Arisian-souled boots, Kimball Kinnison Smith thanks yer!))

I like the idea of a 'Most Enjoyable Story' listing, but don't enclose a proper list since I don't know if you now intend to follow up this idea. If you do, Clarke's "Nine Billion Names of God", and "Rescue Party", Herbert's "Under Pressure, and "Hobbyist" by Eric Frank Russell are favorites of mine. ((Several people were kind enough to send along a listing of their 'Most Enjoyed' s-f, but not enough to make any sort of an article, or feature, out of. If enough people care to send a listing with their comments on this issue to Keith...well, its possible an interesting feature may result.))



Vera Johnson, 9 Trinity Crescent, London. SW17.

Congratulations on Volume One, Number One of BLAZON. It is a handsome publication with excellent artwork and titles and photos. "The Boke Of Fantagruellu" was beautifully presented. I also enjoyed Harry Warner's article on W.C. Fields and Doc' Weir's article on Karel Capek. Bob Shaw's report on Chester was highly amusing, as was Ron Bennett's review of The Phantom Of The Opera. Ted Tubb's article raised some interesting questions.

In fact, the only article with which I could find fault was "The Little Green Men of Easter" by Ramsey Campbell, which was written in such a peevish, whining tone that my automatic reaction was to say, "Rubbish!" However, he did have at least one good point. When a programme is being presented at a con, the audience should be quiet and attentive. Personally, I think it is the responsibility of the con organizers to ensure that this is so. They can bluntly tell people to shut up or ask them to go outside if they want to carry on a conversation. ((There's a dilemma here due to the fact that few people in and around S-F are good public speakers capable of holding an audience. And with a few notable exceptions its probably also true to say that those who have been trained in public-speaking have little worth saying; those who haven't, rarely manage to put their thoughts across. Its an 'insoluble willemma'.))

All in all, Blazon is a noble effort.....but what you did to the Doc' Weir article. The left-hand column of page 19 is continued at the top of the left-hand column on page 20 and continues (I think, since there were no signposts) as far as " we learn how the whole thing started." Then you have to turn to the right-hand column on page 19, starting at the top and continue to the bottom.((Well, you must admit that is logical!)) Then you return to the left-hand column on page 20, starting at the third paragraph, and from that point you can (thankfully) carry on to the end. I wonder how many of your readers were so confused that they gave up part-way through the article ? ((I don't know, Vera, this was just one of the items I never got to see after it had been pasted-up. The few articles I did manage to proof-read never got corrected, either. Which is one of the reasons I've gone back to a duplicated fnz; and possibly why BLAZON is now duplicated.))

Arnold C. Akien, 18 Raleigh Rd, Sunderland.

I bought the first issue of Blazon at the Tynecon book-room and was amazed by its quality and its professional appearance. Tynecon was my first convention, and the first time I saw fanzines. Since I was assured by people who seemed to know what they were talking about, that most fanzines were hammered out on old Banda machines (at best) and had lifetimes only slightly longer than mayflies, Blazon came as a welcome surprise.

By the way, might I suggest a section on s-f art, criticism and discussion ? I much enjoyed the artwork in BLAZON, and though I am unqualified to comment, I'm sure there must be many people like me who would like to know more about the s-f artworld. ((The art of s-f art is to depict that which is not known....to boldly go where no paint-brush and palette has been before! And no-one's unqualified to comment, because no-one's been there yet!))

Paul A. Ryan, 29 Morrith Ave, Halton, Yorks.

As a more or less new member of Fandom, I must congratulate you on your magazine BLAZON. I was at Tynecon '74 and happened to pick up the magazine while it was still hot. I was moved by your editorial about 'enjoyable s-f writing'. So moved in fact, it made me dig up some of my old writings and ideas, and

Harry Warner, 423 Summit Ave, Hagerstown, 21740, USA

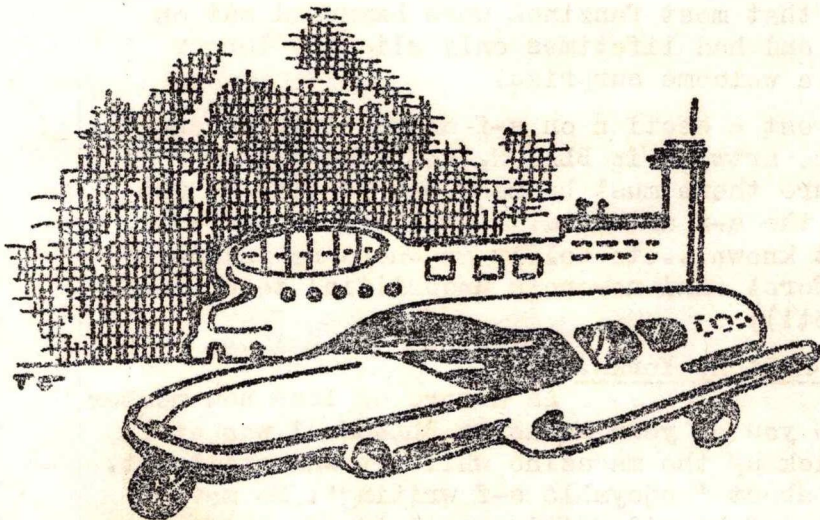
The first issue of BLAZON is overwhelming in both dimensions and the lineup of material you found for it. I don't remember any other fanzine in history utilizing this format in any substantial number of pages. If you can retain it, you should be able to do all sorts of spectacular things in art, which isn't to say that you haven't done impressive things with the illos for the first issue.

I'm never comfortable responding to polls which seek the best sf stories, the most enjoyable sf stories, or such things. There are vast quantities of stories which appealed too much for me to feel up to the task of sorting them out. But I understand what you're trying to do with this particular poll. The authors whose names come to mind most readily are Weinbaum, Kuttner, Simak, Fredric Brown, Clarke, Bradbury, E.E. Smith, Wells, Cordwainer Smith and Verne. I'm sure I could think of ten others whose fiction I enjoy just as much, if I sat another ten minutes racking memory. There aren't many moderns among them and this seems to me the ominous thing about the current status of sf creativity. Many of today's authors are superior as literary talents and much of what they write is more relevant to contemporary problems than those older authors. But what happens if all these college and high school courses in sf or the increasing cost of paper should curtail the recent boom in sf? Will all these deadly serious writers with fiction that must be studied before its meaning can be grasped be able to retain the general readership, now that the entertaining-type writers are mostly concentrating on juvenile-slanted sf?

