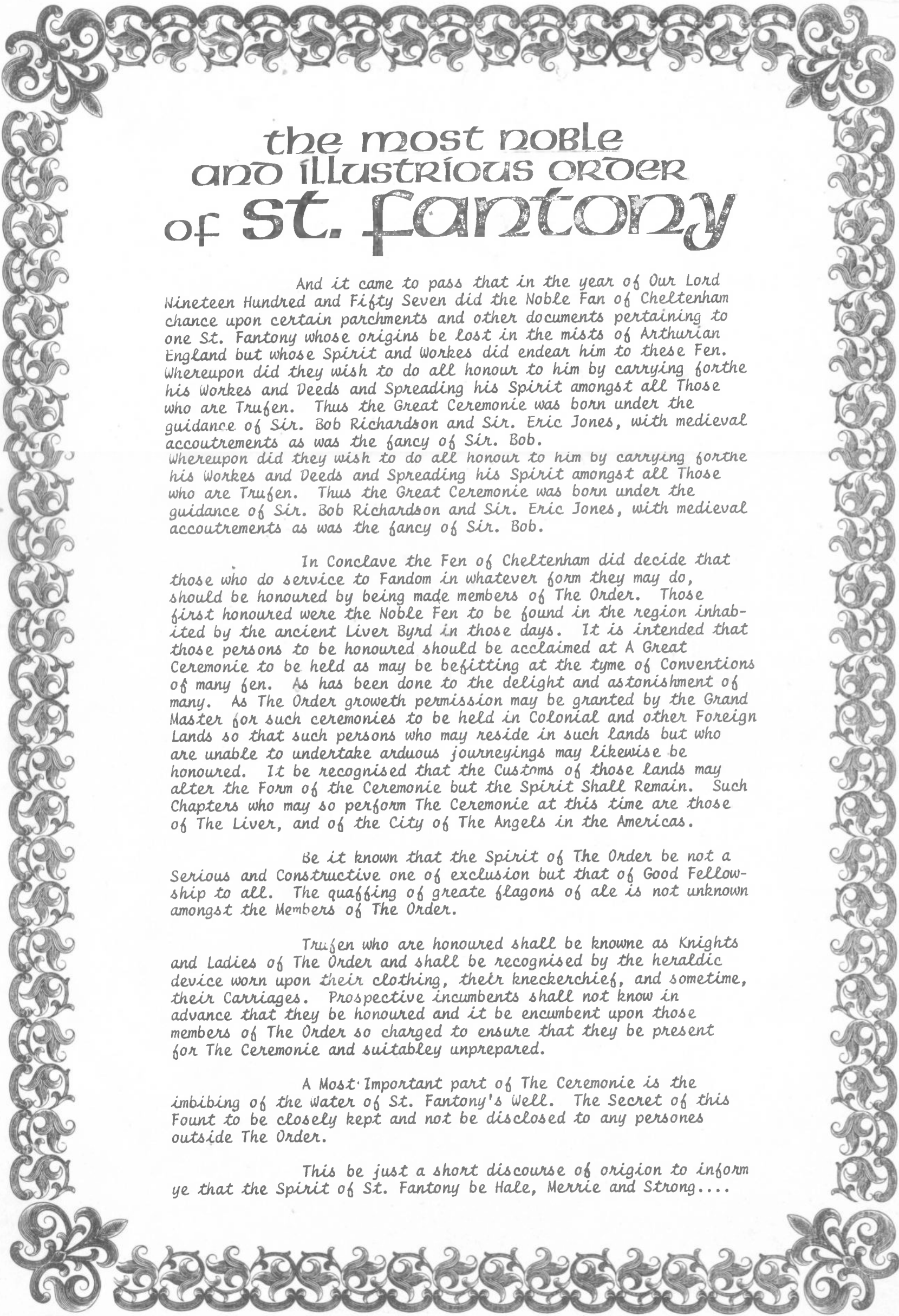


from the knights of *st. fantony*

BLAZON



1



the most noble and illustrious order of St. fantony

And it came to pass that in the year of Our Lord Nineteen Hundred and Fifty Seven did the Noble Fan of Cheltenham chance upon certain parchments and other documents pertaining to one St. Fantony whose origins be lost in the mists of Arthurian England but whose Spirit and Workes did endear him to these Fen. Whereupon did they wish to do all honour to him by carrying forthe his Workes and Deeds and Spreading his Spirit amongst all Those who are Truſen. Thus the Great Ceremonie was born under the guidance of Sir. Bob Richardson and Sir. Eric Jones, with medieval accoutrements as was the fancy of Sir. Bob. Whereupon did they wish to do all honour to him by carrying forthe his Workes and Deeds and Spreading his Spirit amongst all Those who are Truſen. Thus the Great Ceremonie was born under the guidance of Sir. Bob Richardson and Sir. Eric Jones, with medieval accoutrements as was the fancy of Sir. Bob.

In Conclave the Fen of Cheltenham did decide that those who do service to Fandom in whatever form they may do, should be honoured by being made members of The Order. Those first honoured were the Noble Fen to be found in the region inhabited by the ancient Liver Byrd in those days. It is intended that those persons to be honoured should be acclaimed at A Great Ceremonie to be held as may be befitting at the tyme of Conventions of many fen. As has been done to the delight and astonishment of many. As The Order groweth permission may be granted by the Grand Master for such ceremonies to be held in Colonial and other Foreign Lands so that such persons who may reside in such lands but who are unable to undertake arduous journeyings may likewise be honoured. It be recognised that the Customs of those lands may alter the Form of the Ceremonie but the Spirit Shall Remain. Such Chapters who may so perform The Ceremonie at this time are those of The Liver, and of the City of The Angels in the Americas.

Be it known that the Spirit of The Order be not a Serious and Constructive one of exclusion but that of Good Fellowship to all. The quaffing of greate flagons of ale is not unknown amongst the Members of The Order.

Truſen who are honoured shall be knowne as Knights and Ladies of The Order and shall be recognised by the heraldic device worn upon their clothing, their kneckerchief, and sometime, their Carriages. Prospective incumbents shall not know in advance that they be honoured and it be encumbent upon those members of The Order so charged to ensure that they be present for The Ceremonie and suitably unprepared.

A Most Important part of The Ceremonie is the imbibing of the Water of St. Fantony's Well. The Secret of this Fount to be closely kept and not be disclosed to any persones outside The Order.

This be just a short discourse of origion to inform ye that the Spirit of St. Fantony be Hale, Merrie and Strong....

BLAZON

"THE MAGAZINE OF ST.FANTONY AND SCIENCE FICTION"

EDITOR.....ERIC BENTCLIFFE

PUBLISHER.....HARRY NADLER

Volume One

Number One

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Harry Nadler (The bad ones!)

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TRADES welcomed, and a goodly letter-of-comment can also ensure receipt of the next issue.

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THAT WHICH HAS GONE BEFORE.....The Kindly Editor who, in his previous fan incarnation edited such potable fanzines as TRIODE (with Terry Jeeves as publisher), BASTION (with Norman Shorrocks as publisher); visited Pittsburgh, Fond du Lac, New York and sundry other places of fannish interest under the kind auspices of TAFF; became a member of such famous organizations at The Romiley Fan-Veterans & Scottish Dancing Society, The Stockport and Intake Dog & Cake Walking Society, The Liverpool Null-A Drinking Society, The Other Club, OMPA, Cry Letterhacks; and also became A Knight of St. Fantony and a Hon. Member of the Wally Weber Chicken-Bone Eating Club...was last heard of in print around the time that the rumor circulated fandom that Doc Barrett had finally succeeded in turning Indian Lake not only Pink, but alcoholic..."slightly reminiscent of a good angostura-bitters and gin," said Bob Pavlat at the time....

VIEW

FROM THE

RAMPARTS



EGADS! A STRAINED DEVICE

THE SLEEPER AWAKES....Being still slightly of unsound mind and fannish mien, the aforementioned Eric Bentcliffe has returned to the scene of fan publishing after receiving both a libation of water from the Well of St. Fantony and two paintings from Eddie Jones, both of which helped to revive his fannish spirit.

It's all true, you know...but perhaps it might be more truthful to mention that this resurgence of energy is due more to the fact that I do now have a little more time to spare than I've had for the past few years. I've never really lost interest in s-f, fans and fandom...frequent visitations to and from members of the Liverpool Group, the Salford Mob, and sundry other fannish type people have occurred over the years, and I was inveigled into becoming vice-Chairman of the Eastercon at Buxton some few years back--the evil organizers also got me to present about four program items there, at least two of which were originally scheduled to take place simultaneously!

I've also moved, as you've probably noticed, and I think packing and unpacking of various fond fanzines and sundry other mementos probably also influenced me into once again Doing Something. And Holmes Chapel is as good a place to do it in as any...it is a fairly small village some few miles from Jodrell Banks Radio Telescope, relatively unspoiled, peaceful (after suburbia) but

easy of access, being only a few minutes drive from the M6 Motorway. Things do happen around here, of course. Only last year at the Store a major crisis developed when Len's Gooseberries developed 'snub-rot' overnight!! And I have a plan in hand for feeding fake signals into Jodrell Bank's mighty bowl...so if you happen to read that *Andromeda Has Been Contacted*, check first with me!

One of the nicest things about returning to active fan-publishing after a number of years is to hear, once more, the thud of fanzines through the letter box; but even more pleasant is the renewal of Old Friendships with people like Len Moffatt and Harry Warner and to find that they are still just as they were when I left the scene. And this seems like a good moment to thank most kindly those other old friends who have retained such faith in me as to spend their time at typers, writing the material for this issue of BLAZON. I'm most grateful, as, I'm sure, St. Fantony is.... And in case you are wondering, BLAZON comes to you courtesy of the Members of The Order of St. Fantony. The intention being not only to entertain, but to also prove by deed that The Order is not, as some would have it, 'a moribund refuge for elder-fen.' This first issue is being sent out free to some 500 fans. Subsequent issues will be available by subscription, trade, or goodly letter of comment. Whilst BLAZON is edited and produced by members of The Order, ma-

terial (as in this issue) is welcomed from all and fandy. The material this issue is mainly by the people with whom I've retained contact over the years, but I hope (and invite) material from all over, from young fen and old.

RING-A-DING WORLD...For the first time in several years I find myself whole heartedly in agreement with the Hugo choice for Best Novel--namely Larry Niven's RINGWORLD. It's a great yarn, an enjoyable yarn, and it's even Science Fiction! And it sparks off a few thoughts that I'd like to put down on paper.

Looking back over the years and at the many polls of 'Great S-F,' 'Best S-F,' 'Classic S-F' et al, it seems to me that these, whilst they've usually resulted in a list of titles and authors which qualify for the title given by the poll taker (or anthologist, for that matter), aren't always the stories that I've enjoyed the most. Nor are they the ones which have necessarily evoked that ol' elusive sense of wonder for me. Look, let's invent a 'Quasiquote Poll,' to illustrate my point...

BEST NOVEL

SLAN
FOUNDATION
CITY
GREEN HILLS OF EARTH
THE HUMANOIDS

BEST WRITER

Robert Heinlein
Clifford Simak
A.E. Van Vogt
Jules Verne
H.G. Wells

That poll is pure invention, but if you care to check the various Analog/Astounding Polls which Schuyler Miller has conducted occasionally over the years you'll probably notice a slight similarity and the same holds true with almost any other listing which attempts to define 'Best,' 'Greatest,' and even 'Best Ever' Science Fiction. I don't disagree with the findings of the poll takers but I think that they are almost all guilty of being a little pretentious both in their classifications and in their basic aim. O.K., so 'Best S-F' makes a Great title for an anthology; 'Great S-F' makes an even Bester one (sorry, Alfred!); but for the sake of the reader let us occasionally vote on THE MOST ENJOYABLE SCIENCE FICTION STORY! There is a difference here, I think. You see, when a poll form comes along pretty much every fan or reader tends to vote for the particular story or type of story which he considers to be 'typically' Best of the science fiction genre. The fact that when anyone fills in a poll form or census he tries to give "The Right Answer" doesn't help either!

The type of story that tends to be voted into these 'Best' polls is that which, when one has laid down the magazine, book, or pocketbook, one thinks: "Ah, now that created Whole New Concepts, Broke New Frontiers, Was Most Mind-Boggling In Its Cosmic Significance, etc. That story Deserves to be termed a classic." And it probably is and I'd probably agree with the choice myself. However, many of these stories, albeit great examples of S-F, do fall down by not being sufficiently entertaining to be really memorable. To give an example, I'd rate, amongst those stories which are usually given as examples of 'Best' or 'Great-

est' S-F only Arthur C. Clarke's AGAINST THE FALL OF NIGHT (the original Startling Stories version) as truly memorable, for it was an *entertaining* and *enjoyable* yarn as well as fitting into the poll takers categories.

The point I'm attempting to make also applies to the magazines. The S-F magazine which is always given as an example of 'Best' or 'Greatest' is, nine times out of ten, ASF and, again, I'd agree with this (I have it on my shelves complete from '37 to date as proof), but looking back, one of the most enjoyable science fiction magazines ever, I think, was STARTLING STORIES. The science therein wasn't always as accurately prophetic as in ASF, but the enjoyment factor was frequently far higher. Most of the truly enjoyable stories which I can recall most easily came from SS, and there was always that *great* letter column, which must have been the biggest breeding ground extant for fandom. It's always been one of my intentions to cull that very letter column for a one-shot fanzine. Certainly there was more fannish style writing therein than in many a current fanzine!

Hands up, all those who recall with enjoyment Leinster's BLACK GALAXY, Sam Merwin's HOUSE OF MANY WORLDS, BIG PLANET by Jack Vance, Ed Hamilton's CITY AT WORLD'S END, and Leigh Brackett's STARMEN OF LLYDRIS, to mention but a few.

Certainly Larry Niven's RINGWORLD and Anne McCaffrey's DRAGONRIDER are two recent stories which I'd bracket with the above, but they haven't been published long enough to feature in those afore mentioned polls.

So, let's have our own little poll--The BLAZON Poll of The Most Enjoyable Stories Published Within The Science Fiction/Science Fantasy Field. Not the 'Best' or the 'Greatest' but the most enjoyable. Let me have a list, preferably on a separate sheet of paper, together with that letter of comment you are writing, eh? I think the results could be interesting. They might even influence one or two writers into getting their heads down off the metaphysical plane and trying to write something entertaining instead!

Make it a list of you Ten Most Enjoyed Science Fiction Stories; and the Ten Writers you consider write the Most Enjoyable Stories; and as a rider, list what you consider to be the S-F Magazines which have published the Most Enjoyable S-F over the years.

SON OF DRUMS ALONG THE MERSEY...Many of the older fans amongst you may be wondering what has become of that semi-mythical group of characters known as the Liverpool Group since news of their doings was last related in BASTION. Some of the older fans, in fact, may still be trying to forget their doings. However, for those who aren't, I'm pleased to say that they are still very much with us.

Norman Shorrock, for instance, is still slaving over multitudinous vats (he has recently had an extension put on 2 Arnot Way to further his researches) in an attempt to brew the Pentultimate Pimm's--The Shorrock Ultimate Pimm's, of course.

will power Great Britain's first moon shot and is expected to provide more thrust than even Doc Smith ever dreamed of! If Norman has his way, it is entirely possible that his Pimm's powered space ship could be the first moon rocket to arrive on Luna via Alpha Centauri and the Milky Way. In between times, he is taken up with the



overseeing of his Plantain Plantation in Ibiza, and his Dandelion Fields in Utter Pradesh. The harvest from these alone last year was sufficient to provide three glasses of wine for each of the LiG members. His alco-horticultural plans are aided and abetted by Ina Shorrock, whose job it is to pick off descending aphids with her 85mm anti-tank gun. So far this season her bag includes three neighbours, a distant cousin (when her range finder was misaligned), the Venezualan Naval Attache, and a low-flying prototype of Concorde. To which we can only say: "Well Done, Ina!"...from a suitable distance, of course.

That Other Norman, Norman Weedall, is currently working on his memoirs of the early days of the British Interplanetary Society for publication in a subsequent issue of BLAZON. I understand that the first installment will recall the time when he had to vet the salt sodden application form from Arthur C. Clarke, delivered to him by an exhausted dolphin who could grunt and twitter only in a peculiar Cornish dialect. The dolphin that is, not Arthur C. Clarke!

Eddie Jones, that Globe trotting (although he hopes to pass his driving test soon) suave, debonair artist and bon vivant spends his time, when not painting, between Back Bay Boston and a sordid establishment in Scotland Road where infamous proceedings take place--well, so he assures me. The sign on the door says it's The Maghull Institute of Model Soldiers. But then, who ever heard of a Model Soldier in riding boots, black mask, and carrying a whip?

John Owen, descendant of that well known debt collector Owen Owen (in Welsh, Owen Glendower), and itinerant bollard collector is, at present, working on a musical version of "2001" for Radio Merseyside with Elvis Presley in the role of Hal 9000 and Steve McQueen as the Monolith. He is

having some difficulty with Kubrick and Clarke over the copyright but has promised them 2 1/2¢ or an old 78 rpm record by Little Richard.

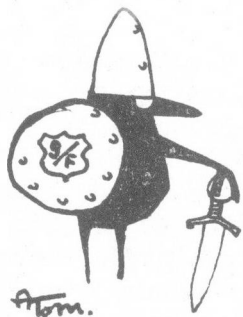
John Roles, erstwhile book seller and part time layabout has, after due consideration, become a full time layabout. He is believed to be currently somewhere in Spain where he (hurriedly) decided to take a vacation after a little trouble with H.M. Customs over the importation of a copy of the Kama Sutra--apparently, five Pakistanies were discovered in the hollowed out pages of the book! He now spends the greater part of the time teaching the Spanish spanish while basqueing in the sun...

John Ramsey Campbell (known within the group as Thing John the Third), whilst recently walking on water got his feet wet, thus proving that he is not a descendant of William Makepeace Harrison. Another recent disappointment, his delightful wife Jennie tells me, was when he auditioned for the lead in "Hair" and was rejected on the grounds of having too much of that commodity for full frontal entertainment. However, he and Jennie are in process of acquiring a small manse, to be called "The Arkham Sampler" until such time as it can be enlarged. On Saturday nights, we understand, Black Masses and old Hitchcock movies will alternate with esoteric discussions of Roger Gorman and readings from the works of McGonnagle.

Stanley H. Nuttall, one of the older (and possibly saner) members of LiG--although one does wonder after his recent return from Tunisia with a three humped camel; his explanation being that 'it was the only thing for sale worth buying'--is on a job connected with computers and it is understood that he has run through at least twenty of these in an attempt to teach one to out bluff Norman Shorrock at Brag, and caused a considerable furore in banking circles when a machine he was repairing commenced to issue bank statements in clubhouse terms: I.E. 'we regret to inform you that your account is in the rough and advise you to consult your bank manager immediately with a five iron.' Next to Hope and Crosby, Stan is probably the most entertaining golfer around. Meanwhile, his delightful wife Marge continues to cook wonderfully alcoholic food--which visitors like Beryl and myself highly enjoy, even though it is difficult to explain a positive breathalyzer test by saying you'd only had three meals today!

William Makepeace Harrison (see separate adventure), to whom we send our Best Get Well Wishes after his recent attack of nose gout. This...Man, this Immortal, this Pillar of Society. How can we describe HIM? What more can we say than has already been said? Well, it all depends on how much He pays us for publishing His latest adventure!