Ken Bulmer pushed one of my buttons that is painted vivid red and encircled by don't touch instructions. There have been so many fanzine articles lately on the topic of defining sf or fantasy, and each one makes me squirm restlessly because there's never going to be a definition that satisfies everyone, and even if such an impossibility were accomplished, it would be useless because there would still be arguments over whether a given story falls within the definition. Besides, Ken commits the currently popular heresy of getting backward the relation between sf and mundane fiction. I can't remember who started it by claiming that all fiction is sf because it deals with imaginary events, but Ken varies it by calling Middlemarch a fantasy. Of course it isn't: all sf is fiction, and any attempt to reverse the statement is merely begging the question, since fiction is, by general agreement, lies and sf is just lies of whopping proportions.

I liked immensely the Doc Weir article. Its author is probably the least appreciated of all fans nowadays, presumably because he was active for only a short time and never became personally known to many fans in North America. It's too bad he couldn't have been around a few more years. Such longevity as a fanzine writer might have been all that would have been needed to establish a tradition of this sort of good writing on serious topics, free from the academic

formalities and the literary preciousness that have sprung up in sercon fanzines. I suppose the neglect of Capek is due in large part to the extreme difficulty of his native language. It's very difficult to learn. A year or two of high school French or German will often give an individual the ability to read and even speak fairly well French or German later in life, but it takes much harder study to get any



useful acquaintance with Czech. The opera mentioned in connection with The Makropoulis Affair was composed by Janacek and it was available in the United States for a while on lp records; the set may still be offered in Europe.

The Return of the Master was almost as marvelous as my memories of Harrisoniana from the past. Nothing new could quite reach the quality that I seem to remember, because the older epics in the series have been gilded and roseated and variegated by memory until they're even more colourful and vivid than they were in reality. I do seem to detect a slight difference in style, away from the Edwardian influences that once permeated the narratives, but this too may be imaginary on my part.

I've never been satisfied with evolution's explanation of the development of man which Larry Niven talked about. Too many things remain unexplained by natural selection and natural mutation. But if I write any more on the topic I'll start to sound either doddering or mystical and I don't really feel in either condition when I think about the other possible explanations.

Since I've never been to a British Con and I don't go to all the worldcons I shouldn't say much about Ramsey Campbell's article. But I had two main reactions to it. One involved his silence on the topic of ill-mannered pros. Pros are few numerically and more mature on the average in age than fans, and yet I've heard at least as many horror stories about the behaviour of individual pros at cons as about individual fans. The other thought was the failure of the article to admit that most abjectional things about sf cons are manifestations of the convention syndrome. My job used to force me to attend eight or ten conventions in all imaginable fields each year, and almost all of them were much worse than sf cons in the respects Ramsey Campbell complains about; in fact I sometimes think those newspaper assignments are the main reason I don't go to more fan gatherings, because the former created an engram which colours my impression of the latter. It's quite possible to contrive ways to enjoy oneself at sf cons despite the annoying aspects. The noise problem in the wee hours for those who want to sleep, for instance. There are objects known as sleeping pills. If the individual has ethical objections to taking them, he can buy earplugs which are cheap, safe and effective. If he fears he won't be able to hear a fire alarm while his ears are plugged he can spend a little more on a machine marketed in the United States as "Sleep-Mate", which produces a steady sound something like an air conditioner's noise, and masks all but the loudest noises in the environment. Much the same effect can be obtained by tuning an FM radio to a spot where there's no station and turning up that inter-station sound as much as desirable.

As I said, the art is splendid, particularly the covers. One of my chronic complaints has been the small dimensions to which so much fanzine art is drawn, and I'm naturally delighted to see fillos in BLAZON almost the size of full-page illos in other fanzines.

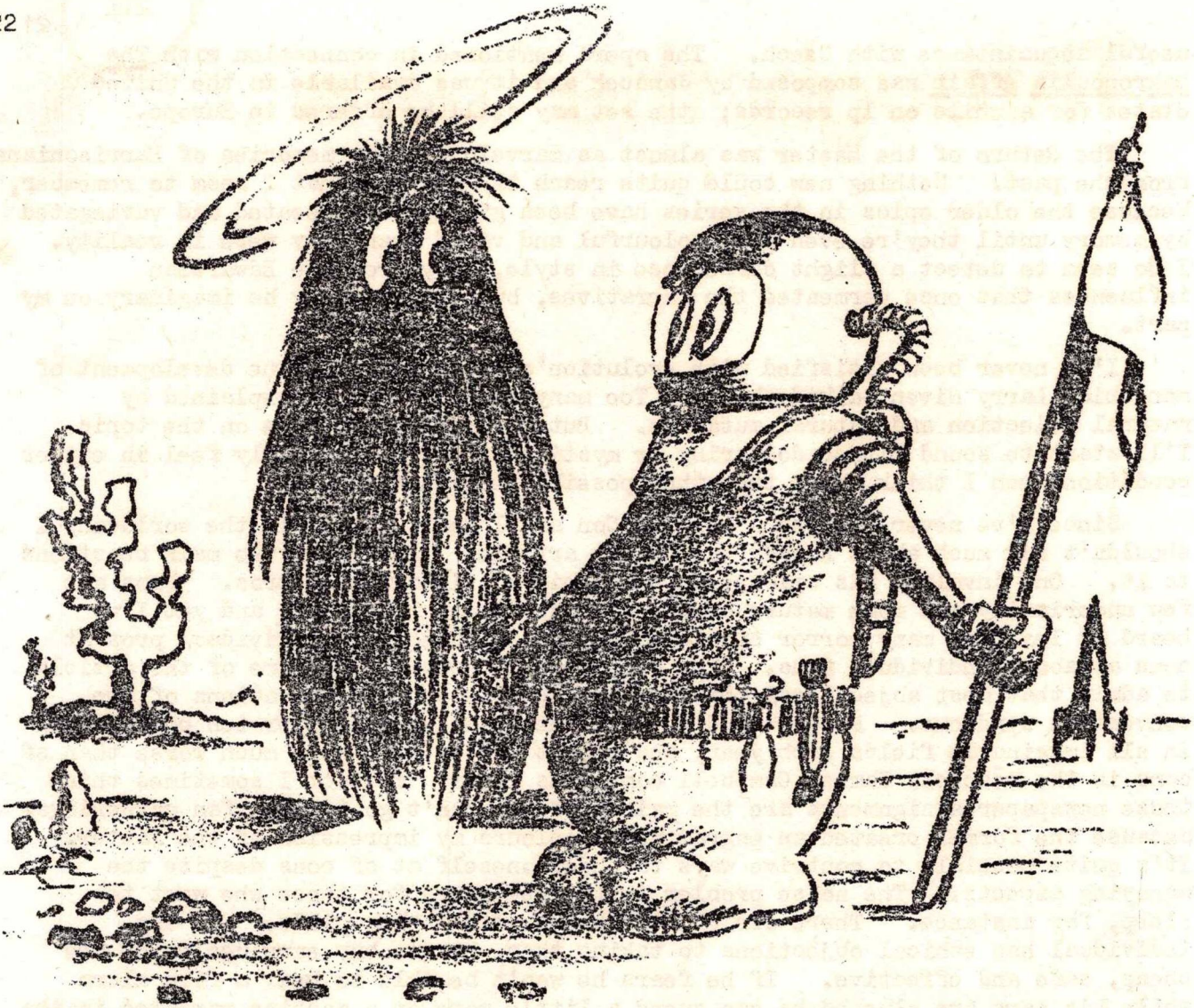
Jostein Saakvitne, Ekornrudv.27b, 1410 Kolbotn, Norway

I would like to know if you are capable of and willing to give my address to some English sf-fans who are interested in letter-exchange with me. I am publishing a sf fanzine (DRIFTGLASS) and would also like to write to new English friends, perhaps especially in the London area.

EEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEE

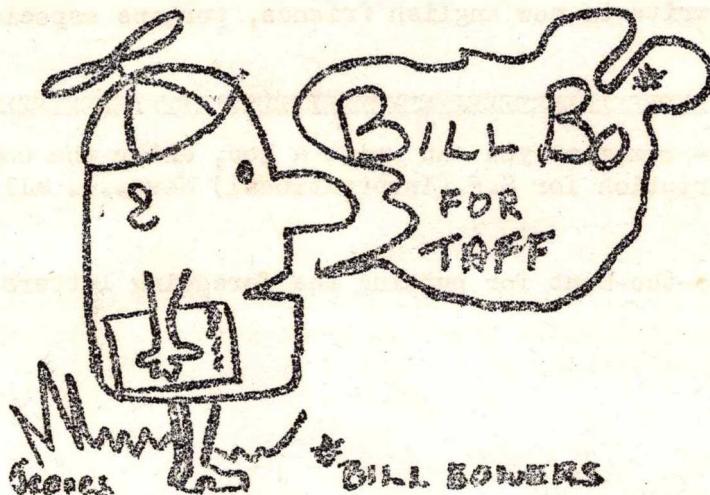
All for this time - remember you can write a loc, enter the competition (see over) and enter a subscription for S.F.(International) News.... all for one stamp !

Many thanks to Eric-the-Bent for putting the foregoing letters on to stencil.



"Welcome
to
Saturn."

So, you've got this far into the issue and, I hope, you've enjoyed it. Now I'd like a little entertainment..... so get on your thinking caps and send me your captions for the above cartoon (of course, at the same time you could send a loc ?). There are no prizes - except the doubtful honour of having your name appear in the next issue of BLAZON if I like your caption! I must admit I hadn't realised that Terry had taken up croquet, I thought it was the other half of the dynamic duo, Eric Bentcliffe (ye ed of BLAZON 1) who (playing strictly according to the LiG rules) might well end up in the above predicament.....



Through the Lens

THE PARASAURIANS Robert Wells Sidgwick & Jackson £2.40 190pp

Conflict between men and prehistoric monsters has fascinated writers of sf since the days of Conan Doyle's Lost World. Most recently, Robert Silverberg has explored the theme of men hunting recreations of extinct creatures, in Born with the Dead (F & SF, April 74), and Michael Crichton has used the idea of men fighting robots, in his film Westworld. Although The Parasaurians is only published in Britain this year, its American publication (1969) precedes both Silverberg's and Crichton's investigations of this general theme.

The hero of the novel, Ross Fletcher, a jaded hunter, is invited to take part in the ultimate hunt, of robot dinosaurs. In the true style of sf adventure heroes, he is young - or, to be more accurate, recently rejuvenated - free of emotional or other commitments, and rich. Thus he is easily able to afford the 1 million (dollars ?) required for the hunt. His companions on the hunt, like himself, are characters constructed mainly of cardboard. While Fletcher is strong, brave and a good man with guns - of which he has an inordinate number - the girl with whom he soon becomes involved on the hunt, photographer Kit Namura, is the opposite - weak, guaranteed to break down under the least strain and become hysterical when in danger, and wouldn't know one end of a shooting iron from the other. She is, of course, beautiful, combining the best of East and West in her appearance, and after a decent period of playing hard to get, she leaps into bed - well, under a blanket - with our hero. The other hunter in the party is Dr. Nils O. Bodee, an eccentric who in the best tradition of sf academics mumbles to himself, sucks an empty pipe, and makes tactless jokes about Fletcher and Namura. The leader of the party is Sternius, who is strong, bad-tempered and so secretive that he is obviously up to no good. It is with Sternius that Robert Wells's characterisation reaches the point of inducing incredulity in the reader, for three quarters of the way through the book it is revealed that Sternius is really a woman. How she is supposed to have concealed her sex during eight years of employment with the hunt organisation, Megahunt, whilst she has presumably been in close contact with numerous groups of hunters - I mean, wouldn't somebody notice when she went to take a leak with the rest of the men? - is never explained. Neither does Wells bother to explain how she manages to have a beard, to which at least three references are made. But the most ridiculous thing about this sex change is that it is so totally unnecessary. I could see no reason why Sternius couldn't really have been a man. I remain completely baffled as to why Robert Wells chose to introduce this incredible element into his plot.