EPITAFF.....DISINTERRED! During the recent removal/upheaval of Eric Bentcliffe and chattels to Holmes Chapels there has come to light several collated but unbound copies of the Bentcliffe TAFF TRIP REPORT circa 1960. This do-it-yourself epic, copiously illustrated by Eddie Jones and with 92 pages of words...available for 50 pence or \$1.00 per copy from the editorial address.



The Boke of Fantagruelle

BY JOHN OWEN

*It was a Knight both fyne ande felle
That hyght, Sir Claudius Fantagruelle,
The trueste Knight, by Oor Ladye,
Of anie Knight in Fandomie.
Hys brest was brode, hys armes ronde,
Hys voys was as a trompet sonde,
Hys sadel was of golde y-bete,
Hys snow-whyt courser hyghte, Flete.
Of alle the Knights of Fantonie,
The brayveste and the beste was he.*

*Comment F.
aymayt la
Demoysele
Cycelie*

*Nowe it befelle upon a daye,
This Fantagruelle he went to playe,
With his ladye so shene¹ ande bryght,
In her bowre, out of mennes syght.
This Ladyes swyre² was as the swanne,
her vysage fayre to loke upon;
Her cheekes as the appel redde,
Her here ful golde upon her hedde,
Her voys was swete as anie Dove,
She was Fantagruelles onlie luve;
And to her, in hys Knightly fasioun³,
Fantagruelle proclaymed hys pasioun.
This Ladye hyghte, Cycelie,
Ande in thys manere speketh she:
"It is for Knights who saye they luve
A Damoselle, ther hertes to prove;
Your luve yow swere, yet werdes are chepe,
Some Dede wolde perce my herte more deepe;
So, if that thou my luve woldst wynne,
Bryng me NIRVANA, Numbre 1."*





Then Fantagruelle fals on hys knee,
 Ande in thys fasioun answereth he:
 "Cycelie, though my queste be longe,
 My luve for thee is passyng stronge,
 Ande though I maye yet live to rue itte,
 Begorrah ande Bedadde, Ille do itte!"
 Then nounteth he hys well-wyght⁴ stede,
 For to accheve the ferly⁵ Dede,
 Ande rydeth forth in Chivalrie,
 All for the luve of Cycelie.

Ses voyages

Lysten Lordynges to the tale
 of Fantagruele ande hys travayle.
 He through manie a lande has gone,
 Fantagruele hymself alone;
 He hath voyāges through Picardie,
Babylon, Scotlandie, and Italie;
 Faye Redding hath he vysited,
 Ande eke Cathaye, ande Birkenhedde,
 Hath seen Hulme Chapelle towres bryght,
 Ande Liverpoole, of marbel whyt;
 Foughte he the Lord of Lyonesse,
 Vanquyshed Sir Brian of Burgesse⁶,
 Out-drunke ful manie a holie Frere,
 Ande out-talked Brunner the Scryvener⁷;
 Ande eke o'ercome, with doughtie hert,
 the leoun and the blake lepārt⁸;
 And slayne hym manie a dragon--
 Bote of NIRVANA founde him none.

Comment F.
 estoy
 malcontent

Lysten Lordynges, the soothe to here:
 Fantagruelle he voyaged manie a yere,
 Untyl at laste, for wante of golde,
 Grete Flete, hys snowie stede, he solde.
 Neisten⁹, hys splent¹⁰ he hadde to paune;
 He was a wearie wrecche forlorne.
 Into a vyllage didde he go,
 Hys herte blake and ful of wo,
 Ande throlly¹¹ to hymself he sedde,
 "Now Fantagruelle must begge hys bredde;
 Bote, ere that I perform thatte dede,
 I must fulfyl more urgent nede";
 Ande with hys wo remaynyng Pence,
 Entered a Gentes Convenyence.
 Upon the wooden seete he sette,
 And thus made moan, with cheekes wette:
 "Alas, alackē, Cycelie,
 Here dye I for luve of thee!"





Comment il
trouvayt
"Nirvane"

He stareth aronde, with doleful loke,
Ande seeth upon the walle an hoke;
A parchement is honge thereon;
It sayeth, "NIRVANA Numbre 1."
Then gode Fantagruelle, cryeth he,
"By alle the goddes of Fandomie,
By Aldyss, Tobb and Hamyldonne,
By Asymovve ande Sturgeonne,
By Pohle ande Kornblutt, know ye thys:
NIRVANA 1 thys parchement is!"
Then from the noysome Looe he spronge,
Hys bryches at hys ankels honge
(For swich¹² was hys grete happynesse
He thought not to adjust hys dresse),
Ande, ere that he colde go hys waye,
Arrested was for selfe-dysplaye.

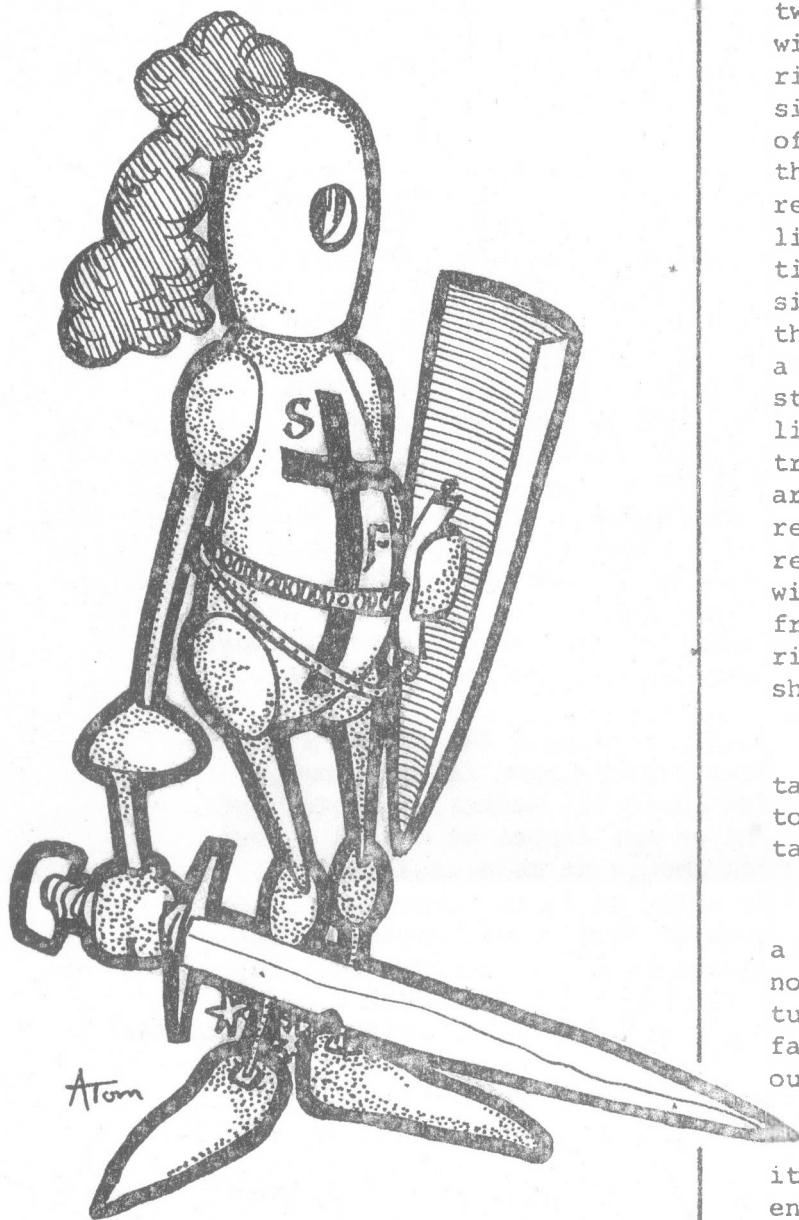
Lysten Lordynges the soothe I saye:
Fantagruelle nowe is caste awaye
For fulle III weekes, in cote¹³ vyle;
Yet on hys lippes he wereth a smyle,
For though he as a caytiff¹⁴ lies,
He hath, at laste, secoured hys prys¹⁵
Nowe in thys manere chirketh¹⁶ he:
"Soone shalle I see yow, Cycelie,
Ande when I do, Ille make a bette
Yowll have a Knight yowll ne'er forgette!"

So endeth now thys Hystorye,
Ande God save thys fayre Companye!



1. Beautiful
2. Kneck
3. "Knightly fashion" - note robust Chaucerian type pun
4. Very strong
5. Unusual, strange
6. A legendary warrior, sometimes referred to as "The Long Knight"
7. A colorful scribe of the period
8. Black leopard
9. Next
10. Plate Armour
11. Fiercely
12. Such
13. Dungeon
14. Captive
15. Prize
16. Chirps





ON THE DICHOTOMY OF REASON

by KEN BULMER

A person unable to fantasize is a sick person.

Although it is important to distinguish between external and internal fantasy, I do not wish to dwell overmuch on the labelling question right now. Fantasy comes in all shapes and sizes flung at us by the world--and in the case of sf and fantasy fans, from the Universe--and this means a clear sighted vision of what is really going on comes in handy in facing up to life. That every day brings greater difficulties in sorting out meaning from the incoming signals is unarguable, and from this follows the obvious danger that a person who lives in a wholly fantasy world is, by the world's standards, insane. Not, I think, a person who lives in a world wherein his fantasy is controlled and guided and used, for though fans are used to being the butt of would-be comic remarks from the mundane herd--and tend to revel in this as a kind of intellectual cachet with all the obvious dangers of that chauvinistic frame of mind--they do stand a better chance of riding the cresting wave of modern, and future, shock demands on the psyche.

All this really means is that one has to take one's fantasy in a dosage strength suitable to one's mental powers, and never to allow fantasy to take over completely.

The Order of Saint Fantasy, of course, bears a heavy responsibility in this area. We are not a load of nut cases parading in fancy costumes and, equally, we are not a load of whey faced academics mumbling over texts and shutting out the sunshine of real life.

The difference between the unknown and reality is, as they say, immeasurable. The difference is not measurable. Where two seeming opposites meet there is no measuring the gap that both separates and joins them.

The fantasy of modern life is a cliché. Every day our senses are assaulted by impressions that although fleetingly taken in leave indelible marks in their turn profoundly influencing our future conduct. An evening spent watching television can take our sensory equipment on journeys throughout the world, can punch holes in our sense of the rightness of the world--if there happens to be a penny dreadful tv space opera on it can synthetically let us into glimpses of other worlds and dimensions created in the tv studios--if there is a moonshot currently in action it can let us share, however vicariously, the real life drama of real space exploration.

The juxtaposition of real life horror and the ersatz tv violence is a cliché of the quality Sundays. Yet it is real and does exist and creates mensural problems critical to the values of fictional presentations. A strange outcome of this that is now receiving increasing attention is the rather chilling understanding that people tend to be more emotionally moved by fictional violence than

factual violence. A story line showing violence in an artistic form--to an sf fan this is not a contradictory ethical statement, as he has delved into alien cultures where this kind of art form flourishes--can often move more profoundly than the messily presented, out of focus shots of people being killed in Vietnam, although the one is fiction and the other fact. Yet when a factual breakthrough of violence does occur its bloody reality obliterates fictional techniques of violence in a quite extraordinary way. It is on this last peg that Fantasy can hang its apologetic hat.

How do these undeniable facts of life in the Seventies apply to the specialized sub-category of fiction we call Fantasy?

For a start, look at that 'specialized sub-category' statement. It tends to denigrate Fantasy--or fantasy-- as a kind of leper of literature. This is not so. It would be much truer to say that fantasy is the main branch of literature, and that the 'realistic,' the 'kitchen sink,' the 'suburban adultery' which has dominated literature for the past century and a half or so is the sub-category, a genre fiction that is dying with the metamorphosis of the traditional novel.

And, to be fair to our own origin, sf as she is known and loved, also is a sub-category, a genre fiction, of fantasy.

To tread on potentially dangerous ground for a moment, one can look at sf's record in, say, the pollution business. At once the understanding is reached that sf has done pretty well, by and large, simply because it embraces so many aspects and angles of looking at life. For stories that extol the virtues of science and blindly call for more technological production, there are stories that consider the deeper implications. The very real danger, just at the moment, is that pollution will suffer from a back lash of overexposure. This would be criminal. The problem is real and no amount of white washing will solve it. Even that statement, using the word pollution as a kind of grab bag noun, indicates the kind of error that can occur. Most thinking people consider that the population increase which is rocking this planet is the final problem; within reason, if population increase is handled in ways that will bring a modicum of common sense to the poor old planet, then the rest will be solved as a matter of course.

In the nature of things, when population increase is put right so that we can all have our gallon of clean air to breathe, there will arise other problems. This is to be expected. But science can solve these problems given the breathing space. And only people can do that.

I have spoken elsewhere on the role of sf in the future oriented kinds of world we inhabit. For the moment I think it right to say that any writer can deal with any subject in the way he sees fit. A story can detail a problem and draw conclusions; it may not even do that. One can strive for 'great art' in one's writing, for beauty of language, of image, of form. One

can all all these things'sf'. But it still seems to me that the proper role for sf in this crazy kind of world is to draw the lessons, to strive to find answers--impossible though that is given the time-context of understanding and scientific and technological change--deliberately to do the job of warning, of exhortation, of yellow press exposure so that no one can turn around when he sinks beneath the effluents and say: "But I didn't know!"

Granted all that. That's sf. It may not be art, but it's what that branch of sf is all about. It makes the so-called mainstream novel look like a fairy tale. Happily, as we all know, many sf devices and themes are now effectively fermenting in the sluggish juices of mundane work.

But I am supposed to be talking about Fantasy. I grant all the above, both the artistic and the didactic, the whole spectrum of sf as being of value. For those few who cry that sf should deal with our problems of the here and now, who mercilessly condemn any other form of literature as irrelevant, who keep their noses to their own grindstones and fail to look up from their self-generated sparks to the real stars above, for these vociferous taskmasters I say, "Get on with your work, we applaud you, it is valuable in the penultimate sense for it will save the world. But get off our backs. Don't keep knocking the fantasy of experience. Have some belief in what you are doing and believe you will save the world for then the writer who you today condemn as a fantasist will be the ultimate saviour of us all. Think on these things."

I can't drop a few names here, but at the Chester con someone made a remark that neatly sums up this point. I've an idea Brian Aldiss was involved, and Larry Niven, or it may have been Fred Pohl. Anyway, someone said: "All your notions of Romantic Love won't save a planet on the edge of extinction." Or words to that effect.

At first thought this seems eminently sensible. A good point. But then, with a closer look, one realizes that it is only through properly applied notions of Romantic Love that the fiendishly difficult problems of population increase will be solved, and through them the salvation of the world. We need everyone in the fight, folks.

To carry the implied point a little further and say that Romantic Love won't stop a planet from falling into its sun leads merely to the answer that the way the population behaves, from the scientists trying to develop some form of fuel or sub-lt drive to the mass of the population, depends very much on their ideas of spiritual life, of what they want, their own inherent dignity in the fact of the universe--all the things that the machine made intellects brush aside as Romanticism.

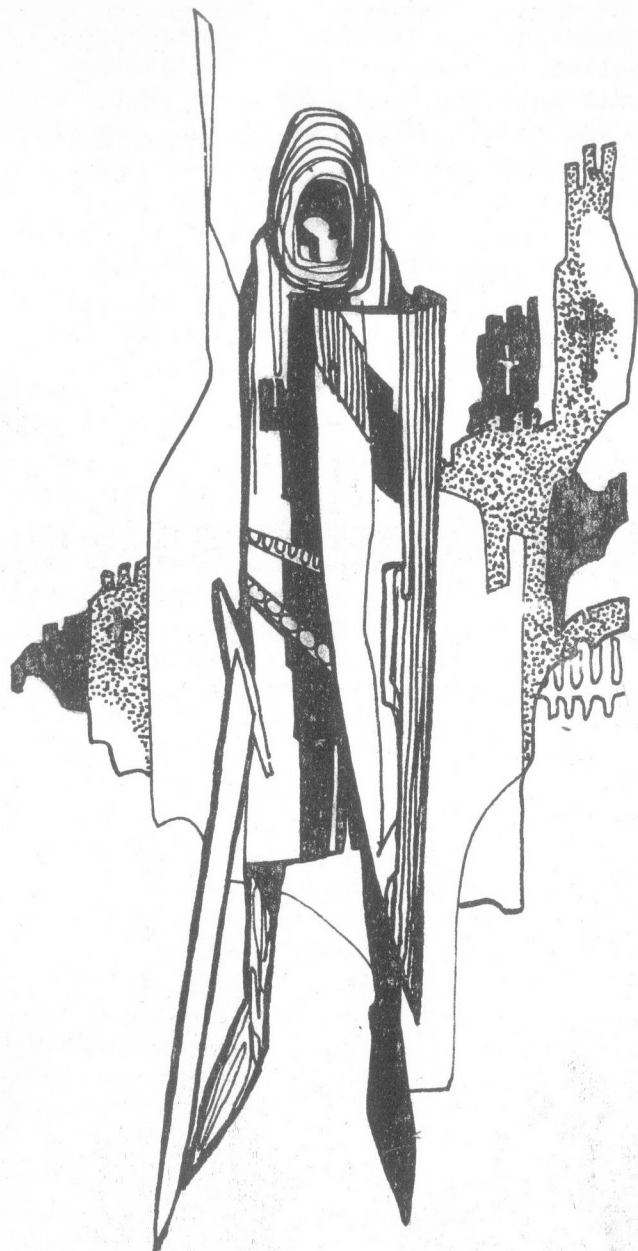
And now to bring the whole thing onto a much simpler plane, I will say: 'All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy.' So we could argue that Fantasy is essential in the world to keep us sane in an insane universe. We take time off

from our serious sf work to relax with a spot of the old fantasy. So we do. So there's nothing wrong in that. Let's all have a holiday to keep the arteries supple and the brain fresh. It's a Good Thing.

If that was all that fantasy did it would still be just about as valuable a commodity as you could find in these times.

But, of course, fantasy does a great deal more.

I don't want at this juncture to get into the great racial unconscious, the parallelism of myths and legends, the cathartic effect, even the eschatological understandings, the sudden and brief adolescent crazes for a particular writer--I gather that Hermann Hesse is the last elected guru--all these things are circulating around the central core of life. To suggest that fantasy helps us to understand more about ourselves is old hat, but at least it should be mentioned. One ought also to not to the scientists who push their research so far that they themselves claim they are dealing with a magic, or a fantasy, rather than a science.



I hope you will notice with what zeal I have been refraining from labelling. Some of these thoughts cropped up when I received a fan letter from a young lady at the University of Houston, in Texas. When I saw 'Houston' I thought it was from Ted Tubb; but it was just as acceptable as it was, anyway. She says she is enrolled in an English class, and one "objective of this course is to define and limit the realm of fantasy. I have just read your book, TO OUTFRAN DOOMSDAY, and I feel that it is fantasy, by my definition. What do you think fantasy is?"

Well. 'Define' fantasy is one thing, and can be a useful exercise though it's been done so many times before that one hesitates to cast fresh bread on the waters. But--to 'limit'!!!

You can't limit fantasy.

MIDDLEMARCH is a fantasy if you understand that George Eliot refined, transmuted and adapted her own experience and her reading into the fantasy world of the book.

If you then say that fantasy should be about things that either don't ordinarily happen, or never have happened, this makes it a little easier. SF writers were writing and talking about men going to the Moon since way back, when in, say, 1950 we wrote stories of men on the Moon you'd say this was fantasy by your second definition. We said it was sf and not fantasy. We were right. Mind you, so many scientists said it was all silly romantic rubbish and proved it was scientifically impossible (when was the last time the old joke about the rocket having nothing to push against got trotted out?) and said we were lunatics that we all got brassed off with them. It was so, true.

So that won't work as a definition. The other definition then must be that fantasy is about things that can't happen. Here is where definitions of fantasy take on something of the cult of religion in the sense that it all boils down to Faith. What you believe, yourself, could happen in a future time, no matter how far distant, cannot be fantasy but is merely an event that so far has not occurred. If you, yourself, really believe that Einstein is the last word and that no one and nothing can travel faster than light, then a story with an ftl drive in it is a fantasy. If you think that mankind will one day finagle his way around this limitation, then a story with an ftl drive is sf. You have to set your own limits on fantasy decreed by your own beliefs.

This is connected with the things of the story. What characters, what motivations, what spiritual impulses, what passions, what themes you may find that surpass your own beliefs in humanity must also bear this same personal scrutiny.

Human nature is as weird a beast as any to be found under the sun and its permutations appear endless. But some of the character motivations and emotional reactions of people

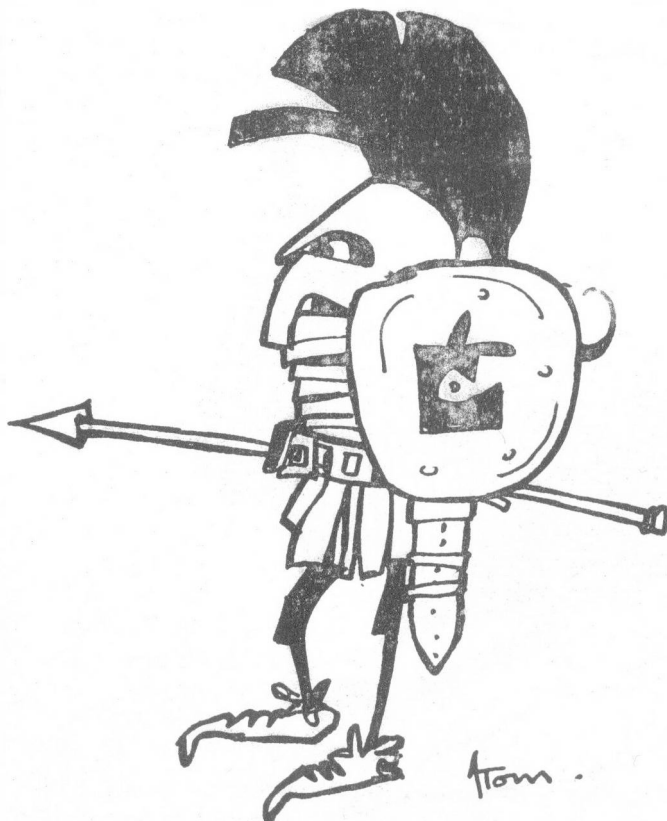
in much modern mainstream material tremble on the verge of fantasy; anyway, one just can't believe them a part of the human nature of Solterra, that's for sure.

Then there's the vexing question in your definitions of the position of the occult. This is all moonshine; this is real head supernatural fact. You take your pick. If you believe in ghosts and vampires and zombies, it is not fantasy; if you do not, it is.

Do you go around looking at people's hands to see if they have a forefinger longer than the middle finger?

So that I would answer that TO OUTFRONT DOOMSDAY (original title was POOR OLD JACK WALEY) is not fantasy. Nothing in it is supernatural, it is all explained through straight scientific means. It could happen, some day, some where. The Universe seems to be rather large.

While we're doing the spot of defining, it might be interesting to set up what I see as the definition of Sword and Sorcery. This is pretty simple. I don't agree with Sprague de Camp's definition in one sense, in that he says all problems are simple. I believe that s&s can have as complex and interesting and human a problem as any other form of writing, given its particular limitations. But to limit it to blockheaded barbarians, as Sprague de Camp seems to want to do seems to me to be to spoil the form. S&S must have swords in it, and it must have a modicum of sorcery, and this can be used by either the standard wizard or hero. It can not have gunpowder. It cannot have scientific marvels for the hero to overcome or what have you--it is really a special kind of historical fiction. Heroic Fantasy, often confused with



s&s, can dabble a toe into the scientific marvel on occasion although in general this kind of bastardization of the form lacks the same penetrative power of the pure form. To give an example from my own work, and please forgive the mention, I'd say that SWORDS OF THE BARBARIANS is pure Sword and Sorcery. The KEYS TO THE DIMENSIONS series is Fantasy of the broader kind wherein fantasy and sf and speculation brush shoulders to their mutual advantage.

To revert to the problem of violence, one can say at the outset that the bloody violence of much s&s material is a fantasy cliché in itself.

One just doesn't believe that a sword can sing a little ditty to itself as it sucks out a man's immortal soul. Yet, with a paraphernalia of surrounding hypothesis, with colour and vividness, with characterization rising above pulp levels, with good writing and with the brooding sense of wider themes behind the brilliant facade of the story, such a belief can be indulged in for the period one is reading the story--a fine writer can achieve that willing suspension of disbelief that is the crux of fantasy (I have said elsewhere that it does not apply to sf). It isn't so, it isn't true, it won't ever be true; but for the here and now of the story one doesn't give a hang that it isn't true. One dives in and enjoys the concepts.

One can believe that a prince who has become a barbarian reaver can talk to the spirits of two men whose voices he hears in his head, men he has killed himself. One can believe that a long dead sorcerer can come to life and seek destruction for the sheer glory of destruction. One can believe anything--or almost anything--within the context of the story of that story carries its own internal logic and conviction.

Serious writers have long been chary of the s&s field. Some of their attitudes have been examined. In the past their attitude could have been summed up in the words of Damon Knight: "The trouble with Conan is that the human race never has produced and never could produce such a man, and sane writers know it; therefore the sick writers have a monopoly of him." (IN SEARCH OF WONDER)

However, times they are a-changing.

Listen to Damon Knight now: "A triumphant epic of swords and sorcery...A vividness, a colour, a dreamdust sparkle." (Bacover blurb for CONAN THE AVENGER, Lancer)

This last quote may be qualified somewhere in context; but the two statements do not really hang together. Now I have far too much respect for Damon Knight's integrity as a critic to suggest he has changed his opinion of s&s for any reason other than one of changing estimation of the subject he is criticising. Fashions change, but the basic ingredients of good story telling, if they do change, change far more slowly.

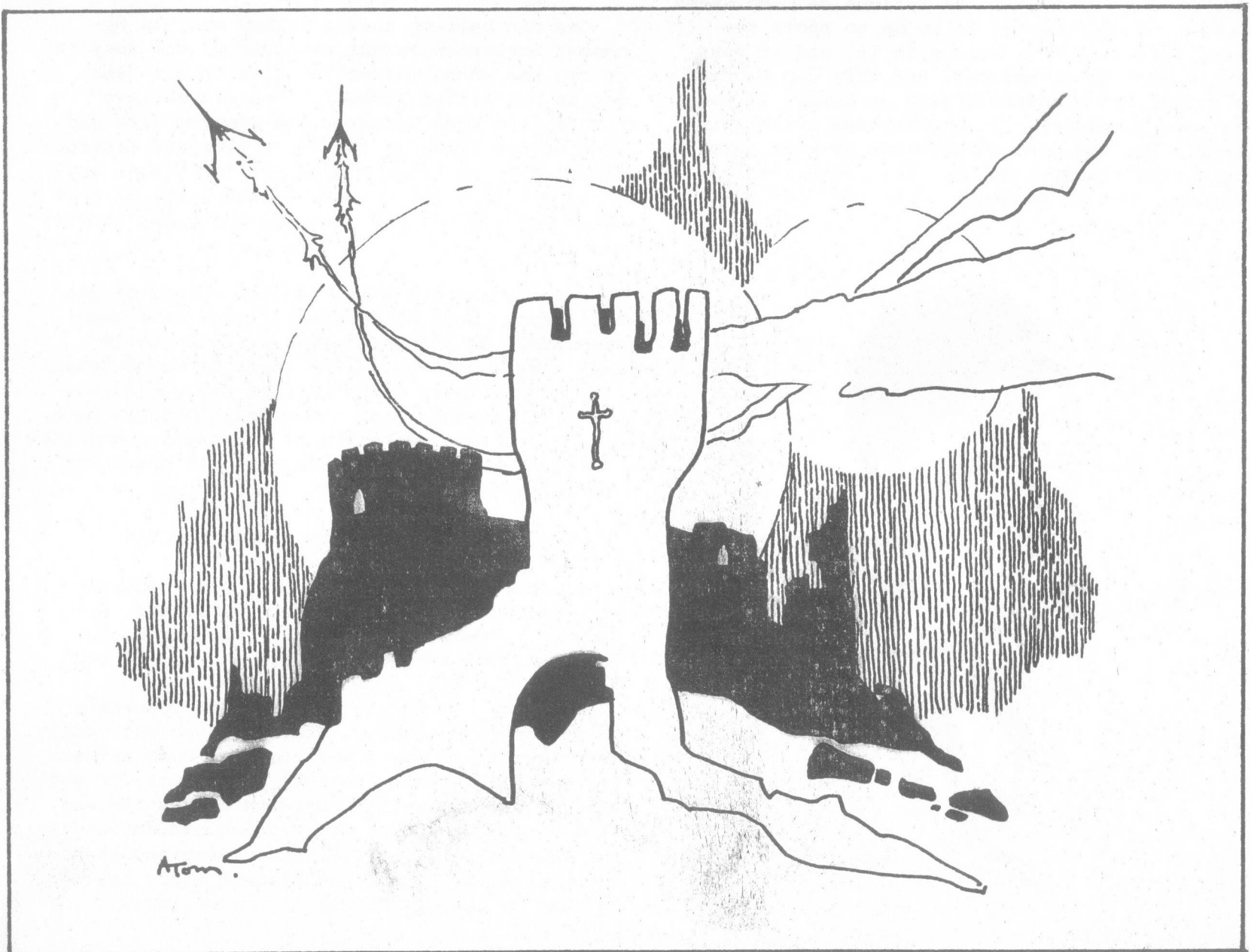
There is more to s&s, obviously, than was at first thought.

Adolescents very often get into the s&s scene, read avidly, as they may have read the comics, and then become disillusioned. They are awaiting the next transition to a plateau of interest. Very often they react to their youthful enjoyment of scenes of violence and, understandably, they then go through a period of exaggerated revulsion towards the trappings of fantasy violence. True violence is loathsome and these adolescents feel guilt and remorse that they could ever have enjoyed literature in which violence figures. Later they will come to see, among other things, the cathartic values, and the personalised basis of their attacks on s&s. These will be teenagers of sensibility, of course. One is always uneasily conscious of the moist mouthed goggler who really thinks he is Conan or Elric or whoever. This is where the opening remarks about fantasists apply; fantasy must be used as a kind of mental therapy--always alongside its purely fun and relaxation aspects, natch--and should not, really in an insane or semi-sane world, be allowed to dominate one's life.

I have a so far unpublished novel on that theme....

All this heavy business about the reasons why fantasy is so important a factor in a sane life, why it should not be allowed to dominate, why we have to get the world to rights first through sf, and when that job is done tackle the far more profound job of getting ourselves to rights (and maybe the one can't be done without the other, in inverse order or both at once). All this I would have thought could be very well illustrated by the Knights of St. Fantasy. We are not weirdies, we're not squares, we're not whatever is the latest insulting slang for either side of sixteen or seventeen; few are fen and femmefen and some of us are trufen, we believe that the Order can serve a useful purpose (and not only seeing the Grand Master's glass is full) and we know what the sword symbolizes. The truth is, no one can do without fantasy, whether they like it or not, whether they know it or not.

This is the end of an article called "Something about Fantasy" written for Eric Bentcliffe for the magazine of the Order of Saint Fantasy--BLAZON.



harry warner Jr.

STAR FIELDS

Real quick, now--who starred in the greatest number of science fiction movies before 1940?

Not Boris Karloff, unless you are terribly charitable toward the amount of territory covered by "science fiction." Not Fay Wray, even though she became famous for her troubles with King Kong and a mad wax museum proprietor in two famous films.

It was W.C. Fields, I think. But the distinction isn't really important. It's just a sneaky way to lead into an article about the Fields fad in the United States and about the way he seems to appeal to so many fans and to express my own almost unmitigated admiration for him.

If you think I'm babbling of Bill Fields, as Shakespeare almost said, think about his most famous movies.

There was "You're Telling Me" in which he is an inventor who creates such devices as a keyhole finder for drunks and uses it himself; a collapsible spoon, which betrays him when he tries to commit suicide; and an auto tire that can't be punctured. Two of these three inventions don't seem to have been perfected yet, three decades later. Many Fields fans aren't aware of the fact that this sound film was a remake of a silent Fields feature, "So's Your Old Man." In that one, Bill's main invention was a shatterproof glass for auto windshields.

Then there was "International House" with a whole barrage of science fiction devices. An Oriental genius has developed a form of television that doesn't need a cameraman on the spot to pick up things happening far away. Fields operates both a midget car, which didn't exist in the era when the film was new, and a remarkable airplane which still hasn't come into being.

Remember "The Big Broadcast of 1938"? Its plot involves a race between two luxury liners, one of which is powered by a fantastic new kind of power until W.C. Fields muddles into the mechanism.

Or an early movie version of the superman theme, "Million Dollar Legs." This involves a nation whose athletes definitely surpass any known human characteristics.

What's more, Fields didn't stop after 1940. He later appeared in "Never Give a Sucker an Even Break" which contained such things as a small segment of a lost race and some kind of simian who has obviously mutated a considerable distance from the physical nature of any known gorilla or ape. And if you insist on counting some borderline Karloff movies as science fiction, then I'll contend that "Alice in Wonderland" is an early new wave story and Fields makes a brief appearance in that as Hampty Dumpty.

But all this isn't getting closer to the main question: why have so many people suddenly begun to feel so fond of the Fields movies?

Take me. I saw several of them when I was tiny and they were brand new. I didn't enjoy them at all. Fields seemed to take entirely too long to do something funny to my young mind and he was too similar to some people in Hagerstown to be suitable for a movie screen, in my naive judgment. Fields' movies drew well enough to make him famous but he never attained the popularity that Chaplin had held in the past.

I don't know how much things may have changed in Great Britain. But on this side of the Atlantic, it's all changed. Nobody shows much interest over here in the comedians who competed with Fields, like Will Rogers and El Brendel. But television, film festivals in museums, metropolitan theatres that specialize in old movies, and even collectors of 8mm movies for home showing are suddenly in a major Fields era. Photography magazines offer complete features in 8mm, magnetic sound for \$140.00 and you can buy short silent segments chopped from longer films in 100 foot lengths for a few dollars. Three television stations in this area have staged Fields festivals in the past year or two, running a half-dozen or more of his films night after night or on successive Saturday nights, and I've heard about stations in other sections staging all-night Fields Festivals, six or seven features one after another without interruption. Books about Fields and his films continue to appear almost every year. His name bobs up in fanzines more frequently than that of any other movie comedian of his era. I know a man who never misses a broadcast or television appearance by Howard Cosell, a sports announcer, not because he cares about sports but because Cosell's voice sounds something like Fields', and somewhere in Hollywood or New York there is an extremely gifted imitator whose voice is being used to give sales pitches on television commercials in Fields' voice.

Maybe the change comes from no cause more subtle or complicated than belated recognition of genius. Poets like Hopkins and composers like Ives have been appreciated properly after their death and it's quite possible that people in the 1930's and 1940's didn't admire Fields fully for the same reason that my younger self was indifferent: stupidity.

Or the recent wave of interest in Fields might have something to do with the continuing engulfment by the future's complexities which is overtaking all of us. Fields usually portrayed a fellow who was the butt and the prey of the entire universe. A blind man wandered into his grocery shop and became an instrument of divine destruction like a malevolent god in a Greek tragedy. His harmless decision to keep his ticket to a wrestling match in his pocket set off a train of circumstances that broke up his home. Animate and inanimate forces collaborated to destroy hat after hat and even the hats that were temporarily intact refused to go

on his head at the proper time. Maybe things have always been like that for most of us, to some extent, but they're getting a whole lot more that way in recent years, as government and science and the masses of people crowd us and jostle us until we feel like saying something even stronger than "Godfrey Daniel!"

A third factor might be another common thread in the character pattern which Fields knit on the screen. He usually was an incompetent bumbling fellow in every respect except one redeeming ability or virtue: once an excellent memory, another time his mechanical knack, and even--preposterous though it may seem--love for a child in one film. Everything is so complicated today that each of us is lucky if he can attain skill in just one specialized area.

Since I saw the light and began watching Fields movies on every opportunity three years ago, I've been wondering two things, both of which provide another excuse for writing this article for a science fiction fanzine.

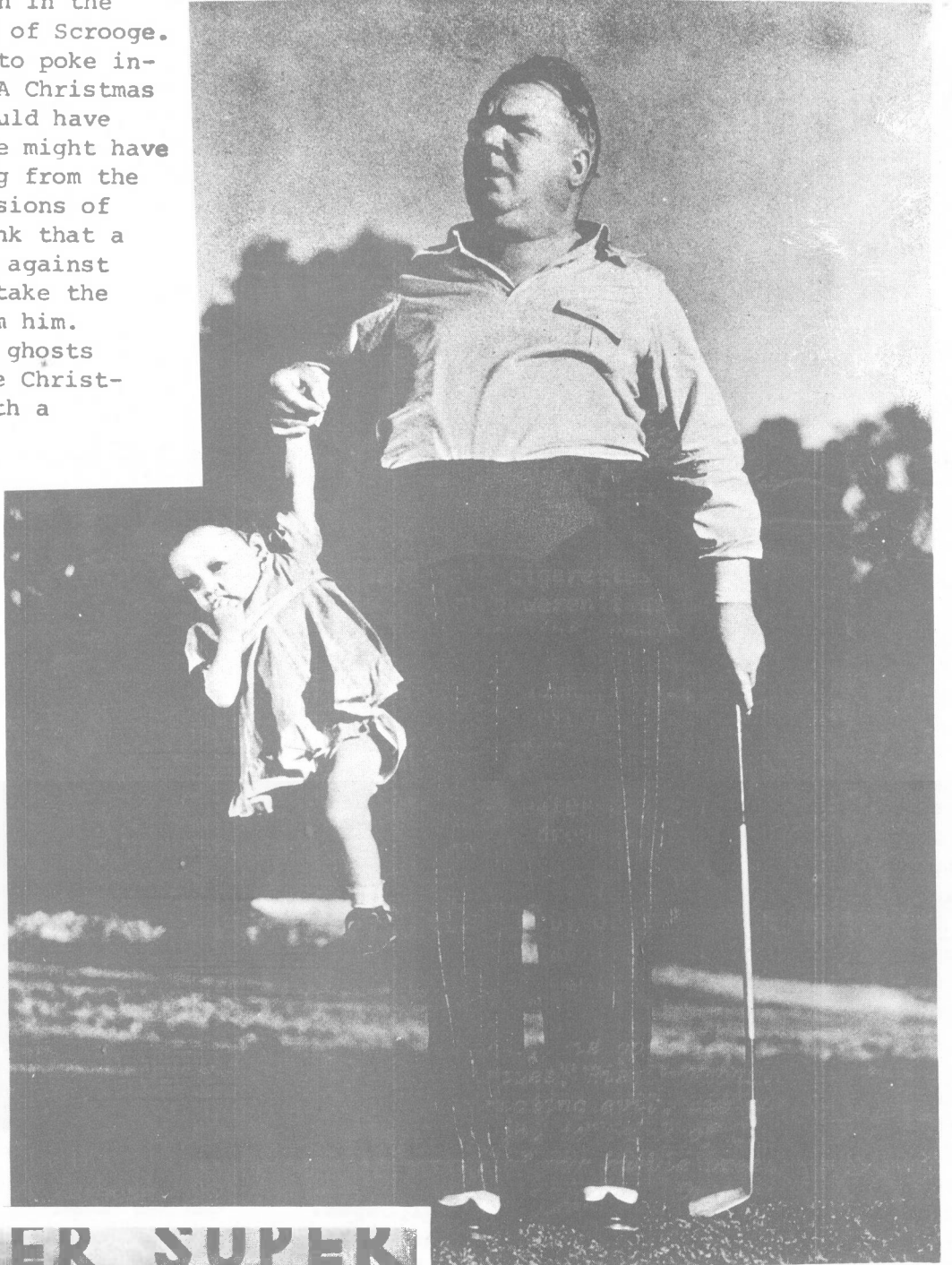
If Bill Fields had stumbled as a boy into an abandoned time machine, and had used it to move backward about twenty-five years, would his movies have been even greater? Most of his sound movies suffer to a great extent from inadequacies involving the remainder of the cast, the script, or the fact that W.C. appears in only a few scenes. Suppose he'd begun to make movies soon after the turn of the century, and like Chaplin he'd seized upon his early successes to take complete control of all his films, as Chaplin did. I suspect that he would be even greater. Without that time machine, he didn't attain stardom until it was too late for independence from producers and boards of directors and financial interests.