These criticisms apart - and they are serious ones - The Parasaurians is a reasonable adventure story, even if it moves a little slowly in the middle, and lays the clues to its central mystery with too heavy a hand, so that the perceptive reader has guessed the denouement long before it occurs. Two other factors militate against one's enjoyment of it on this adventure level. One is the fact that the author cannot resist recourse to the Frankenstein syndrome - the monster which Sternius has created turns on her and destroys her. The other is the very strained attempts to introduce some "significance" into the novel by the use of very obvious symbolism, which simply doesn't work.

In sum, then, Robert Wells has some good ideas - particularly the recreation of dinosaurs for hunting - but works them out inadequately. Ultimately he is badly let down by his characterisation.

(Chris Fowler)

((To help, I hope, get another slant on this book I'm reprinting here a review from ERG 48, with Terry's kind permission. He does point out that the heading in ERG is "Recent Reading" rather than "Reviews".....))

THE PARASOURIANS Robert Wells Sidgwick & Jackson £2.40

Close your eyes until you get past the awful dust-jacket on this one ... you'll be glad you did.

22nd Century is the scene where Ross Fletcher (a first time rejuvenee) is approached secretly by Megahunt. For a cool million, they will transport him to their secret island where he can experience the thrills of hunting their solar-powered robot dinosaurs. Ross accepts, but once on the safari things get complicated. For companions, he has multi-rejuvenee, pipe-chewing crack-shot Bodee. Megahunt have also tacked a beautiful photographer on to the party to get action films. The guide, Sternius, is sinister, enigmatic, and obviously has a private scheme in operation. The action is continuous and at all times fully credible. The plot may sound trite, but the way Wells handles it, it simply isn't. I found this one of the most exciting items of s-f I've met in a long time.

(Terry Jeeves)

DYING INSIDE Robert Silverberg Sidgwick & Jackson £2.25

David Sellig is a middle aged bachelor, a graduate who now ekes out a precarious living by ghosting term papers for college students. He is also a telepath: not unusual perhaps in sf, but what is unusual is that his telepathic ability is on the wane - hence the title.

Gradually Selig's story unfolds. The son of lower middle class Jewish parents he was a difficult child and hated his younger sister, Judith. At college he was an able student but thereafter failed to find occupational success. His personal life was similarly unsuccessful. He has few friends: the nearest to a close one being Tom Nyquist, another telepath. The serious affairs are the highlights of his relationships with women. His relationship with one, Toni, ended after he became telepathically involved in her LSD trip, his relationship with another, Kitty, was destroyed by his inability to accept that he could not read her mind, while Nyquist could.

The story is told in a very effective mixture of first person and first-person-talking-about-himself-in-the-third-person. Selig's attitudes and feelings are presented with such success that the reader feels pity, contempt, annoyance, approval and understanding (though not necessarily in that order) of the unhappy figure of David Selig. For Selig's problem is ambivalence towards his gift and its impending departure. He enjoys the power that it gives him yet feels guilty about using it. He considers himself a voyeur yet is irresistibly bound to find out what others are thinking. Ultimately he blames his ability for the breaking up of his romances. Yet he fears dying inside and seems almost to regard it as retribution for his failure to use his talent to the full.

Silverberg's portrayal of his character can only be regarded as masterful: for this is good literature as well as good sf. He wisely does not attempt to provide an explanation of why Selig is telepathic but although this is not necessary an explanation of why Nyquist can read Kitty's mind while Selig cannot surely is required. This is a central issue, yet no word of explanation is given. Finally, a puzzle. The story is set in 1976 as we are told three times in the first few pages of the novel, yet no use is made of this time - 1976 is not different from 1970. So why bother with setting it in 1976? However, one should not let such small quibbles detract from the merit of an excellent novel.

(Peter Hyde)

THE DARKNESS ON DIAMONDIA A.E. van Vogt Sidgwick & Jackson £2.25 254pp

Although I have read most of the early van Vogt classics, like Slan and the Null-A novels, The Darkness on Diamondia is the first of his recent novels which I have encountered. It is therefore with some disappointment that I have to report that time has not improved his style, which still grates, nor his plotting, which is still incomprehensible; and that the years seem to have diluted the force and power of his writing to the point where it is but a shadow of its former greatness. The overwhelming impression which the novel leaves the reader with is one of confusion.

the plot concerns a conflict on the planet Diamondia between the native Irks and the colonist Diamondians, which Colonel Morton of the Negotiating Committee is trying to peacefully resolve. In the process he becomes involved with an extra-planetary force, the Darkness, which seems at times to be anti-pathetic to the Diamondians, and at times to everyone. The parallels between the Diamondian situation and the decolonisation one - shades of Vietnam - are too apparent to labour, although van Vogt makes them less obvious by having the Diamondian society exactly parallel that of contemporary Italy, even down to the hot-blooded Diamondians driving little cars around furiously, all of which I found a little hard to take. Another thing which I found hard to take was van Vogt's apparent discovery of two elements of human nature, to wit sex and Bodily Functions. He seems to have little understanding of the former - for example he makes every woman on Diamondia a prostitute; but of course one of them has a heart of gold and falls in love with Morton: - and the coy way he writes about the latter had me in stitches. For example: "Bray..... checked on the two unconscious bodies. No change. Bray mentally predicted toilet disasters."

Other annoying features of van Vogt's style include his repeated use of "sort of" and "kind of", and the endless idiosyncrasies which brought me up short about twice a page. Finally, to complete the confusion of the plot, there is a lot of gobbledygook about "finite logic" and "modern logic", which is never satisfactorily explained. In conclusion, The Darkness on Diamondia is a pale imitation of the great works which van Vogt produced in the past; let us hope that he finds his old power.