The other thing I've been wondering about concerns me as much as it does W.C. Fields. Suppose I ran across that time machine tomorrow, and suppose I found in the time machine a complete instructionbooklet that included assurance that I could change the course of events by interfering with bygone events. Then imagine that I thought long and hard about how much W.C. Fields' success as a comedian emerged from the unhappinesses of his real life: his terrible experiences as a boy, the alcoholism that helped to kill him, and all the other factors that helped to make him an unhappy man and a famous comedian. Should I go back to him when he was a boy and do the things that could have made him a happier man, an untwisted personality, and just a normal fellow living out his life in some kind of obscurity? Would it be more ethical to spare one man a lot of unhappiness, if that action prevented him from becoming the comedian who brought so much happiness to millions?

Fortunately, that's a puzzle that I'll probably never be forced to solve. When I get tired of wondering about it, I think of a simpler and more cheerful world of if:

Suppose Fields' one movie adventure into the

world of Charles Dickens had not been in the role of Mr. Micawber but in the part of Scrooge. No matter how many fingers happened to poke into this particular film version of "A Christmas Carol," I'm sure that Bill Fields would have made it a classic. I suspect that he might have managed to give it a different ending from the one you'll see in the other film versions of that famous story. I always did think that a strong enough Scrooge would stand up against all those people who were trying to take the old man's hard-earned money away from him. Fields would have been the man. The ghosts of his deceased partner and all those Christmases wouldn't have had a chance with a Scrooge who barked: "Drat! Humbug!"



Fields, in "The Big Broadcast of 1938." (Courtesy of Paramount Pictures)

THE ROBOT MASTER doc' weir

All of us who maintain the cause of science fiction are well accustomed to being challenged to name any Science Fiction author who is a figure in world literature in his (or her) own right. Most of us, I fancy, follow Sam Moskowitz' example, and give H.G. Wells as our example, though we might equally well have named Jules Verne, whose Voyages Extraordinaires were universally accepted, when they were written, as perfectly legitimate mainstream fiction, though of a novel and enthralling kind, or, for the matter of that, Edgar Allan Poe, or Conan Doyle. I wish I knew why it is, by the way, that people seem to associate Doyle only with detective tales and (if they know his works well) with Science Fiction, quite forgetting that he is the author of a series of excellent historical novels, as well as of such Kipling-esque adventure tales as The Tragedy of The Korosko, or such domestic tragi-comedies as A Duet with Occasional Chorus. Wells, Poe and Verne, however, are all genuinely world literature, and I personally think that Doyle has an equal claim.

Most people forget, however, that we have a much more recent example of a genuine world figure in literature of quite recent date in the shape of the Czech playwright, poet and novelist who added the word ROBOT to the language of the world. The late Dr. Karel Capek. He was an exact contemporary of several of the figures whose names have been dinned into our era by the self-styled intelligentsia till we have become sick of hearing them: Andre Gide, James Joyce, D.H. Lawrence, Benedetto Croce and Franz Kafka. He is far more universally readable than any of them, and he exerted a much more widespread literary influence than any of them--except possibly Croce, in his very specialized field. Capek's field was anything but specialized, and he exercised a world-wide influence that affected play writing, theatrical production and journalistic belles-lettres in every country, and he holds a place in international literature that no critic careful of his own reputation dare deny.

Capek was born on January 9th, 1890, in the small mill town of Hronov, in North-eastern Bohemia, where he later attended what the Czechs would call a secondary school, and we would call a grammar school, but he then went abroad for most of his university training, studying Philosophy in Paris, Berlin and Prague. He took the degree of a Doctor of Philosophy of Prague University in 1915, presenting a thesis on pragmatism--that is to say, on the doctrine

"if it works, it must be right". The attitude he took up in his thesis was the one he maintained throughout his life thereafter--"if it works, it can't be quite wrong, anyway; but don't go telling me it's right unless you can definitely prove that by no possibility on earth can it be made to work any better!"

In 1917 he, together with his elder brother Josef, a gifted artist, joined the staff of the moderately conservative Prague paper Narodni Listy, but this job lasted only a few months, since an economy drive in the managerial department led to Josef's being sacked from the permanent staff to be put on a contract basis; Karel promptly resigned, and a few weeks afterwards both brothers joined the staff of the paper Lidove Noviny, with which they remained associated for the rest of their lives. They could hardly have found a medium in which they would have been more at home; both brothers held markedly iconoclastic political views--indeed while they were in their former job they had been in constant hot water for publishing a satirical weekly (you might well have called it a fan magazine!) of their own called "Nebojsa!" a title which you could roughly translate as "Dreadnought", an enterprise, by the way, which took some nerve to do during the last days of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy with its war time censorship regulations. The infuriated censorship officials, however, invariably found that, while trampling all over their most cherished policies, the Capek brothers had somehow managed to remain firmly inside the strict letter of the regulations!

Lidove Noviny itself carried on much the same policy at a higher level; it was one of the very few non-party newspapers in Central Europe, with a famous reputation for well-informed essays and leading articles on current questions, and for good and well-considered criticism in music, literature and art.

Karel Capek had now very definitely found his niche in life; he was a many-sided man, and during his life he was many things: a poet, essayist, novelist, playwright, theatrical producer and film producer, and obtained outstanding success in all these roles. But if he was asked his profession he always described himself as a journalist and was immensely proud of his profession, since he maintained that there was no other calling that brought a person into touch with so many, varied and worthwhile people and things.

He was interested in everything, and, more especially, in all sorts of people, so that the many newspaper articles and essays that he wrote have often been collected and anthologised.

Karel Capek's fame first reached England when he and his brother Josef collaborated on a play. It was not his first theatrical experience, since he had already made a considerable name for himself in his own country with a highly melodramatic play called "The Robber" as early as 1917. The new joint effort however, was a very different kind of affair; its authors called it a comedy, but they might better have called it a sarcastic allegory; it was "Ze zivota Hymzy," which was translated into English under the title of THE INSECT PLAY. It was a bitter picture of how kindly well-meaning people can yet compose a society that, taken as a whole, behaves like a crazy and destructive lunatic, in which all their good intentions go for nothing. Written in 1920, it exactly hit the post war atmosphere of disillusionment of its time, and had a long run in many countries. It was, however, significant that the dictatorships--the Soviet Union, Japan, Italy and Nazi Germany--all banned it; Capek's bitter picture of the fighting black ants, that, once ordered to fight, go on fighting until they are ordered to stop, without in the least worrying about either whom they are fighting against or why, was one that struck too painfully at the very basic idea of the totalitarian state!

While working at this play with his brother, he was also independently writing yet another of his own, and this was his entry into Science Fiction, since it was the play R.U.R., standing for Rossum's Universal Robots, which gave the languages of the world a new word. In its original Czech the word is self-explanatory. Whereas the feudal system in England came officially to an end in 1563, in Austro-Hungary it lasted right down to 1848, so that even in 1920 there were plenty of people alive who could remember it, and the unpaid work that a feudal serf had to do so many days in the year for the Lord of the Manor was called robot, so that the word robot carried the implication of an unpaid slave worker.

It is worth mentioning that Capek's prototype robot was not the type usually pictured in Science Fiction nowadays--in particular it was not at all the type made so famous by Isaac Asimov, since it was not a machine, but rather the sort of creation that I believe it is now fashionable to call an android (and, by the way, I've seen the word android used as far back as the early 1920's).

Since I much doubt whether many of you have ever seen the play, or read it either, I'll give an outline of the plot: When the curtain rises we are on a remote Pacific Island, in the General Manager's Office of the great central factory of Rossum's Universal Robots, which has been established there so that stealing of the firm's secrets are impossible.

The General Manager, Domin, is at his desk, giving dictation to a robot typist, who is tak-

Robots, we are told, were the joint result of the work of two men; it all started with old Dr. James Rossum, who was as mad as a dingo dog, though he was a first rate biologist. He managed to discover a material which, once synthesized, would develop a life of its own--which was so eager for life that it could be stamped, turned, or press-moulded and shaped in any way. Old Rossum had tried to make actual human beings, seeing himself as a sort of Deputy God Almighty; his creations had been copies of human beings as exact in every detail as he could get them, and they had all been utter failures, none of them living for more than a few hours.

When Old Rossum died of disappointment, his nephew, young George Rossum, an engineer, had taken over. He had thrown over the idea of copying human anatomy, and had, while retaining the human shape, redesigned the whole internal anatomy, making efficiency his chief aim. The result was the present day robot--five times as strong physically as a human being, incredibly swift in both movement and thought within the limits of their knowledge, but entirely without emotions or feelings of any kind. Unless accidentally injured they would last twenty years, after which they underwent a sort of general breakdown, all organs and structure failing more or less together, when the material was returned to the raw material vats at the factory to be pulped, re-integrated, and reworked into new robots.

Domin had supplied the money and the business head, and now he was head of the firm, since George Rossum had died in a motor accident. With the development of this new giant mass production factory this was the start of a new era for mankind--freed from the grinding necessity of working for their daily bread, they would at last have leisure for things of the mind and the soul, and real civilization would begin at last.

Helena finds this too much to either believe or to grasp all at once, and the curtain falls as the morning break comes to an end and the robot secretary re-enters; Helena asks her what will happen to her in twenty years time, and gets the answer in a tone of complete indifference: "I shall cease to move."

The second act of the play is set a few years later, and Helena Varton is now Domin's wife. Domin's dreams for the future are coming true, but not at all in the direction that he had expected--practically all the world's work is being done by millions of robots, and R.U.R. is wealthy and powerful beyond imagining. But mankind is doing nothing towards improving their own lot or their education with the leisure that they now have.

On the contrary, they are growing increasingly bored and ill-tempered. Quarrels, fights and murders are of daily occurrence, and there are continual wars, in which robots, used as soldiers, kill and destroy without pity. Civilization seems to be rapidly falling to pieces.

ing it direct onto an electric typewriter at nearly a hundred words a minute. Then enters a Miss Helena Varton who has come to see over the factory, having been sent by a women's welfare organisation, to see that the welfare of female robots is properly looked after. For some little time she does not realize that the secretary herself is a robot, and is then most surprised to find that she speaks six languages perfectly, has equal facility at high-speed typing in all of them, and can carry out most routine processes better than any human.

It being then the time of the mid-morning coffee break, the five departmental managers join the scene, and the robot secretary is dismissed the room, and, in the general conversation that follows, we learn how the whole thing started.

Helena, hoping to do away with the appalling atrocities of robot warfare, urged Dr. Gall, head of the Research Department of R.U.R., to produce robots capable of human feelings and emotions such as sympathy and joy. Gall has produced a design for this, giving them a slightly improved brain, and an enormously more elaborate nervous system, and, to help them to normal emotional responses, the reproductive organs of men and women. Several hundred of the new model robots are turned out as an experiment, but their first emotion is of the most savage hatred for mankind, since they find themselves compelled to obey beings inferior to themselves in both body and brain.

Meanwhile, in the outer world, civilization is destroying itself so rapidly that Helena, in a desperate resolve to try to save mankind by depriving it of the services of the robots, steals from the safe the original formula of Dr. Rossum's raw material, known only to Domin and his departmental heads, and burns it.

Hardly has she done so, when the office block of the factory is attacked by thousands of robots, led by the new sensitive super-intelligent kind--news, meanwhile, begins to come in over the radio of a world-wide revolt of all robots against mankind. In a last frantic battle the humans are overwhelmed and killed, all except the old, slightly cracked office cleaner, Alquist, whom the robots half contemptuously spare, since, as one of them says, "He never attempted to give us orders, nor did he try to fight against us."

In the last act, some ten years later, the robots are themselves facing extinction; they, even the new sensitive type, will only last twenty years, and they have no idea how to make or to reactivate the material from which they themselves are made. Alquist, an ignorant man, and no scientist, cannot help them, and they are concentrating on a frantic research programme, which seems to become increasingly hopeless the longer they continue at it.

Alquist falls asleep in his chair, and wakes up to hear a pair of the new sensitive robots--one female and one male--discussing quietly why

it is that they cannot work or think efficiently unless they are together; apart they feel unhappy and distracted, together they are happy beyond measure, but they cannot think of any reason that could explain this. Alquist, realizing with his human experience what is the matter, tells them gently that they are in love with each other, and sends them out as the new Adam and Eve of a new race in which a new artificially produced mankind shall once more re-people the planet and build a new human race. Life never dies....

In 1926 Capek came to England, to renew there a formerly brief contact, which was now to develop into a lifelong friendship with two English men of letters. They were the most oddly assorted pair you could have found, but they both appealed to different sides of his own nature--John Galsworthy and H.G. Wells. The result of this visit was the work that put him on the map for the man in the street in England once and for all: Anglicke Listy or LETTERS FROM ENGLAND. A Voltairesque depiction of the life of the English, which is still one of the best descriptions ever published of the English and their national characteristics, as seen through the kindly, ironical and disillusioned eye of a sympathetic foreigner.

Capek's work was at once kindly, keenly observed, penetrating and intensely amusing. Curiously enough a very similar and equally amusing study of our national character appeared in the very same year, but this time written by a Dutchman, Dr. Hans Renier's THE ENGLISH, ARE THEY HUMAN?, while an equally amusing study, from the very different viewpoint of a cultured Frenchman came out four years later, Andre Maurois's THE ISLAND OF THE TEA DRINKERS. It just so happens, however, that the Czech sense of humour is generally closer to the English sense of humour than that of any other foreign people with whose literature I am acquainted. For that reason, I consider Capek's portrait of us to be far more relevant and interesting than any of the others.

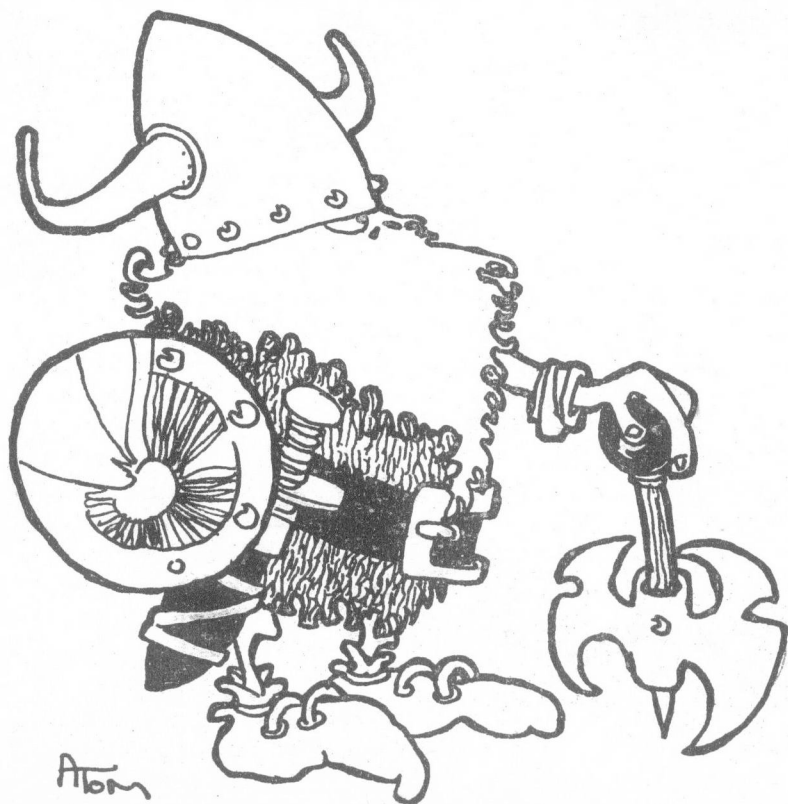
The matter of translation from Czech into English was, of course, one of Capek's biggest problems. LETTERS FROM ENGLAND, however, came by chance into the hands of a brilliant and sympathetic couple, Kim Weatherall, an Eton biology master, and his Czech wife, Mäna. They made the perfect team for the purpose: Kim Weatherall had the kindly disillusioned outlook of Capek himself, together with an enormous and very choicely used vocabulary in English, while Mäna had the intimate knowledge of Czech habits and customs and ways of thought that was essential to get across Capek's mental attitude and cultural background. The book went across with a bang from the start, and is still selling steadily today. After that Capek stuck to Allen and Unwin as publishers where he could, and asked them to use the Weatheralls as translators wherever possible.

Meanwhile, Capek had written and published his first science fiction novel--KRAKATIT; this was a story of an inventor who had produced an explosive so powerful that an ordinary match

box full would destroy a fair-sized city. The principal raw material for its production was water. It sounds like an anticipation of the hydrogen bomb, doesn't it? There just may be a little more in that than you might think, because the very first radium ever produced was extracted by the Curies from uranium ore from the great mines at the Czechoslovak town of Jachnmov. They are, even today, still the third largest uranium mines in the world, and, before 1930 Czechoslovakia had one of the best and most up-to-date atomic laboratories in Europe. I myself learnt some of my atomic physics there.

The story is a good plain fast-moving action thriller--the inventor is kidnapped by a great industrialist, then he is kidnapped from him by the agents of a foreign government, and then kidnapped yet a third time from them by a gang of international anarchists! Each of his various captors want to extract the secret of the manufacture of his explosive from him, by force if necessary. Eventually some of them, trying to manufacture the explosive from insufficient data, manage also to set it off. They, together with all their documents and records, are destroyed, and after the inventor has been dug out of the ruins and has recovered from his injuries, it is found that he now has no idea of how Krakatit is produced, or of anything about it! This book was translated by one Laurence Hyde, while the Weatheralls were busy with LETTERS FROM ENGLAND, and, in consequence, has always suffered from a stiff and stilted translation.

Immediately after this came another Science Fantasy play: THE MAKROPOULIS AFFAIR, which centers round what we used to call the elixir of life, and what Blish has seen fit to term the anti-agathic drugs, which doesn't strike me as any improvement! I do not think it was ever been staged in England, but it had a con-



siderable success in Prague, in France, and in the U.S.A., though not always as a play, since it also made history as the first Science Fiction opera.

His next s-f novel was THE ABSOLUTE AT LARGE. This is the tale of an atomic reactor whose radiations cause all those who work near it to develop a curious form of religious mania. It does not in any way affect their work, and is in all other ways a great success, so that many other similar atomic reactors are built, and set to work to run machinery of the most varied kinds all over the world. All their attendants, however, develop religious mania, and when they come to compare notes the religious outlook of each group is slightly different; each group, however, is firmly convinced that its own particular revelation and credo is the ultimate truth, so that disputes break out between the groups and get steadily fiercer till a full scale set of religious wars breaks out all over the world.

In the meantime, the reactors themselves have got religious mania of a kind, since they regard their principal duty to be to serve mankind; in consequence we have reactor driven mining machinery going on working without supervision to send ore to the surface, reactor powered railways whirling it off to the factories without orders, and the reactor powered factories going on working twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, turning out cars, radio sets, refrigerators, sewing machines and innumerable other gadgets, in quantities larger than mankind can possibly need, quite unconscious of the fact that they are thereby bankrupting the firms who own them! Also, so much food is being rushed off to the freezing and canning factories that there is none left for the population, who would be rapidly starving but for the decimation of the populace caused by the wars, which are now being carried on with all the merciless pig-headed obstinacy of a crusade! Ultimately the reactors begin to run down, and mankind, reduced to about a tenth of its former numbers, settles down again to life with a distinctly new set of views on both religious tolerance and also on what used to be called the curse of labour.

For nearly ten years after this, Capek abandoned Science Fiction altogether, though he continued to pour out novels, plays, poems, and essays outside the genre. However, the increasing growth of totalitarian government during the 1930's caused him much anxiety, and led him back to s-f with a novel published in 1936: WAR WITH THE NEWTS.

Mankind, finding an intelligent race of newts living in the Pacific Ocean, kidnaps numbers of them, and trains them to use tools adapted to their physiology, to carry out underwater engineering work to improve harbours. Newt students in increasing numbers appear to attend engineering and technical colleges. Then the newts themselves begin to mine away the continental coasts to increase their own living space--they are shallow-water creatures, and they are filling up the deeper depressions in the ocean bed with material from the coasts. Mankind finds

himself being rapidly squeezed into less and less land space, and when he tries to halt the Newt erosion by force, the inland areas are bombarded with high explosive, fired from Newt submarine war vessels off the coasts.

Here, for once, Capek does not leave us with a happy twist ending, as he has hitherto done--he leaves us to find that for ourselves--if we can! It was a pointer to his growing disquiet which, in 1937, with the growing shadow of war, impelled him to write the last of his s-f plays: THE WHITE PLAGUE.

In a country run by a merciless party dictatorship, obviously modeled on Germany, a strange new disease breaks out--the initial symptom is the gradual whitening of the skin, and while it is slow to develop it is invariably fatal. A young doctor, a member of a proscribed political party, finds a serum which will cure it; experimenting in secret and illegally he has just managed to secure definite success when he is denounced as an unauthorized medical practitioner to the Party Minister of Health, Privy Counsellor Dr. Sigelius. Before Sigelius can get the secret out of him, however, the matter is out of the Minister's hands. The Dictator has found that he himself is showing the preliminary symptoms of the White Plague, and he sends for Sigelius, informing him that he has just a week in which to find a cure--or else! Sigelius has already learnt that the serum takes several weeks to prepare so the only step left for him is to appeal to the doctor to go forthwith and use his last reserves of serum in treating the Dictator--in person, since Sigelius himself does not know how to apply it.

On his way, the doctor is stopped in the street by a group of young party-thugs who are amusing themselves by stopping all passersby and compelling them to sing a particularly obscene popular party song, under pain of being beaten up forthwith. The doctor tries to excuse himself as being on the way to an urgent case, but is at once knocked down and kicked to death, while his last phial of serum is smashed in the gutter.

This play was filmed in England in 1938, the Czech actor Viktor Lom taking the part of the Dictator, and the film was released under the title POWER AND GLORY.

This same year saw the seizure by force of the Czechoslovak frontier districts by Germany, and her betrayal by France, and in a lesser measure by England at Munich, and on Christmas Day of that year, Karel Capek, still only 48, died of a broken heart. As he himself said:

"Writing has been all my life's work, and it is the only thing I know how to do. This new regime will not let me go abroad, and anything I wrote now would never be permitted to see print. I have nothing more to live for."

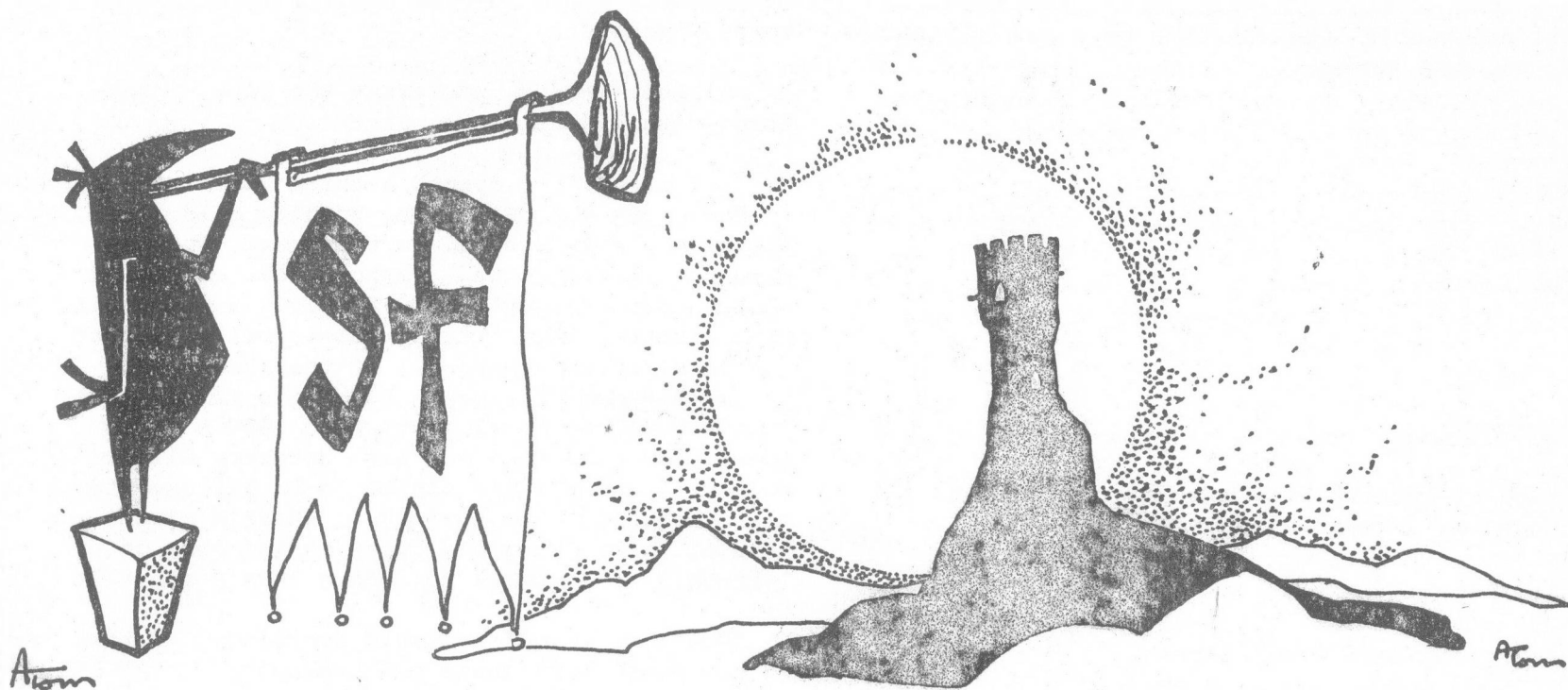
By a very lucky chance, I once happened to hear Capek's own views on Science Fiction, and they are well worth repeating. It was in 1934, at a lecture he gave on journalism and essay

writing as a career; when it came to question time, a Czech-American from Chicago stood up and asked him why he wrote Science Fiction. Capek looked slightly puzzled, scratched the back of his head, and said: "I beg your pardon, sir, I don't quite follow what you mean?"

The questioner, who sounded as though he was pretty familiar with the American s-f magazines, proceeded to explain, though rather clumsily, I thought, what he meant. When he had finished, Capek looked distinctly annoyed and replied quite sharply: "But my dear man, I don't write what you call Science Fiction at all, or if I do it's only by chance. What I do--what I always have done-- is try to tell my story through the particular medium and style that seems to me most likely to get the idea across--and that's just what everybody else does, isn't it?"

This article was sent to me by Doc' shortly before his untimely demise in 1961. Doc' Weir was probably the most literary person to become an active fan and shortly after his death the Doc' Weir Memorial Award was instituted by British Fandom to perpetuate his memory. It should, I think, be awarded for Literary Accomplishment rather than on a popularity basis.





Return of the Master

Many of you, dear readers, will have read over the years of the exploits and adventures (if by such humble words we may name them...) of SIR WILLIAM MAKEPEACE HARRISON. These few adventures (which a Kindly Government has allowed to be published), so ably chronicled by his friends, Harry Hurstmonceaux and Cyril Faversham, have amazed, astounded and enthralled multitudes; and not only in the English-speaking World is His name a household word, for the writings of his two favourite aides have been translated into no less than seventeen languages, including Welsh. In which proud land he is known as Cymru The Conqueror for his exploit in saving Tiger Bay from being drunk dry by an arid Arab. Hence the cry-- 'Cymru am Byth!', Harrison For Ever!

The most famous of His exploits, of course, have been those in which He has thwarted the evil machinations of the arch-fiend, the horribly-piranha-nibbled arch-fiend, Herr. von Neumann. Many of you will have wondered at the resilience of this oft-destroyed demon in escaping from sudden death time after time, to confront The Master once more with Fates too horrible to recall. 'Could,' you may have wondered, 'this embodiment of evil be quite human?' What is the secret power which has enabled him to escape his doom not once, but many times. Is he a Rosicrucian, mayhap?

And then, you may have also wondered at the Superhuman qualities exhibited by Harrison-- here too, is perhaps one who can be described

as 'more than human'...His god-like qualities, His impeachable virtues, His impeccable taste, His strength in combating evil, His nose--all these may have led you to think of Him as someone not merely of our humble breed. A favourable mutation, perhaps? Or something more....

At last it is possible to tell at least part of the story behind the story--not all, for not all can be translated into human terms. But let us begin at the beginning....

THE SCENE: SOMEWHERE IN THE GALACTIC DEEP
THE TIME: IMMEASURABLE EONS AGO

A meeting was in session--no earthly mind could have realised this since there was no gathering of bodies, the members of this strange council met only in mind. "Life has been detected on a new world, Sol Three," came a thought. "It shall be observed and protected," came a reply; "you, Xryalce, shall have the charge of perfecting a suitable being for this purpose. And, since this is an oxygen-planet, let your creation have a nose for trouble."

Elsewhere in space; on a planet of a strangely dark star, a most peculiar monster cackled harshly to itself as it added strange potions and ingredients, molded protoplasm, meanwhile 'eavesdropping' via its extension into the twelfth dimension on that very meeting...."And trouble it shall find," it mused, "this shall

be a pawn of most powerful evil...double, double, boil and bubble, let This One be a lot of trouble. He, he, he, heeeee...."

....eb

Eons Later...

(THE FANDROMEDA STRAIN by Harry Hurstmonceaux and Cyril Faversham)

1.

Harrison stared beyond Q's head at the grey metal wall with its dials, scanner screens and flashing lights. I'd give my next month's stipend to know what the hell they are all for," He thought. He felt depressed. His thoughts revolved about Sheila Blige, and He wondered just why it had all gone wrong. God, He thought, but I could use a Wolfschmidt.

"Ah, so you're here, Willy," Q was saying. He had raised his eyes from his paperwork, and was noting briefly but with seeming approval Harrison's casual aquamarine dinner jacket, brocaded Mapps & Crotchet shirt and diamante bow tie. "Yes...well now, we're sending you off to take a look at this chap Gustav Stool--you know something about him, I take it?"

Harrison jerked himself together. "Head of LAFF, isn't he, sir?"

Q nodded gloomily. "League Against Fan Faticism. Pretty murderous and dedicated organization. And they mean business, Willy. Here, CIA send me this just forty minutes ago. Read it." He handed Harrison a rather creased paper-backed copy of THE CARPET BAGGERS

"I've already done so," said Harrison. Perfunctorily amusing, but--"

"No, no, *here*, page seventeen, para two; comma at the end of the third line."

Harrison took a transistorized electron-microscope from His waistcoat pocket and, holding it over the comma, read: "CIA to Q. Urgent. Information received LAFF proposing to endanger Good Life by exterminating elite of International Fandom at Frome Worldcon. M.O. not clear, as full details were known only to our operative WM7, eliminated 0317hrs (EST) today. Death due to homogenization of the thalmus caused by sub-sonic pistol fired at close range. Operative was discovered naked and completely smeared with glutinous brown substance which lab analysis and Consumer Association tests established as chocolate yoghurt. Unmistakeably an action of LAFF counter-espionage: request urgent action by

competent agent. Love to Bedelia and the kids. Message ends."

Harrison nodded, pocketing the book. "Anything detailed on Stool, Sir?"

"Let's see." Q opened a thick manilla folder. "Ah yes, Sixtyish. Totally bald. Thickset. Purple eyes, no eyebrow. Three nipples. Likes women. Pathological obsession about chocolate-yoghourt. Formerly a St. Pauli pimp amongst other things. Lives well, present source of income unknown. At the moment he's at the Bideawee Christian Lodgings, Frome--this year's Worldcon Hotel, you know. Got a suite there under the name of 'Sir. Coventry Climax.' He's with a woman who claims to be his daughter, calls herself 'Dandy Climax.' There's also a kind of valet--mongloid dwarf by the name of 'Crunch.'" He looked up. "And that's about it."

"Not much to go on," said Harrison. "I take it you want me to leave right away?"

"Yes, get down there for about seven. Book in the Bideawee under the name of Warren G. Wonka--it's all laid on. Find out what's happening and take any action you see fit. Draw the usual issue from stores. You'll need a neutron gun and possibly a microelectroencephalograph. And, Willy--"

"Sir?"

"This time don't forget your anti-satyriasis jab."

2.

The restaurant, with its revolving pink-glass dance floor and tired balalaika orchestra was almost prototypically mediocre, even tho' it did evoke memorias of early London Conventions; but (apart from the execrable Sauce Bernais) it had been a good meal, and Harrison felt more or less at ease. Sheila Blige was almost forgotten now, and His thoughts began to revert to food, good and bad. He recalled a dingy little place in Kuwait where the Chicken Chakhadarta was always flamed in fusel oil; and the extraordinary Cafe Pizarre in La Paz, whose menu included enchiladas served with orange mousse.

"I do hope you don't mind me joining you. All the other tables seem to be occupied by these delicious fan-people."

Harrison looked up. Opposite him sat a girl of about nineteen with a pale, oval face of exquisite prettiness. Her hair (the exact breathtaking golden-brown of the Mercedes CGB 4750 he'd driven south from Sao Paulo the winter of '63) fell in soft, unsophisticated profusion about her shoulders. She wore a formal turquoise evening gown whose rather prim decollete revealed her slender white shoulders and the promise, as they say, of full firm breasts. She smiled

with a disarming candour. "I'm Dandy Climax," she said softly.

"I can well believe it," said Harrison, sinking his teeth into an avocado. "Sir. Coventry's girl, aren't you?"

"You know Daddy, then?"

"Slightly. I'd like to know him better, of course. And, indeed, his daughter." He irradiated a calculatedly casual smile. Something about her cheekbones reminded him of a little Thai sing-song girl he'd known briefly--twelve minutes or so--in Kuala Lumpur. "Perhaps," he said, "I might show you my collection of Eddie Jones Originals, the unexpurgated ones, of course?"

"Of course," said the girl, with a kind of droll impatience. "And, well, I want to talk to you anyway. It's important, too. Something that may affect the lives of all these darling fan-people."

"I see...you know who I am then?"

"Certainly. As a matter of fact, I'm from the Department too. I'm nothing to do with Steel really, my name's actually Gillian Gorringer."

"Of the Shropshire Gorringses? Brigadier Gorringer's daughter?"

"Yes. Yes...but listen. Steel's cooking up something pretty fearful, as you know--and--I've found out it's scheduled to happen tomorrow night at the Banquet. Look, we'd better go up to your room--Steel's men are all over the hotel. I'll tell you everything upstairs." She rose.

"Everything," she repeated rather couchantly.

3.

Harrison groaned, softly, and turned his head on the pillar. "Are you awake, Gill?" he whispered.

The girl's eyelids lifted, and her periwinkle blue eyes regarded him with the blissful languor of sated passion. Her full, moist lips--tactually reminiscent of, he thought, a rather good cranberry jelly with kirsch he'd once had at Sardi's--parted slowly. "Darling," she murmured softly, "d'you know anything about boring old subsonic microwaves?"

"Good God," said Harrison, "Why?"

Gillian shifted restlessly between the soft sheets. "Well," she breathed, "you probably know they exhibit a frequency response of exactly seventy-eight point two decibels--"

"Yes, yes...go on."

The girl's eyes were misty now, and full of an infinite tenderness. "All these wonderful

people--Ethel, Brian, Ramsey--oh, it mustn't happen, it MUSTN'T!"

"Yes, but what's Steel planning to do?"

"Well, Sir Norman Shorrocks is an amateur wine-maker, as you know, specialising in fermented cinders. He'll undoubtedly be drinking his own stuff at the Banquet tomorrow when he makes his speech on Null-A Logic and The Human Predicament. Fermented cinders, you see," she added quietly, "exhibit a frequency response of precisely seventy-eight point two decibels."

"Hell," said Harrison. He propped himself up on his elbows. "And where's Steel now?"

"He said he was going to the Institute."

"Institute?"

"Yes, it's some sort of phoney medical Research Centre he's set up--a former depot of the Min. of Ag. and Fish he's acquired. But I believe the whole business smells."

She shivered. "Why? Are you going there?"

"Well, perhaps not right away," smiled Harrison.

4.

Ten thirty p.m. Harrison left the Brabham in a fairly discreet lay-by and made his way on foot down the dark rutted lane that led to the Steel Institute. After about a half mile, his path was barred by a pair of great wrought iron gates. On either side of them stretched a tall wire-mesh fence, obviously electrified, possibly radioactivated. He took out what looked like a small gold-plated propelling pencil and twisted its cap, once. The pencil immediately began to emit a low buzzing sound; from its point came a thin beam of yellow-green light. Harrison directed the beam at the metal of the gates, and waited. After exactly nine seconds the pencil disintegrated.

Muttering an untranslatable Urdu obscenity, he tried the gates. They were unlocked, and he pushed them open. Inside, he found himself on a long elm-bordered driveway. At the end of it he could see the dark bulk of the Institute building. He walked cautiously forward.

There was a sound of dogs barking; it grew rapidly louder, more distinct. By God, they were onto him already! And they were getting closer....

He turned as there came a rustling from the shrubbery, a melee of baying and yelping, and suddenly two great dark shapes were upon him, snarling and tearing. He tried to fend them off with one arm, while with the other he fumbled in his jacket pocket. "Fang!" came a man's cry. "Sabre! Where the 'ell are yer?"

"In all my twenty-two years as a Stipendiary Magistrate, I have never encountered a case of such abject foulness. That a man of your standing--" Harrison's eyes flicked gloomily about the courtroom--"a man in important and confidential Government service, should stoop to such...such adolescent voyeurism..." Harrison gave a start. There in the back of the courtroom sat Gillian Gorringe, alias Dandy Climax. As lovely as ever, and undoubtedly as lethal.

"...I observe too, that in July, 1965, you were fined forty shillings for persistently importuning the mezzanine maid at the Balaclava Hotel, Burselm...."