(Chris Fowler)

THE GODS THEMSELVES Isaac Asimov Panther S-F 40p

This one has had a great deal of publicity, in fact perhaps too much publicity, for I found it to be something of a let down. It is a good story, well told by The Good Doctor, but not remarkable for new ideas or, even, brilliance of writing. I suspect, indeed, that it was originally intended to be three separate novellettes for it is divided into three distinct parts - though they are connected by an overall discovery made in part one ("Against Stupidity"). Few of the ideas are really new herein - the concept of a new terrestrial-discovered power source (in this case an electron-pump) affecting a previously unknown 'compatible para-universe' has been used many times before; rarely as effectively, agreed, but it isn't new - not the sort of concept that should be awarded a Hugo or a Nebula and I doubt that it would have been if Asimov wasn't the writer. The first part of the book, in which the discovery of the Electron-Pump is made, is rather dry - but quite possibly this is entirely in keeping with the atmosphere of the academic research laboratory; Asimov should certainly know. The second part of the 'novel' (entitled "The Gods Themselves") is the most effective in its writing and also the most science-fictional part of the book, dealing as it does with the inhabitants of the other universe. But, here again, I am going to cavil somewhere, somewhen - I just can't put a title to it or a date - I've read this before! I'm not accusing Asimov of plagiarism, but this tale of the 'Soft Ones'; beings living off solar-energy and capable of inter-penetration is familiar. (Can any BLAZON reader jog my

memory ?) The final part of the book, "Contend in Vein", is set in a Heinlien-
esque Moon Colony of the not too remote future - again it's well written and
Asimov ties the loose ends together, largely by inference, reasonably well.
Possibly if someone other than Asimov had written this I would be enthusing over
it, but somehow I expected much more. Good, but not in the same class as other
recent Hugo Winners.

(Eric Bentcliffe)

STONEHENGE Leon Stover & Harry Harrison Sphere 30p

This isn't sf, but because it has a considerable element of Fantasy and
because one half of the writing team is a well-known (some, even, would say
infamous) sf writer it gets itself reviewed here. The Fantasy element is the
inclusion of the Atlantis Legend into what is, basically, a novel of pre-history
and an attempt to explain the building of Stonehenge. It's a damn good story
and Leon Stover's anthropological knowledge nicely balances Harry Harrison's
ability as a story-writer to produce a very satisfying whole.

It reminds me, in style, of de Camp's pre-historical novels - and this is no
criticism. The storytelling is powerful enough to convince you that this is
what it was like to live in the time-period of the story and the amount of blood
and gore about makes your cowardly reviewer glad that he was born a considerable
number of centuries later. If you like a good story, solidly told, you'll like
this.

(Eric Bentcliffe)

NEW WRITINGS IN SF 24 editor Kenneth Bulmer Sidgwick & Jackson £2.25

Collections and anthologies are hard to review - the choice
is to give an overall impression or to spend a line or two on each story - which
is to little to really say anything. I'm compromising by giving the list of
contents and saying that this New Writings is well up to the standards of the
first 23.

Foreword...Kenneth Bulmer (4pp)
The Ark of James Carlyle...Cherry Wilder (18 $\frac{1}{2}$ pp)
And When I Die...Peter Linnett (15pp)
Three Enigmas: III. All in God's Mind...Brian Aldiss (14pp)
A Strange and Terrible Sea...Donald Malcolm (20 $\frac{1}{2}$ pp)
New Canute...Martin I. Ricketts (16 $\frac{1}{8}$ pp)
No Certain Armour...John Kippax (40 $\frac{1}{3}$ pp)
Now Hear the Word...David S. Garnett (32 $\frac{1}{8}$ pp)

THE JOHN W. CAMPBELL MEMORIAL ANTHOLOGY editor Harry Harrison Sidgwick &
Jackson

Someone at Sidgwick & Jackson's must be a
mind reader... they didn't send me a copy of this book - just the contents page !

Introduction: The Father of Science Fiction...Isaac Asimov (6pp)
Lodestar...Poul Anderson (36pp)
Thiotimeline to the Stars...Isaac Asimov (9pp)
Something up there likes me...Alfred Bester (23pp)
Lecture Demonstration...Hal Clement (17pp)
Early Bird...Theodore R. Cogswell & Theodore L. Thomas (114pp)
The Emperor's Fan...L. Sprague de Camp (19pp)
Brothers...Gordon R. Dickson (58pp)
The Mothballed Spaceship...Harry Harrison (17pp)
Black Sheep Astray...Mack Reynolds (29pp)
Epilog...Clifford D. Simak (14pp)
Interlude...George O. Smith (19pp)
Helix the Cat...Theodore Sturgeon (26pp)
Probability Zero! The Population Explosion...Theodore R. Cogswell (2pp)
Afterword...Harry Harrison

From Page 15: W.W. Watts & J.W. Gregory respectively at the 1924 meeting of the
British Association.....

Disentangling himself from the persistent Mr Harrison, Jack Cohen went on to introduce Peter Weston who was to give a TAFF report. "Is there anyone in the hall who hasn't heard of Peter Weston?" Jack asked. Dutifully every person in the hall put his or her hand up... Peter, assisted by a projector which didn't work and John Jarrold and Shane McCormack who did, gave a rather disjointed TAFF report. In the absence of projection facilities, photographs of Peter Weston wearing a straw hat and looking extremely ~~drunk~~ overtired were passed round. Peter seemed to have had a rather mixed reception from American fandom which he found rather disappointing. He felt that the World Con was very badly organised at times. He told of his speech in support of the British '79 bid in which, he said, that he had become somewhat carried away by his enthusiasm... well, how else does one describe promising that if Britain got the World Con in '79 the Queen would open it?