And, there was a big, bulky man beside her. Quiet grey suit. Bald; no eyebrows; purple eyes. Evil. Unmistakably Gustav Steel. And next to him a dwarf. The dwarf. Yellow, small, and imperfect in every detail.

"...However, in view of your comparative youth and distinguished Abyssinian record, I am prepared to take a lenient view... Five pounds, and you may consider yourself extremely fortunate...."

Harrison paid his fine and got out of the courtroom as quickly as possible. He ran into the rainswept street and approached a taxi-driver propped against his cab. "A girl," he panted. "Beautiful--a bald-headed man-- a mongloid dwarf--"

"Ah, well now, that might be a bit difficult. But I know a nice little widow, late middle-age, very accomodating she is too."

No, NO, NO! Have you seen anyone like that?"

The driver scratched his head. "Well, yes, as a matter of fact I have. They took my mate's cab about five minutes ago. I heard them ask for--let's see now--the Club Tabu. That's a place off the cattle market. Very sexy. You know--interesting diversions." He winked. "Shall I take yer?"

"Yes," said Harrison. "But hurry, man, for God's sake HURRY!"

"I know how it is," said the driver.

The Club Tabu was a typical back street cellar club, deserted at that time of day. There was not ever a solitary attendant to question Harrison as he descended the steep flight of steps to the dim, dusty smelling bar. He looked about him apprehensively. No one. There was a door to his right. He tried it. It opened into a long, white tiled corridor, and he passed along it to another door marked 'GENTS' at its far end. Beyond this, a spiral of worn steps led downwards into gloom; he descended them cautiously. He found himself in a dank, evil smelling brick labyrinth.

Harrison had managed to find the tiny mauve capsule he'd been searching for. He bit into it once, quickly, and flung himself to the ground. "Don't 'ee move!" came the man's voice. "I see yer! I got a rifle 'ere! Stay where y'are!"

"Keep back, you bloody fool!" roared Harrison above the baying of the dogs. "That pellet contained Zyklon-B! It's gas, d'you hear me, gas! Keep clear!"

A man's tall silhouette suddenly appeared from the gloom, and simultaneously a ghastly, sulphurous stench began to permeate the night air. "Gas, is it?" said the man suspiciously. "Down, Sabre; down, Fang! Down boys! Gas, eh? Well you don't frighten me, mate! You just come along, and we'll see what Matron Lindsay has to say about all this."

"The bitch!" said Harrison with feeling, thinking at that moment not so much of Matron as of Gillian Gorringe.



"Remain quite still, please." The voice came echoing from somewhere behind him. "Quite still." There was the customary sudden, blinding flash...

6.

Strangely enough, he had no headache, but he felt sick and rather dizzy. His first impression was of a muted, purposeful buzz of activity; slowly opening his eyes, he was dazzled by a fantastic even, white brilliance. He became gradually aware that he was sitting upright in the centre of an enormous blue-tiled room--some kind of control centre? On a long raised platform opposite, a dozen or more white-coated technicians sat with their backs to him before a bank of screens set into the wall. He was strapped tight--with leather thongs, by the feel of it--to a rigid, high backed metal chair. A figure moved into his range of vision, and with a sudden shock of fear and revulsion he recognized Dandy Climax.

She was dressed in the uniform of an officer of the Bulgarian W.V.S. Beside her the dwarf, in an impeccably tailored Eton suit and shiny black topper, jumped up and down in manic glee.

And now the most traumatic sight of all--Steel himself--moved into view. His thick, muscular legs were encased in a pair of mustard yellow ballet tights; fastened from his neck and falling about his naked, hairless, sweat glistening, tri-nippled torso was a torero's crimson cloak, gold edged and spangled with golden zodiacal symbols. Tiny jade bells, of an exquisite design (probably Ming Dynasty, thought Harrison), dangled from his earlobes, and in his hand he carried a broad bamboo scimitar (Harrison identified it as a pangu, a weapon much favoured by the hill tribes of unexplored northern Sumatra). Observing that his victim had regained consciousness, Steel strode jauntily over to Harrison and stood looming over him, his ugly yellow egg of a head sleek with sweat.

"Ah," he smiled, stubbing out a Gauloise with leisurely relish on the tip of Harrison's nose, "He's awake at last--our Ministerial superman, sent down by Whitehall to save dear old fandom! Well, chum, allow me to explain to you what's going to happen to the whole Nocturnal Emission in approximately three minutes from now." Steel's voice was deep timbred and he enunciated his words rapidly, in slightly accented but very precise English--the precision, perhaps, of some dour anonymous nanny in his unimaginable childhood. "You'll just miss seeing it on our monitors, I'm afraid--but I'm sure you'll be interested in some of the organizational details. You know, I take it, that Sir Norman Shorrock--something of a gastronomic masochist, one fancies, --is drinking his own cinder wine at the banquet tonight. The bottle, of course, will be broached immediately before he begins to speak." He glanced at his watch. "Which will be almost any time now."

"Exactly seven and one half seconds after the cork has been drawn," he continued, "the F to R

ratio of a megalostat secreted beneath the banqueting table will become critical. Homeostatic imbalance will thereupon ensue, and--presto! No less than eleven tons of Chocolate Yoghourt will Disembogue into the banqueting hall through eighteen concealed wall gratings at a mean temperature of twenty-seven hundred degrees Centigrade, OBLITERATING EVERY LIVING THING IN ITS PATH!!!"

There was a rising murmur of excitement from the technicians, who had begun to crowd about the monitor screens. It was obviously nearing zero hour.

"Interesting," said Harrison, feigning a calmness he certainly did not feel. "And just what are your plans for me?"

Steel's eyes flickered in the direction of the screens. "For you, my dear old pillar of the Establishment, we've arranged a fairly imaginative, if melodramatic, apotheosis. The chair to which you are strapped, you see, is fixed to a conveyor belt leading directly into our experimental laboratories. We've only a couple of minutes but I feel I must tell you briefly, what's now about to happen to you at the various--what shall I call them?--assembly points. In Bay One you'll be given a ten second spray with a rather ingenious little bacteriological device which will infect you--permanently, I'm afraid--with paratyphoid, chicken pox, yaws and swine fever. After that you'll visit our Chromosomal Disintegration Chamber, where the molecular structure of your genes will be completely reformed within forty seconds flat." He smiled. "That, I fancy, should be rather fun. Next, you'll reach our patented wave-radiation apparatus, where you'll be bombarded with concentrated cosmic particles for eighty-three seconds precisely. Finally you'll be given an enema." His eyes darted to his wristwatch. "Et voila, c'est tout."

"You're mad, of course," said Harrison conversationally, "quite mad. Coprophilia, obviously, but combined in this case with a pathological hatred of fandom and fan-purity. Are you basically an anal-retentive, I wonder, or was it just that Brunner once refused to sell you his autograph...?"

"Sir!" came a hoarse, excited cry. "Megalostat activated! Yoghourt now entering pipeline! Sixty-three seconds to zero!! All systems, GO!"

Steele's eyes glittered insanely. "Twelve years... My God, I've waited twelve years...." He pressed a button at the side of Harrison's Chair. "Goodbye, old chum," he said, with a quiet, crazy glee. "Sorry you'll miss the show!"

Harrison's throne jerked forward and began to trundle slowly towards a low, brightly lit tunnel directly ahead. Above the whine of the synchrogenerators he could hear the low menacing rumble of molten yoghurt surging upwards into the pipes. All those wonderful, wonderful fans.... He could almost hear the frenzied screams, the hoarse gurgling.... There had to be some way out, some seemingly trivial detail

he hadn't considered--think, man, he told himself feverishly, THINK!

His thoughts raced. First, the conveyor was obviously controlled by some sort of high torque rotor rheostat. Probably too, there was a series parallel starter. Now what was it his old science tutor used to tell him about three-phase interlock driving mechanisms? Ah yes, yes--but he'd have to be quick!

He was able to move his fingers--just. Fumbling with his right hand, he managed to locate the neutral link assembly on the chair arm. Does the bloody thing have auxiliary isolators for sequence starting He wondered. It ought to have--it must have...

And for once in this story his luck was in. The toggle spring suddenly snapped away from its shroud support, and with a quick crazy upsurge of hope he saw the gusset plates on the multiple gudgeon unit begin to buckle. He was almost at the tunnel's entrance....There was a great grinding roar as the reverse entry adaptors slowly tore themselves away from their spreader housings and toppled, with a shattering crash, to the laboratory floor. *My God*, He thought dazedly, *it worked!* Bless old Stinky Carruthers!

He jumped from the chair. "Stop him!" roared Steel. "Don't let him get to the controls!"

A needle beam of concentrated negative-protons flashed past his ear. He ran to the control panel and threw the de-activation switch. Another beam sliced into metal not more than five centimeters from his head. He was done for, but they wouldn't get those wonderful people at the Banquet, they wouldn't eliminate the backbone of fandom. No use to run now. He turned, heart pounding, and waited for the final beam--the one that would reduce his cortex to a glutinous grey omelette.

"Everybody keep quite still!!!"

As Harrison's eyes darted to his left, he saw two completely incredible things. First, the white coated technician who had been firing at him was crumpling slowly to the floor. Secondly, Dandy Climax was holding one of the new Dunhill pocket disintegrators against Gustav Steel's middle nipple. Beneath her stood the dwarf, his wrinkled little face grim.

"What the hell?"

"Keep very still, everyone," said Dandy Climax levelly. "In exactly three and one half minutes, seventeen men from the N3F Counter-espionage unit will be joining us. Until then, you'll please do as I say."

Steel's face--his whole head--had turned a hideous greenish grey. Saliva trickled from his blubbery underlip. His mouth worked impotently, trying to frame the words that would encompass his rage and disbelief. "You," he cracked. "You--and Crunch?"

"Operatives C/34/DFG/9 and /9½ respectively," said the girl blandly. "Keep quite still, please."

"But no, no, it's not possible; we were--you were my..."

"Mistress?" said Dandy Climax, with a little tremor of disgust. "Yes, I was your mistress, Steel. Even now I can't think of your caresses without a crawling sensation. But it was worth it," she added quietly. "My true love, Brian Burgess, has been saved...."

God, what a girl! thought Harrison. But if she was from the Department, why had she sent him on that wild goose chase to the Institute? Never mind, he'd take it up with the writers afterwards. Because now there really would be an afterwards.

"So you really are Brigadier Gorrings's daughter?" He said, with an uncertain grin.

"The Department, Willy, burdens me with many strange names," smiled the girl. "My real one's Halo Groyne. Friends--special friends--usually call me Halo."

"May I?" asked Harrison.

"May you what?" queried Halo kittenishly.

...But that, dear reader, is another story.

THE END

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS: The authors would like to acknowledge the technical assistance, guidance and money of the following, without whose help the incredible story you have just, we hope, read could never have been told: Sir. Gavin Proudpiece, KCB, MBE (Dept. MI5); Blacky Duquesne (N3F); the Imperial War Museum; United Artists; Birds Eye International; and Roger Gorman. A special dept of thanks is due to Miss Mackintosh of Greek Street, London, for her unflagging co-operation at all times during the preparation of the mss.



They do say that Great Fannish Minds Think Alike, They Do. Certainly it seems to have worked that way with Chessmancon Report Titles...purely coincidentally, Bob Shaw, Mike Meara, Peter Roberts, and myself, all unbeknownst to each other, decided to use as a title, CHESTER SONG BY TWILIGHT....at least Mike Meara and Peter Roberts did. Bob changed the title of his piece, as you'll note. Myself? Well, after a struggle with CHESTER CONKLINATION and my conscience, I decided that I'd stick with my version. So as a general subtitle for what you are about to receive, May I submit...

CHESTER'S THROG BY TYPEWRITE....

All Our Chester Days

BY BOB SHAW

All the other members of NIF (New Irish Fandom) set off for the Chester convention on Friday afternoon, but because of work commitments I had to put in a full day at the office, and Sadie and I didn't leave until evening. That sort of situation always makes me rigid with despair.

"Here I am at work while everybody else is enjoying fabulous adventures at the Con," I kept telling myself, while knocking hell out of a brand new office typewriter (it was a mint Imperial). "I'm being Left Out. I'm Missing Things."

As it turned out, all the gloom was unnecessary because the early plane--carrying Jim and Peggy White, James and Ann Lavery, Brendan and Denise McHugh, Graham Andrews and Tony Moran--went via Manchester and it took the group hours to make train connections to Chester, with the result that they didn't reach the Blossoms till mid-evening. In contrase, Sadie and I took off from Aldergrove in an elderly Viscount at 7:30, landed at Liverpool, haggled with taxi drivers until one volunteered to drive us to Chester at a reasonable fee, and we walked into the foyer of the Blossoms an incredible 115 minutes after leaving Northern Ireland. This produced such a pleasant sense of somehow having come out ahead of the game that a modest celebration was called for. So we headed for the cocktail bar and skelped back a number of gin and tonics while saying hello to old friends. It wasn't until I noticed how much we were being charged for the gin and tonics that the feeling of euphoria wore off slightly--I can assure you that at the Blossoms cocktail bar prices, alcoholic is non-habit-forming.

Anyway, Friday night turned out to be really good--the sort of night which is the main reason I go to conventions. There was a generous complement of the familiar, intellignet, interesting, knowledgeable, humorous faces of the fans I really like and--as is the way at British cons--

it all seemed even better because it was Friday night and everybody knew the whole thing still lay ahead. We all had fannish fortunes in the Bank of Time. One way in which U.S. conventions score over British is that they are spread out over more days. At the Boston con in September I was very much aware of having that extra time in hand, and so there was none of that sense of urgency which leads British fans to stay up all night and become too tired to get maximum benefit of the following day.

Dave Kyle, I'm glad to say, is a leading member of a new movement to go to the Eastercons on Thursday and stay over till Tuesday. He and Ruth almost sweet-talked Sadie and me into an extra day in Chester this time, and if we hadn't had arrangements made to go to London we'd have done it. See you next year, Dave!

I suppose that in what purports to be a con report one should make some mention of the official programme. Regrettably, I have a tendency to go to conventions and not see any of the programme items, but this doesn't mean that the programme isn't important to me. I like to be near the programme and let it induce currents in me, a coil of nerves in the vicinity of the con hall's electromagnetic field. Some other fans feel the same way (I won't name any names) and it is pleasant to sit with them in the bar, speculating on what is actually happening in the hall and listening to fragmenting reports from runners--"George Hay has got up to ask a question," "The projector has broken down," "There's been an outbreak of sporan rash among the Scottish fans," "George Hay is still asking his question..."

At the Chessmancon, however, I decided to pay attention to the official programme. I set out after it on a number of occasions, tracked it down in its lair, and sat there and stared

at it. The experience left me with the following jumbled impressions and memories:

I enjoy Harry Harrison's talks--they're like a series of sound effects which convey a message.

Larry Niven was Guest of Honor and his more serious approach to talks, on the other hand, isn't entirely suited to the mood of British conventions where there is a tradition of irreverence to pro authors. At American cons the author gets up and projects himself as seen through his books, emphasizes the difference between himself and his readers, and this is fine because there's a sense of importance about a big U.S. con and it is to be expected that the speakers will be important, successful men. On this side of the Atlantic the conventions are more homely. We all know each other, and we remember the pros turning up at the White Horse on their bicycles, not so long ago, and we respond to the Big Name who gets up and lets us see that he's a small name at heart, which is another way of saying that all of us really are Big Names is the truth were told.

When it comes to public speaking, John Brunner has a certain je ne sais quoi, but I don't know what it is. At the banquet he announced that Brian Aldiss had won the British Fantasy Award and I listened to hear which work of Brian's had earned him yet another honour. All I heard was John concluding with something like, "Never before has a moment of eclipse been turned into such an instant of triumph." As I had completely forgotten that Brian's latest collection was called "A Moment of Eclipse?" I was left with the feeling that John still had not told us the name of the award winning work. After the banquet I met him in the lobby and confessed my ignorance.

"It was for 'Moment of Eclipse'" John said reprovingly. "You weren't paying enough attention."

This prompted me to check with as many people as I could to see if they had understood John's reference to the award, and I didn't find one who had! Somehow I got the feeling that nobody really cared much about the award one way or the other.

Enough about the programme items. Other pleasant memories are of Chuck Partington producing four bottles of an excellent beer called "Oh Be Joyful" and giving them to me as a gift. Incredibly, he had remembered hearing me praising this beer (I used to drink it when living in Bolton but it is unobtainable in Northern Ireland) at the previous con and had brought them specially all the way down to Chester. What an example to other committee men on how to win friends and keep your conventions happy! What a credit to British Fandom Chuck Partington is!

A similar pleasant memory is of Brendan McHugh producing a full bottle of 180 proof spirit which, in his profession as a food chemist, he can distill with yeast, sugar and impunity. (He always keeps a bottle at

home--plus a number of little phials of flavouring such as peppermint, aniseed, etc.--and has earned a reputation as a lavish host by offering his guests a choice of any liquor they desire. When somebody asks for, say, Pernod, he dashes into the bedroom, adds a drop of aniseed flavouring to his almost tasteless spirit and hands them a large glass of it.) Somehow the convention bottle came into my keeping at the end of the con, so Sadie, George Hay, Sam Lundwall and I went into a bar near Chester Station, ordered four gin and tonics and discreetly boosted their contents with it for about thirty minutes. And there was still enough left for a modest booze-up in London a couple of days later! What a valuable addition to fandom is Brendan McHugh!

The reference to a room party brings up an interesting point, concerning the very noticeable lack of them at Chester. Peter Roberts, writing a con report in Vector, (who also, by the way, got in first with the title I was going to give this report) says the reason was that the hotel bar was open most of the night, but I disagree. The big attraction at a room party is the company, not the liquor, therefore the bar being open wouldn't make much difference. I think that 1972 was simply the year of the jackpot for British conventions. The room parties are a vital part of a convention, yet we tend to leave all the work and expense of them to a small dedicated band who have thrown open their rooms for many, many years with little sign of a relief column emerging from the ranks of newer fans. There was bound to come a time when the perennial hosts would say, "I'm tired--let somebody else hold the party this year, and we'll go to it." And there was bound to come a time when all these good fans would experience the same reaction in synch. That time was Easter 1972.

I am more guilty than most fans in this respect because I love the room parties and have done since the Festival Con in '51, yet it never occurred to me to act as host. The thought has occurred now, of course, and next year New Irish Fandom will hold a party which we hope will be among the noisiest and most crowded on record. But, as the late night room parties are obviously so important to the success of a con, should our thinking on them not be taken a step further? Should some room parties not be made official or semi-official events with some backing from the committee?

The fans lucky enough to be invited regularly to the existing "exclusive" type of party may see little point in the proposal, but it could mean that many conventioners who aren't members of in-groups could get a lot of extra enjoyment and be brought further into fandom instead of having to drift off to bed like Cinderellas at midnight. At U.S. conventions the big fan groups actually advertise their parties in the programme leaflet and--whatever the drawbacks of such a party may be--there is no doubt they promote our old ideal of a science fiction fellowship.

It's just a thought.

WHO WENT WHERE?

Larry Niven

MAN'S ULTIMATE PURPOSE--an old and honoured subject of profound speculation, best pursued when drunk!

Science fiction writers have touched upon the subject, and so have atheists and religious fanatics, fools and wise men, high school debating classes and dying old men.

My own treatise on the subject will not be thorough, but I will try to keep it short.

MAN'S ULTIMATE PURPOSE:

I) May have already been fulfilled. See a recent *Analog* short story. Theme: DNA is a message. Its code has been cracked. Its importance is of the order of "Leave two bottles of milk, skip the cream!" It was probably retrieved long ago, perhaps before there were vertebrates.

II) May have been fulfilled by some previous life form. See "The Adults" by Larry Niven. See also The Book of Genesis, Old Testament.

III) May be intended for the step after man, such as:

- a) The next step in evolution after what we term 'man'. See SLAN or any other book by A.E. van Vogt.
- b) A parallel step. See Sturgeon's "Hunting Season". Humanity has been decimated and sterilized by a disease. The survivors take steps to see to it that some animal will eventually evolve to their high estate. They choose otters. The protagonist is shocked to discover that otters are already beyond man, and probably created the plague in the first instance!
- c) Something man may build or create: a robot, or a computer, or an organic android. See THE TOWER OF GLASS by Bob Silverberg.

IV) We may not like our purpose, or agree with it. See the DNA-is-a-message story (again). See SIRENS OF TITAN by Kurt Vonnegut. See Greg Benford's DEEPER THAN THE DARKNESS, especially the ending!

V) We may have missed our purpose! Can't think of any stories that illustrate the point, but... evidence exists all around us.

So let's talk about Man's Ultimate Purpose.

Consider: Man is a halfway house of evolution. Our best evidence says that he was interrupted halfway along his path from a fruit -

eating, tree-living ape to a meat-eating plains ape!

Take off your shoes! You still have fingers on your feet. You break them against furniture corners. You stub them on rough ground. They develop corns. Clearly they are not designed for running across flat ground. They wouldn't be that much use in climbing trees; though they do have some little prehensile ability.

I used to hold cigarettes in between my toes when reading, mine weren't as prehensile as I thought...and I can show you proof!

Your feet were caught halfway in their evolution. Your toes were halfway towards vanishing when the change came.

The switch from eater of fruits and nuts to eater of meats also dropped us halfway. We can eat virtually anything. In most cultures, that which is considered edible is determined by custom far more than by our true limitations. Further, there is an ability all mammalian carnivores have, except man. The conversion of meat to energy dumps too much urea into the bloodstream. Most carnivores can turn urea into a somewhat more complex, somewhat more soluble substance. We can't! Our bodies dump the urea as best they can, but the filthy stuff tends to precipitate out between the joints, causing gout....



Some of us will have back trouble, and some of us will have foot trouble. We were caught halfway, when Man's evolution took a right-angle turn.

What change was it? It was the apparently unplanned-for development of the brain. The chain of events here is peculiar and more than a little ridiculous. A plains-ape developed the bones to stand up, and a hand that would swing a club. But the nervous coordination required to stand up and swing a club and still be standing after the swing is tremendous. In practice it was probably even worse!

Man apparently lost his body hair because he was getting heat prostration every time he chased down an antelope. If that theory is true a mind-boggling picture is presented. We must imagine a naked plains-ape running at an antelope's speed, on two legs, meanwhile using one arm to beat the antelope over the head until it fell down!

Evolution must have been rough on that ape... He kept meeding more and more nervous coordination, to remain on his feet until the antelope fell over. His brain-case expanded like a balloon.

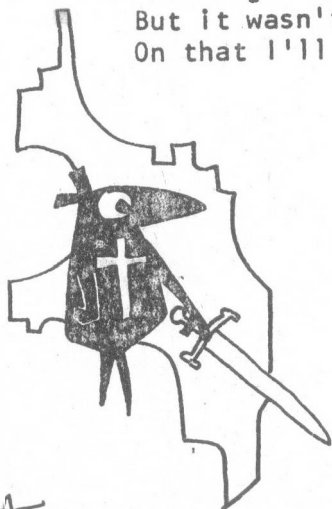
Until, suddenly, he was intelligent. Then all bets were off, because Man started changing his own environment, instead of the other way around.

If you can find a purpose in all that, be my guest!

I say that we must make our own purpose, and that our foremost problem is to adjust to what we are. It hasn't been easy so far, and it probably never will be.

Being a brief speech pulled out of the hat, as it were, during the CHESSMANCON Banquet. Mr. Niven later refused to give a demonstration of his plains-ape running down an antelope with the excuse that his burnt toe nails caused a certain imbalance at over twenty miles an hour.
...eb

Said a fan at the Bar,
As Bob downed a jar,
That might have been Bass,
But it wasn't Slow-Glass!
On that I'll bet, ARRR!!
eb.



There was a young fan at Chester,
Who'd never heard of Alfred Bester,
He thought 'The Demolished Man,'
Was a chap from Japan,
Whose toes had just started to fester!
eb.

Meanwhile....

The Scene: Very a.m.

The Blossoms Hotel
.....

Ruth Kyle picks up room phone...

Down in the hotel lobby Tony Walsh, bleary-visaged but still fannishly alert and in search of another party, notices light blinking on the deserted hotel switchboard and, having nothing better to do, answers it.

Tony: "Hello, Blossoms Hotel."

Ruth: "Room 24, please."

Tony: "Room 42?"

Ruth: "No! Room 24!"

Tony: "What's wrong with room 42?"

Ruth: "Nothing as far as I know, but I want 24...please?"

Tony: "42 is a very nice room..."

Ruth: "I don't doubt it, but I want room 24...", pleading desperately.

Tony: "Well, the only thing I can suggest; y'see I don't know how to work this thing. But if you go to room 42, well room 24 is only just below...and you could open the window and shout down....!"

quasi-quote, of course.

There once was a Shorrock called Norman,
Who said to the Blossom's Doorman,
I'm not in the pink,
I've had too much to drink!
I think I'll become a Mormon.

In the Blossoms Hotel one day,
At a meeting of the B.S.F.A.
They did a right stunner,
And elected John Brunner,
Which made all the fans kneel and pray!

There was a stamp-dealer at Deva,
Who came down with convention-fever,
To clear out the fog,
He had 'hair of the dog,'
And the barman cried "Null-A and Viva!"

Anon.



Many fans are ill-mannered.

This explains so much about British Eastercons that the only reason why it never figures in discussions of conventions must surely be that it's not an admission fans care to make. Evidence, however, is abundant. Let us take the question of room parties.

In Chester this year I encountered only two room parties. No doubt there were others--much of my time was stolen by a BBC Radio Merseyside programme I was recording--but the two I attended seem significant enough to discuss. One was a desultory affair run by young fans (who appeared to be running it because they'd heard it was the thing to do) into which a few people wandered, had a swift drink and hurried out again. The other involved a small room and several dozen people. There seemed to be more smoke than air, and virtually the only way to communicate with the person opposite was to interleave thighs with him/her and shout; the whole thing was reminiscent of the stateroom scene in NIGHT AT THE OPERA. Meanwhile, downstairs, drinks were available until five in the morning in the bar and in the lounge. Perhaps I just don't understand room parties, but in that case I'm entitled to ask: why are fans so obsessed with them?

The answer seems to bring us straight back to the problem of manners. After Chester someone commented to me that conventions weren't the same these days; we had cooperative hotel managements now, but we'd lost the magic of pursuit. No longer did the manager chase partygoers through the corridors, threatening to throw them out unless they went to bed; no longer were room parties peripatetic of necessity. Well, nostalgia is fine; but it seems to have occurred to few fans, in those days before conventions took over the entire hotel, that there might have been residents in the hotel who were unable to sleep because of the noise.

An anecdote may make the point clearer. A young sf reader whom I've known for years attended her first convention recently. Because her room was beneath a room constantly visited by drinkers, she couldn't sleep, and her first convention was her last. Now, although part of me argues that this proves she isn't the convention going type, it seems unreasonable to suppose that simply because she went to a convention to enjoy the programme (which she did) she should also be expected to forego sleep. But this is exactly what convention partygoers do assume, however implicitly, about the occupants of the nearby rooms. There is an oddly anti-social quality about much social activity at conventions. The alcohol party is being to some extent supplanted at conventions by the marihuana party, so possibly things will gradually calm down. But even here there's irony; it seems likely that many drinkers will view these parties with disfavour.

But let me return to the subject of the girl who couldn't sleep. Convention audiences tend to divide into the annual hard core and a mass of others, some of whom return the following year. What of those who don't? All too often I've heard them dismissed: "They weren't true fans," "we don't need them." Don't we?

Two people whom conventions need more than they need conventions are Barry and Sylvia, friends of mine and of the Liverpool Group. They are more than averagely cultured and sensitive to most manifestations of art, including sf and fantasy, and they went to Worcester in 1971 expecting, quite rightly, to meet people like themselves. Although they live in Liverpool, they avoided this year's convention in nearby Chester. An anecdote will show why.

One of the films which Philip Strick showed at Worcester was an Outer Limits episode, DEMON WITH THE GLASS HAND. It had a powerful performance by Robert Culp in the title role, splen-

didly expressionistic direction by Byron (War of the Worlds) Haskin, and a poignant and imaginative script by Harlan Ellison. A fine film, which might have provoked some uncomprehending laughter in a commercial cinema. But the behaviour of many members of its audience at Worcester would not have been out of place at a children's matinee.

Is it too much to require sensitivity of such a convention audience? It appears so, and I think it was Barry who pointed out that when a love relationship began to develop (subtly and with a good deal of psychological preparation) in DEMON WITH THE GLASS HAND, the audience's groans and jeers seemed to indicate that they were on the defensive. Either that, or they simply didn't believe in human relationships. What was the old argument that sf is a retreat from reality? It seems to be so for many fans, and will no doubt remain so until they begin to grow up. Until then, it seems that the intelligent convention goer can enjoy some programme items only late at night, when those of his colleagues who are so bored that they don't know what to do with themselves can make all the noise they like at room parties.

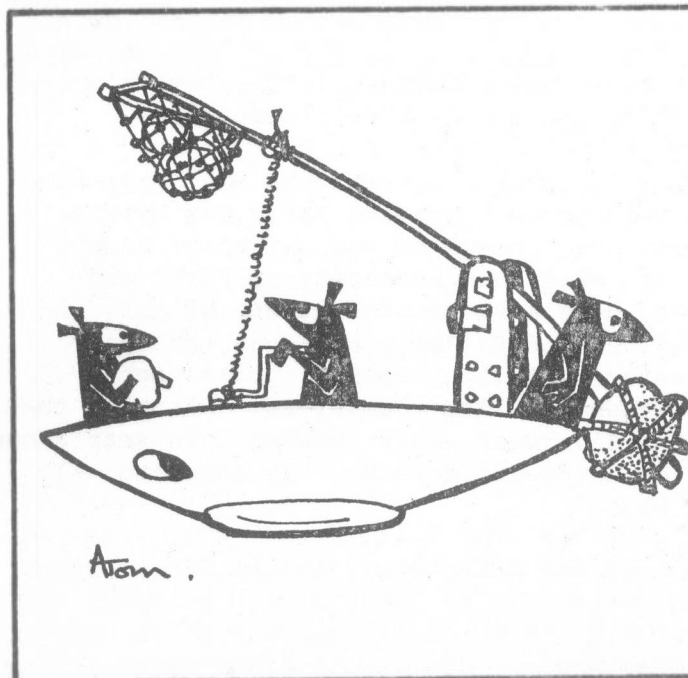
Everyone accepts that fans come and go; writers, some of whom are odd creatures who dislike being crammed into room parties, are less often considered. J.G. Ballard took one look at the ingrown culture of fandom and went away, but few fans seemed to care; he wasn't very interesting anyway, even if he was rethinking sf to such an extent that some of his admirers discovered literary talent they never knew they had. I've a good idea how he felt, for some years ago I headed a panel on the history of the sf film. Less than halfway through the lecture, the audience was making so much noise that I and my colleagues were virtually inaudible, even with the aid of a microphone. If I had told the audience how I felt at that moment no doubt I should have offended most of them; instead I walked off halfway through a film extract and didn't return--an

indefensible action, certainly, but indicative of my feelings. Besides, what was anyone else doing about the situation?

Well, Harry Nadler, who had arranged the programme, was vainly yelling for quiet. The rest of the people in the hall were either silent or chattering away. If the silent ones wanted to hear the discussion on stage, why didn't they demand quiet in a manner that might be obeyed? If nobody wanted to hear the discussion (and I admit that it was my first attempt at such a programme item) why the devil didn't they tell us so instead of ignoring us and wasting our time? Perhaps the point is simply this: in the fact of the worst manners, fans are appallingly placid and protective towards one another.

At the beginning of this article I mentioned a BBC programme which I put together on the Chessmancon. One of the most frequent complaints of fans concerns press coverage; the sort of press report which begins "If you see little green men in Chester this weekend" is sure to raise the same old disenchanting protests. Yet what are reporters likely to see at conventions? Juvenile misbehaviour during the programme, people apparently trying to break the record for filling a hotel room, toy guns which are nonetheless dangerous, people lying about stoned out of their minds (on alcohol, not on pot). And fans complain that sf isn't being taken seriously enough--by which they frequently mean that they themselves aren't being taken seriously--and never once look to themselves for the reasons. I fear one reason is obvious: fans enjoy feeling ostracized and misunderstood, because in a perverse way they can feel defensively superior--even to the mere sf reader, who doesn't realize that to enjoy sf properly one must attend conventions.

If I'd been honest, that BBC programme might have ended with a warning. Some listeners may well have assumed, on hearing the recordings I'd made, that a convention would offer them a weekend of intelligent enjoyment. So it would; but sometimes I think the search is hardly worth it.



JAMES LAVERY--TRUE IRISH FAN...

Evidence.... On arrival at hotel reception thumps down briefcase on reception desk and utters, "You've five minutes to clear the hotel before this goes off!"

.....
 Later bids for 1973 Eastercon to be held at The Europa Hotel in Belfast.....'For a really bang-on convention!'

jan jansen reports on SFancon III

FANTWERPEN AGAIN

The Scene: remnant of a 16th century chapel, now converted into an art gallery. Just the one hall, at the end of which the communion bench still stands. Round the otherwise naked walls, an array of paintings by French painter Andre Beguin--too marvelous for words. The floor space taken up by rows of chairs seating about one hundred attendees, coming from all over the country, but mainly from Flanders, with a large, mainly professional, party from Holland.

In front Simon Joukes, as ever, toastmaster (we'd have to dress him up as a mummy to keep him quiet), capably assisted by Daniel De Raeve, organizer of this convention, whose place will later be taken by Robert Smets for translation. Moving around with a 2.8 third eye and flash, Jan Jansen, wanting to make sure there'll be recognisable pictures of the convention this year, whilst trying to hide from last year's results. In the space left behind the communion bench, a full blown radio-reporter team recording everything on tape, eight hours of it, to make sure they can fill a four minute spot in their weekly programme.

Outside, thanking all the fannish ghods that although the sky is overcast it nevertheless doesn't raid, Benny Suykerbuyck behind a self-made bar, whilst Herman Ceulemans and Paul Boumans worry over coffee and sandwiches.

In between bar and coffee stand, eight metres of tables packed solid with science fiction in all its ramifications, from hard covers and pocket books to comics, posters and artwork, with fantasy and sword and sorcery thrown in for good measure, all but the artwork in several languages.

When you pass the chapel on a normal day you usually just see the restored archway and gate, often closed, so that you cannot guess at the charm hidden away in this corner of old Antwerp, kept intact thanks to the conservatism of its last owner who willed it to the town council on condition that it be kept in its original state.

The gate was obviously open this day--and with the quaint old buildings at the back of the cobbled yard, the book stalls with the busy throng around them, you need only have imagined period costumes to have thought yourself back in another century or in another time continuum. The unusual activity drew the attention of passersby and drew in the hesitant sf readers who'd been attracted by the frequent press notices the week before the convention. We'd managed to build a welcoming atmosphere around the event.

Inside the hall the programme started with the welcoming of the guests of honour, Ron Bennett and Michael Moorcock, after the introduction of painter Andre Beguin to the audience, all of whom were enthusiastic about the space paintings adorning the walls.

Ron Bennett, mixed up in Belgian fandom from way back as if he were a regular inhabitant of the country himself, possibly didn't even realize that this was the second time he'd been invited at guest of honour to an Antwerp convention. But then--the previous one had been held seventeen years ago. Above we've mentioned the eight committee members and their activities this year, but seventeen years ago we were really dredging to get as many fans together to hold our Twerpcon. Admittedly, bringing their wives and an occasional friend doubled the attendance figure, and even then the same regions were represented, with Ron from the U.K., Nic Oosterbaan from Holland, Maurice Delplace from Brussels, the rest from round about Antwerp. The main difference apart from size was that the Twerpcon was organized for the readers of sf in Belgium, or more correctly, in Flanders, but accepted visitors from elsewhere with open arms. One old fan name of Jansen, aided by several of the present generation, tried to keep some time free, officially, for meeting people, making or renewing friendships, and generally speaking, trying to make a social success of it, rather than a day of lectures with a film show appended. We needn't have worried about keeping time free. The programme bogged down often enough to ensure plenty of opportunity for this aspect of conventioning, and most likely added tremendously to the overall expressed feeling of having had a good time.

It's not possible to compare the two conventions--the difference, not only in time but more especially in attendance, is too big to permit it. But both turned out an unexpected (hoped for yes, but nevertheless an unexpected) success.

Comparison of this year's convention with the two previous Sfancons--yes:

Sfancon I, held in 1970, drew nearly 100 people to a library meeting room on the outskirts of Antwerp. Press coverage was given first to the founding of a new sf fan group in Antwerp (stating that there'd been one in the fifties but that they couldn't find the Jansen responsible for this), and again for the convention proper. By invitation, some Dutch and

French fans were also present, supplying the international flavour all Antwerp gatherings seem to have. A tremendous success where attendance was concerned, the program was so-so, terribly sercon as was to be expected, and there was practically no chance to get to know each other. The lack of a bar or sandwich counter didn't make this any easier. But the initial purpose, confirming that there was sufficient interest in science fiction to keep on trying, to keep a clubzine going, to arrange further meetings in the future, was easily met.

The second convention suffered from lack of preparation, lack of organisation, but especially from lack of co-operation, where two factions were arguing over who had the right to run Sfancon 2. Held in a lecture hall of a museum in the center of town, a hall with a seating capacity of 200 (easily filled, look at how many came last year!) the attendance of about 40 or 50 fans made the hall seem empty. Dead. Once again the lack of a bar or sandwich stand, accompanied this time by signs 'Smoking not allowed' did nothing to help the dead body from the floor. Some rather dry items on the programme (one author even read a short story to the audience) certainly didn't help either. What might have saved the day, the films, flopped even worse, and the final straw, "King Kong," shown on TV just a couple of weeks earlier, had an attendance of three. Financially too this convention came near to breaking up the club and only substantial donations by committee members kept it alive through the rest of the year.

We live and learn.

Though no one professes to know the reasons for this year's success, it seems obvious that the public must be enticed to come along by publicity before the convention and the inducement offered needs due consideration and planning, excepting for the hard core of let's say thirty to forty people that would come even if only for a chat over a pint of beer.

The Flemish publication of Moorcock's BEHOLD THE MAN made him a logical candidate as this year's guest of honour, besides the fact that as an old correspondence-friend in his fannish days he wouldn't be a total stranger to it all. Ron Bennett, having met him in the years between as well, joined me in persuading Mike to undertake the trip to Antwerp and attend the convention for the only thing we were able to offer: a great welcome. We here can't thank Mike enough for his generous gesture--his coming gave us the necessary 'in' to get publicity from the newspapers, radio, and even one magazine which devoted six pages to science fiction and fandom the week before the convention.