A general adjournment to the bar followed this report. To my great pleasure I was waved to across the crowded bar by Malcolm Edwards who was sitting over in one corner with his lovely wife, Christine. A conversation followed about his problems in producing Vector in the face of a BSFA Committee so hopelessly inept and uncommunicative that he found it impossible even to obtain the necessary funding to complete the current issue which he had been preparing for months. From what he said, and what I later learned from other sources, it certainly seemed that a collapse of the BSFA was imminent. Rob Holdstock joined the group shortly afterwards and proceeded to tell me about his plans for anthologies of new writers in Britain for which he was trying to find an interested publisher - so far without success.

Peter Nicholls was the next to join the growing group. He introduced us to his sister - "Don't you see the family resemblance? She's just like me but with tits and without a beard" (or was it the other way round? my notes seem a little hazy on this point). In fact the family resemblance was clear. I was conferring with Peter Nicholls about my plans for an SF film season at the Reading Film Theatre when a reporter from the Observer, called Peter Wilby, rolled up. He revealed to Rob Holdstock, who was sitting on my left, that he was writing an article about the boom in SF. Rob obviously didn't take this in clearly, or at least didn't take it very seriously, for he immediately began spinning out the most incredible line about him, Malcolm Edwards and Greg Pickersgill being the total of London fandom. The reporter was religiously taking all this down.... this must, finally, have convinced Rob of the serious intent for Rob suddenly changed tack completely - one could almost see the little relays clicking over in Rob's head - and began trying to get some free publicity for his anthology idea. Malcolm Edwards joined in and even I found myself drawn into the discussion. Peter Wilby eventually left and Chris Atkinson, the great love of Roy Kettle's life, brought us all drinks. Thus I was well equipped for the arrival of Chuck Partington, with whom conversation ensued for the rest of the evening. Talking of the Tynecon and a certain Ms Conessa he commented "You made it, but Jim Blish didn't". I didn't understand it when he said it and I still don't. Oh well, I expect someone will enlighten me sooner or later.....

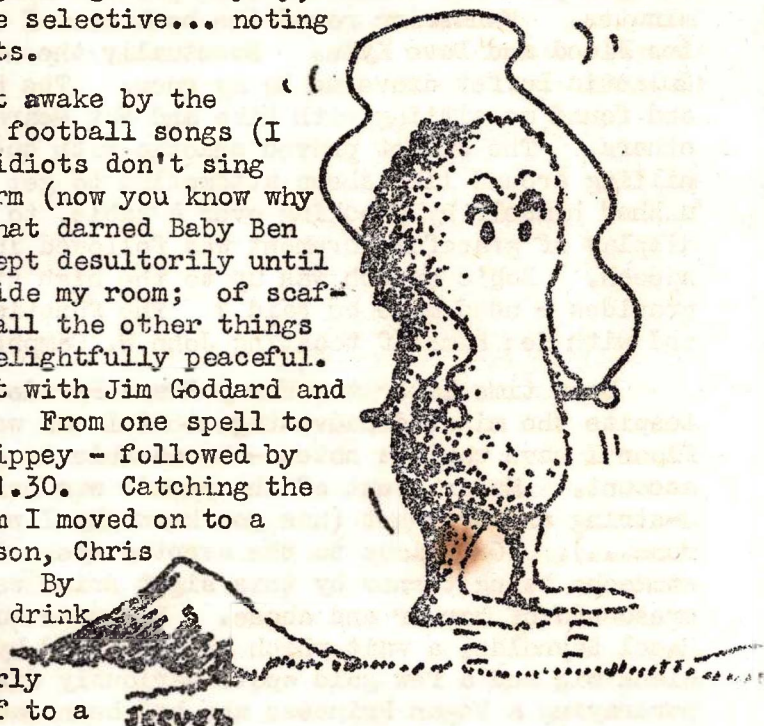
Following a long conversation with Chuck about MOL (a civil service term for the Meaning Of Life for the unenlightened) which lasted until 1.45, I espied Sheila Holdstock across the other side of the room and the photographer in me stirred. This, I thought, is one girl who must be added to the Fowler Photographic library of the world's most beautiful women. I introduced myself with my usual line - borrowed from Hungry Joe in Catch-22 - which goes something like "Me heap big Life photographer, me take your photograph, you be on cover of Life magazine, be big star, go to Hollywood, multi denario, multi ficky-fick all day long". Well, Sheila didn't seem to go for the "multi-ficky-fick all day long" bit, in fact she didn't seem to go for the whole idea of having her photograph taken. Half an hour later I was still trying to persuade her - the photographer in me can be very persistent - but I was running out of arguments. In desperation I resorted to such tired cliches as "But think - you will be helping to make

a work of Art" which earned me the well deserved response of "Now I know you're bull-shitting me!" I finally persuaded her to consider the idea the next day when she was a little less ~~than~~ over-tired. Christine Edwards, perhaps because of her previous appearance in a Bristol newspaper - the famous occasion when she was described as the "wife of a publisher from Harrow" (which Malcolm is still trying to live down) - proved easier to convince of her photogenic qualities and agreed readily to having her photo taken. Exhausted by all this argument I retired to bed at about 2.30.

Unfortunately for those readers who were hoping for a continuation of this blow-by-blow account of Novacon my notes - and my memories - become a little hazy about events subsequent to getting up on Saturday morning. I'm still not able to fathom why this is, but it does seem to be something that afflicts even the most dedicated of convention reporters. If I drank I could blame it - as most fans do - on the alcoholic blurring of the senses which is such a feature of conventions. As I don't drink, however, I shall have to assume that there was some force at work... something in the atmosphere - perhaps all those alcohol fumes from evryone else - blotting out my memory. Or maybe one of fandom's most beautiful women performed some terrible indiscretion in my presence (or even with me? - hope springs eternal...) and her husband or boyfriend (or both) has had a pet brain surgeon excise the memories. A harrowing thought. Anyway, from this point my account is likely to be more selective... noting in detail only the more important incidents.

Despite the late night and being kept awake by the sound of idiots outside the hotel singing football songs (I know they must be football songs because idiots don't sing anything else) my infallible internal alarm (now you know why I have trouble with my digestion - it's that darned Baby Ben in my duodenum) awoke me at seven. I slept desultorily until 8.40 through the multifarious noises outside my room; of scaffolding being erected, a baby crying and all the other things which make the Imperial Centre Hotel so delightfully peaceful. Dragging myself downstairs I ate breakfast with Jim Goddard and Gerald Bishop, the famous spelling error. From one spell to another - a talk on Magic in SF by Tom Shippey - followed by coffee with Sheila and Rob Holdstock at 11.30. Catching the end of a Teleoons film in the Temple Room I moved on to a discussion on awards in SF by Harry Harrison, Chris Priest, Peter Nicholls and Rob Holdstock. By the end of this Rob was much in need of a drink - which he took with his lovely wife and myself. This conjunction proved singularly fortunate as I was able to drag Sheila off to a convenient place to take her photograph. Most of this photography took place on a stairway before a large window which meant that one had to stop periodically to allow past tiresome people who seemed to think that the staircase was intended for getting them from one floor to the other. Sheila was a good subject and on development of the film she proved not to have blinked as she had threatened to do.

Loyally adhering to Jack Cohen's meal policy - ie eat in the hotel, and eat the set meal in the Portway - I found myself confronted by one of the worst meals I have had to consume... to wit processed peas and shepherds pie which appeared to be made of powdered potato, with meat bearing a strong resemblance to Soy lent Green. Perhaps the after-effects of this delightful repast explain why I cannot remember a single thing that Ken Slater said in his Guest of Honour speech entitled The View From Down Here. I can remember it being very entertaining and all the better for being delivered in Ken's best stentorian addressing-a-group-of-deaf-army-recruits voice. In fact I'm sure it doesn't matter that I can't report on the content of the talk - I should imagine it could have been heard all over England. After a break from the convention hall, drinking in the bar with



Brian Mottershead, I attended a talk under the title The Road to Wigan Pier on the future of British SF Conventions - this featured Fred Hemmings, Andrew Stephenson, Peter Presford, Rob Jackson and Peter Weston. The discussion centred on the difficulty of finding large enough hotels for the cons and the need for two year bidding to ameliorate this problem. A feeling-of-the-meeting seemed in favour of two year bids.

At five I left the auction which was then in progress in order to watch some films. During this showing some idiot - easily identifiable because he was singing a football song - let off a stink bomb. This prank won the response from everlovin' Jack Cohen of an offer to push the perpetrator's teeth down his throat... which would have allowed this person the unique ability of being able to chew with his navel, if they were pushed far enough. Jack then opened a window to let out the odious odour, in the process performing a death defying hanging-from-the-curtain-rail stunt. The films proceeded, eventually, with a Pink Panther cartoon, Pink Finger - no risqué jokes please - a montage of trailers for SF movies and, best of all, a western send-up, Blaze Glory, made in gloriously garish and grainy colour. Climax of the film came when the hero, who had sported a very tall ten-gallon hat throughout, finally removed it to reveal a beehive hair-do underneath. This hilarity was followed by The Day Mars Invaded the Earth an aged piece of celluloid that proved to be so bad that I walked out after 20 minutes. Wandering round the book room I spotted Chuck Partington talking to Les Flood and Dave Kyle. Eventually the necessity to prepare myself for the Galactic Buffet drove me to my room. The buffet started only ten minutes late and found me sitting with Mike and Pat Meara, David Hardy, Andrew Stephenson and others. The buffet proved chaotic with queues all round the room and everyone milling around like sheep attempting to get enough food. Jack Cohen distinguished himself by knocking over a table, to the delight of all watching, and this display of graceful movement was followed in due course of time by Bob Shaw's speech. Bob's speech was up to the high standard of wit which Bob always provides - need more be said? The function concluded with a toast to Ken Slater and with Ken himself toasting John W. Campbell, Ted Carnell and P. Schuyler Miller.

Some time later the Fancy Dress Parade commenced in the Connaught Room. Despite the minor disadvantage that I was watching this from my room on the fourth floor I have copious notes - so am able to give a full if somewhat incoherent account. Major event of the parade was Brian Burgess's tasteful appearance in a G-string and beer-gut (now you know why I was watching from the safety of my room...). Oblivious to the averted eyes of delicate persons, ignoring the strong stomachs being turned by this sight Brian was finally driven from the floor by a crescendo of horror and abuse. Everyone was eagerly awaiting the arrival of Hazel Reynolds, a wait which was rewarded by her appearance in a shoulder length black wig and a few gold spots variously distributed about her body. She was portraying a Vegan Princess who had been caught with her force field down. (Don't blame me, that's what it says in my notes...). Group entries were provided by the Aston University SF Group, as the Cornelius family, and the Oxford SF Group as the Bizarroes. Many of the other entries were based on rather poor puns, but Josephine Saxon provided a great sensation when she appeared in her now-famous black dress slit right up to there and presented herself before the goggle-eyed Jack Cohen. "Do you know a Robert Sheckley story?" she purred to the speechless chairman. When a repetition of this unusual question elicited no response she embraced Jack and said "Can you feel anything when I do this?" Nobody seems to be quite certain what "this" was, but even from the fourth floor I was able to hazard a fairly colourful guess.

The judging resulted in Hazel Reynolds winning - to cries of "Fix!" - with the Bizarroes second. The period of judging was usefully employed by the audience in not playing a rather complicated game of SF character charades suggested by Hazel involving lots of pieces of paper which everyone turned into aeroplanes. Dispersing from the littered convention hall to various room and corridor parties the audience broke up. My memories of the rest of the evening, during which I descended from my Olympian heights, centre on a number of incidents. The first of these involved Simone Walsh who offered her services to

me... as a short-hand expert. Unable to work out whether this was some kind of disguised trap I regretfully declined. At 2 I set my watch back, praising the wonders of the British time system and the foresight of the convention committee which, between them, had allowed us an extra hour of partying. On to the Aston University group's room party in 309 where David Langford read one of his highly entertaining parodies - this time of the appalling Hook - call Cesspool of Stars. Present were people from both Oxford and Aston Universities as well as Kevin Smith and Andrew Stephenson. Ken Bulmer looked in, initially to request a diminution in noise and later with Ted Tubb to listen to David Langford's humour. After Kevin Smith's rendition of Langford's 2.54 Centimetres to Doom, which, appropriately enough concluded at 2.45, I adjourned with Andrew Stephenson to the bar. Walking down the corridor we passed a terrifyingly drunk Josephine Saxon leaning on kindly Rob Holdstock and making a call from a wall telephone. We subsequently learned from Rob that she had, somehow, persuaded the hotel desk to give her an outside line so that she could listen to the Dial-a-Pop song - which explained, of course, why she was undulating around and singing.

On to a corridor party centering on room 301 where I saw Mike and Pat Meara, as well as Roy Kettle who showed me his True Rat 3. Moving up a floor, some time later, I joined Andrew Stephenson, Simone Walsh, Dave Rowe and Rob Holdstock by the hot drinks machine. Drinking a cup of vile machine tea I observed, with some amusement, an idiot (you could tell he was an idiot because of the footballer tattooed on his epidermis) who was trying his luck with Ms Saxon. Luckily brave boy writer Rob Holdstock was protecting her from all comers. The combination of this sight and the tea finally drove me off to bed at 3.30. This meant that it was not until some time later that I learned of an amusing incident involving Greg Pickersgill's suspicions about Simone Walsh and Peter Nicholls - and Rob Holdstock hearing strange sounds emerging from an hotel room... Unfortunately my lips are sealed on this matter as all kinds of mayhem could break loose if information were leaked. Enough said.

Sunday morning commenced bright and early... well, early at least.... for me with breakfast at nine with Jim Goddard, Mark Adlard and Peter Nicholls. Peter looked fairly deathly having gone to bed about six only to awaken shortly afterwards to find his watch saying 8.30. My Ghod, he thought, the clocks go forward tonight, it's really 9.30, I'd better get down to breakfast. What he had forgotten, of course, was that the clocks had gone back... and that the time was, in fact, 7.30. The conversation that ensued between Mark Adlard and Peter was remarkably erudite for so early in the morning and went something after this fashion:

Mark: Stapledon is the greatest sf writer.

Peter: Stapledon is cold and sentimental.

Mark: Well, Philip K. Dick should be writing things to go in crackers.

Peter: Old John has every superman cliché in the book.

Mark: He invented them.

Peter: Well, anyone who can write a book entitled Flow My Tears the Policeman Said must be O.K.

I swear it, that's what they said. It does at least prove that people do discuss SF at conventions. Opting out of the conversation I borrowed Peter's copy of The Observer to read the report on the convention; predictably all the things Rob Holdstock had said had been quoted.... and attributed to 24-year old librarian from Harrow (who else ?) Malcolm Edwards.

Eventually, having finished breakfast and the newspaper article, I left the room to have a look at the War-gaming discussion. This proving dull I went up and packed my bags, re-emerging from my room at 10.25. This must have been the ultimate low point of the convention because even my copious notes run out here and say only "nothing happened". Fortunately shortly afterwards I found something happening in the bar, the "something" being Peter Nicholls and Josephine

Saxon dancing. Yes, I know 10.30 is a very funny time in the morning to be dancing, but then this was a science fiction convention remember.

At 10.45 I entered the convention hall to hear the talk on Gods in SF by Harry Harrison, Mark Adlard and Chris Priest. Discussion ranged over the possibilities of science as the new religion, Black Easter, Canticle for Liebowitz, C.S. Lewis and Stapledon. Harry Harrison expressed the view that sf should appeal to the religious need in man. The talk concluded at mid-day and was followed by the prize giving for the Fancy Dress, during which an impressively small boy accepted an impressively large bottle of whisky on behalf of the Bizarroes. The Nova Awards were made, being a joint presentation to Lisa Conesa for Zimri-6 and John Brossnan for Big Scab 2. Neither editor was present so the awards were accepted by Peter Presford and Greg Pickersgill on their respective behalfs.

Espying Christine Edwards I managed to tempt her to my favourite hotel staircase to take her photograph, following on which we joined Malcolm for lunch. This was taken, in open defiance of Jack Cohen's meal policy, in the Kenco. A rather flustered waitress informed us that we were supposed to eat in the other restaurant where there was a set meal. We pointed out that we had no intention of eating the set meal - especially considering the low standard of the previous day and insisted on being served. I have been asked by Christine Edwards to report that she was NOT rude AT ALL to the waitress. Since she was not rude - and certainly no-one else was - there must have been some other explanation for the excruciatingly slow service: I mean, 30 minutes for an omelette? Others from the convention were still waiting to be served when we left at 2.40. As Roy Kettle remarked to Christine, "Are you ordering a sweet or do you want to get away before tomorrow?"

The afternoon item on the programme was a talk on The Population Explosion by Prof John Fremlin. I noted that he was professor of Applied Radioactivity at Birmingham University; O.K., I thought, so long as he doesn't apply any radioactivity to me I'll go and listen to him. This proved a wise decision, for he gave a fascinating talk on the means of housing a huge population on the earth by covering the whole surface with a building 10,000 feet high - held up by filling the top six floors with helium. The major problem seemed to be the disposal of all the waste heat generated by the people. He concluded by saying that the provision of space and food for all the people unlimited population growth would produce was technologically feasible, but perhaps socially undesirable. Such a society would require detailed computer control to prevent chaos, a control which would become as much a part of everyday life - almost a natural law - as the law of gravity. He seemed to feel that people in such a society would be happy and tranquil.

When this talk had concluded at 4 I joined a number of London fans in the downstairs bar and discovered that Novacon 5 had been the biggest ever with 341 registered and about 250 attending. As my train was due shortly I left, saying regretful goodbyes to those who had made the weekend so enjoyable. It was an excellent convention, well varied in its programming, a convention at which one felt at home, despite the minor problems such as the meal policy. All concerned with the organisation are to be congratulated on providing another fine Novacon.

Royal Angus Hotel, Birmingham

7th-8th-9th November 1975

DAN MORGAN

GUEST OF HONOUR

Birmingham Science Fiction Group

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