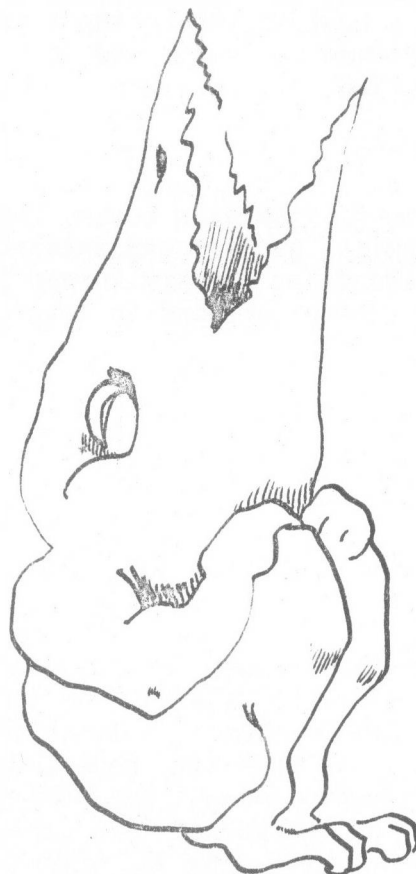
A further piece of luck turned up when through the local film club, which uses the chapel for its weekly meetings, we managed to book "2001" for the convention. Acclaimed by most people as the best sf film ever, it had been shown for one week in the center of town and never made the local circuit, so many fans

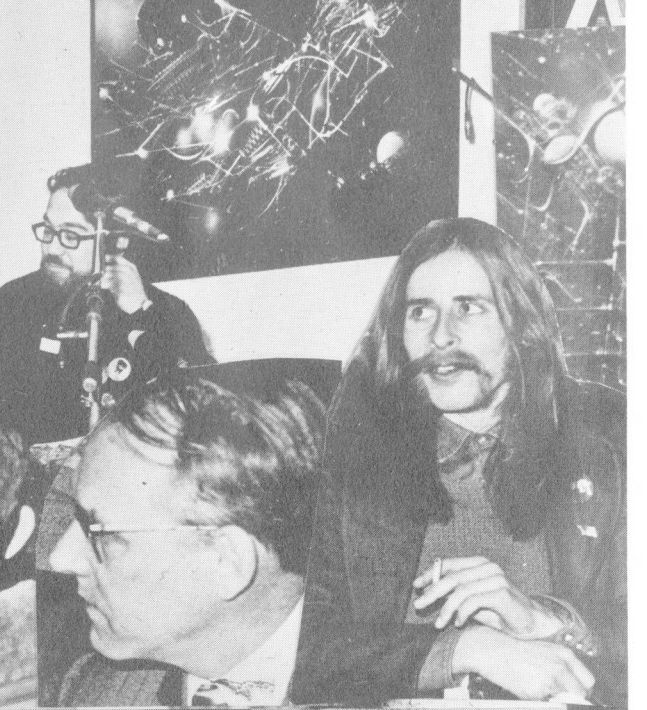
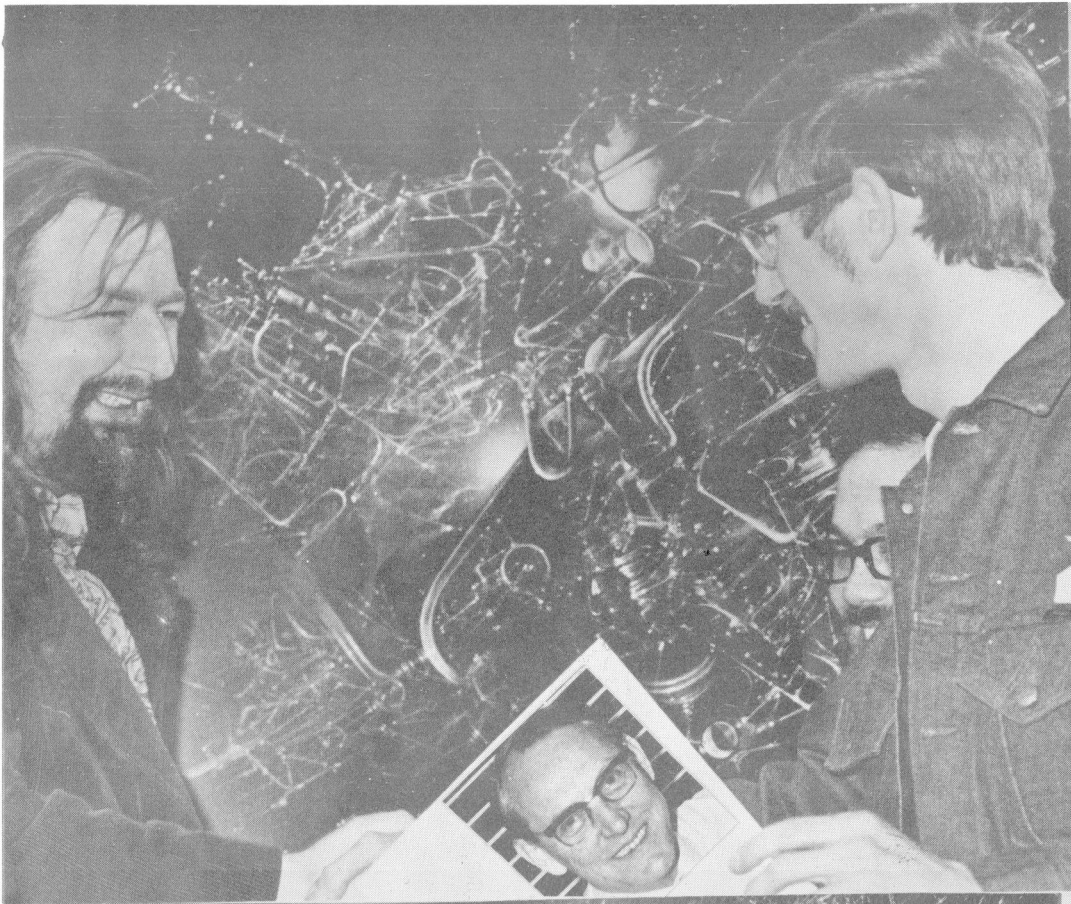
hadn't had a chance to see the film. "2001" drew a full house Friday evening before the convention. It filled the house again the evening of the convention, where fifty would-be spectators had to be refused. (Incidentally, to prove that justice is rarely done, Mike was among those fifty.)

These two attractions, plus the resultant press mentions, and especially the constant plugging away in our clubzine for six months running, carried the day for us.

We'll see whether this can be held to be the truth when next year's convention is over. Other than Antwerp, there's only Ghent in Flanders that has any group activity so, just prior to the con we slipped a "Ghent in '73" filler in Infosfan, the clubzine. Julien Raasveld took up the mention in his pre-con Parallax and the Ghent crowd arrived at Sfancon 3 with a "what's this all about" look on their faces. To make it short, they've been persuaded to run the con next year. It's far nearer to Ostend, and we'll gladly arrange a tour of the city and a welcoming party for visitors from England the Saturday preceding the convention. If you miss the film show on Sunday evening you can easily get back to work Monday morning, and you needn't even miss it--if you are from the London area.

So do come and get acquainted with Belgian fandom and
Fanjan.





THE LORD
OF
THE RINGS



A PORTFOLIO

ESRA CANTHORN

2: The Two Towers

17-9-62



24.12.1962

11-9-62



ANDÚRIL AND THE MARK!



17.11.62



THE HOSTS of
MINAS MORGUL





15-9-62

THROUGH THE LENS

by
K.K. Smith



RINGWORLD by Larry Niven, Ballantine Books.

This is a Good One. A worthy Hugo winner and a story which will give pleasure when first read and on rereading. Basically it is a Quest, and on reflection, I think that it is a fairly safe statement to make that almost all memorable novels do fall within this category. It reminds me greatly of BIG PLANET by Jack Vance in conception, but in style and characterization is infinitely superior. Nessue the Puppeteer and Speaker-to-Animals the Kzin, the two aliens are nicely drawn and convincing in their actions and background. The concept of the Ringworld itself is well-conceived, even if a certain monotony sets in after the arrival thereon of Louis Wu and his motly crew. It is the action on Ringworld which reminds me of BIG PLANET, a grand tour of a huge but not totally alien world. However, it is not the Ringworld itself that provides the main plot interest but rather its effect on the crew of the Long Shot; the three already mentioned plus Teela Brown--chosen for the trip because she was 'genetically' lucky. There's some very interesting twists to the plot as well as to the tail of the Kzin! If you haven't read it--you should!

THE GOLDEN WIND by L. Sprague de Camp, Curtis Books.

"The lusty novel of a mighty adventurer in the unknown exotic lands beyond the Mediterranean" it says here. And it's a reasonably apt description even if it does give the usually misleading impression of what is to be found inside the cover. I suspect that the blurb was written to attract the Sword and Sorcery fans--the story however

wasn't. Which rather pleases me because I am not a Sword & Sorcery fan...it is far too easy for the hero (and author) of such stories to get out of a dicey moment in the plot by suddenly brandishing a talisman he'd just tripped over and muttering the runes thereon inscribed! THE GOLDEN WIND does not fall into this trap or category. It is a quasi-historical novel of great interest and with a very convincing brckground--most of which is based on fact rather than fiction. The Golden Wind in question is a seasonal 'blow' between the continents of Africa and India, and the story relates the tale of Eudoxes of Kyzikos who, in the first century B.C. succeeds in making the first 'known voyage' from Egypt to India. There's a whole mess of entertaining skulduggery herein plus some pretty authentic historical guesswork. The type of story that Sprague probably does better than anyone else around.

UP THE LINE by Robert Silverberg, Ballantine Books.

I'm still unsure as to whether I like this one or not.... It's very well written; it's a Time Travel story and I like Time Travel stories...but...I feel that Silverbob thought he'd write this one for the mass market so he over-accentuates the sex in the story. I'm not against sex (who is?) but I do resent it when an author lets it get in the way of the main story line. It's a darn good story --with a plot line of 'chartered' package deals to the Past and its concept of the Time Courier Service taking tourists to the bloody times of the past--this is probably what would happen if Time Travel was possible. Good characterization and nice detail of Istanbul when it was part of the

Byzantine Empire. But...as I say, a little too much sex.

TAU ZERO by Poul Anderson, Lancer Science Fiction.

The story Poul should never have written--in my opinion. I think it is the only Poul Anderson story I've read and not particularly enjoyed. Possibly because I'm a semi-scientific ignoramus. However, just as in Bob Silverberg's story sex is allowed to get in the way of the story-line, so here is science (or pseudo-science). This is the story of a star-craft from Terra which per ardua ad accidentia circumnavigates the Universe. It's not a new theme, it's not a good theme, and I'm afraid that not even Poul Anderson has been able to make it into a good story. The first couple of chapters before the 'Leonora Christine' departs from earth are good--with a well extrapolated background of a not too far distant earthly civilization. But after leaving earth--and here I misleadingly (?) quote from the blurb--aboard the 'Leonora Christine' "Nothing Changed." And that's just about my summation of the story. The ship has an accidental collision with too dense a pec of parsecs which results in it going through Galaxy after Galaxy until, boringly, the crew witnesses the fall and rise of the Universe. The characterization, alas, is not sufficient to overcome the motony of the trip. Tau serious, tau mundane.

THE BYWORLDER by Poul Anderson, Signet.

After reading TAU ZERO it was pleasant to renew my faith in Poul Anderson by reading this one. I've always considered him one of the most consistently entertaining authors in our genre--and I read s-f for entertainment--and THE BYWORLDER puts him back on his pedestal for me. It's a well-written, well-plotted 'mystery' story of the intentions of the voyager from Sigma Draconis, solved in an unusual way by an unexpected 'researcher'. An artist. An 'artist, drifter, and sigaroon' to be precise, name of Skip Wayburn. There's plenty of provocative ideas, plenty of action and a well-drawn, truly alien character. Skip has to fight The Establishment in the early part of the book to be allowed to board the alien's vessel and when he does get aboard, the pressures of the still conflicting nations of earth still hamper (through the other researchers) his solving of the enigma. Highly recommended.

ICE CROWN by Andre Norton, Ace Books.

I don't think Andre Norton has ever written a bad novel but she has, in recent years, written quite a few mediocre ones. This is one of them! I'm afraid that Miss Norton is too concerned with churning out wordage for money (which I can't blame her for doing) to write as well as she can (which I do deplore). It is difficult for any author who has discovered a formula which the publishers, editors, and most of the fans like, to break away from that formula. This one is, alas formula Norton...small group of Galactics marooned on planet the new natives of which are under partial, evial, mind-control--and even this is discovered too early in the story. The early Norton wrote good entertaining stuff--DAYBREAK 2250 AD is still one of my favourite stories and a good

example--and kept us in suspense for the greater part of the story. Now alas, she still writes well, but her stories have a disappointin sameness and, worst of all, she lets the reader look behind the scenes almost from the first chapter--after that everything becomes rather predictable. I hope she tries a new formula soon, mayhap the change of publishing house will help. Are you there Don Wollheim?

By

Chris Milton

ANNIHILATION FACTOR by Barrington J Bayley / HIGHWOOD by Neal Barrett, Jr., Ace Double.

This is an interesting double containing novels by two relative newcomers to the scene. Bayley is a friend of Mike Moorcock and has, I believe had some stories in New Worlds. He writes a passable Space Operaish novel of conflict between a King and a pretender Prince coupled with a mysterious entity called the Patch which roams the 'spacial fault lines' which are generated by the FTL drives used by both sides.

Barrett writes about a planet on which an ancient culture has degenerated to the extent that a secondary slave race has assumed the dominant role. This race is a cross between monkey and lemur and is termed Lemmits. The social structure is one of complete separation of the sexes, each with their own territory. A male 'Colonial Officer' living with the male tribes has the unenviable task of rescuing an off-world female sociologist who has crashed and is living with a female tribe. In the end the whole structure of this society is revealed at the Mothering, the annual meeting between males and females to preserve the race.

Both novels are well written and promise good work from each of the authors in the near future.

SWORDSMEN AND SUPERMEN - no editor credited, Centaur Press.

This slim volume (120 pages) is subtitled 'An Anthology of Swashbuckling Fiction' although I can't see any reason for this. The stories, of which there are five, vary in length from three pages to twenty-seven pages. The Robert E. Howard story is one of his 'Brekenridge Elkins' stories written in a western cum hillbilly style. This does not however detract from the humor which is in it.

There is also a story by a complete newcomer named Darrel Crombie. For his first effort this short promises much. There is a basic fantasy theme with marginal SF elements which fit in to place very well.

There is a readable short story by one Jean D'Esme, set in French Indochina, the main fault of which is that it is a part of a book and seems abrupt in its ending. Next is a story by Arthur D. Lowden Smith about a sword that seems to be Stormbringer in everything but color. According to the preface it is one of a series based around the sword and its effect at various battles in the classical period. Finally there is one of Lin Carter's diminutive Simrana tales which have been appearing recently.

which were published in *New Worlds* and *Science Fantasy*. All of the stories are competently written and almost without exception all contain entertaining plots and even occasional humor.

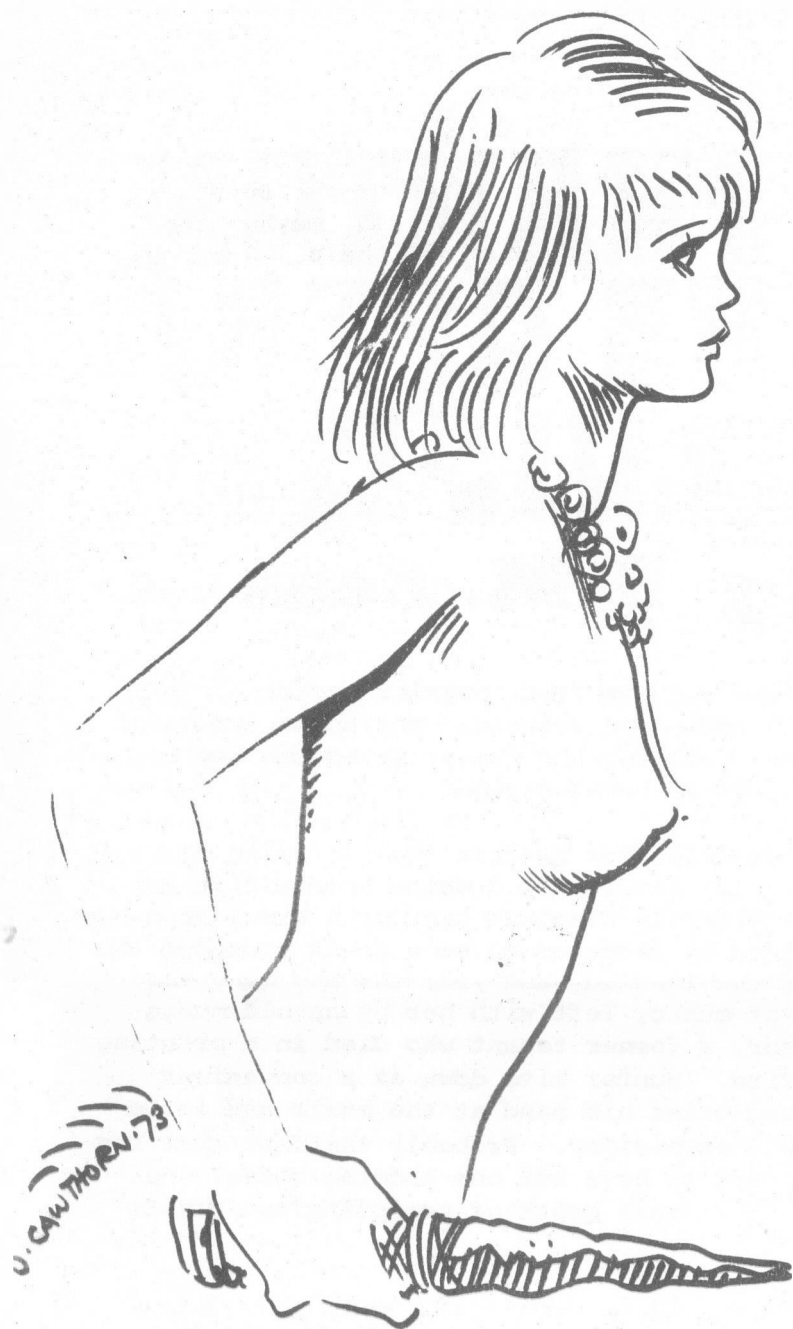
In toto this double is a very good representation of Ted Tubb's work and proves his ability as a writer of popular SF, even if he does not get Hugos for it.

DARKNESS ON DIAMONDIA by A.E. Van Vogt, Ace Books.

This is the latest piece of work from the pen of SF's master of the ultra-complex novel. True to type, there is the usual twisting plot coupled with Van Vogt's strangely spasmodic structure. He always writes in 'scenes' of about eight hundred words. Despite the effect this causes, the novel is absorbing and fairly lengthy (254 pages).

The location of the story is Diamondia, a planet inhabited both by human colonists and the non-human Irsks, who have tentacles instead of limbs. There is also an entity existing as the magnetic field of the planet which enables the Irsk to telepathically communicate. However, this entity, known as the darkness, also invades the minds of various persons including the members of the Negotiating Committee, which is trying to stop the conflict between the human Diamondians and the Irsk. To add to the complexities, the story also bases itself around another of the theories which so many of Van Vogt's novels contain. In *THE UNIVERSE MAKERS* it was Scientology or Dianetics, in the two 'Null-A' books it was General Semantics and in *DARKNESS* it is 'Finite Logic' as opposed to our 'Sylogistic Logic' of the present day.

I found myself somewhat confused at the end of the book and am totally at a loss to explain the multiplex plot structure in anything but the briefest outline. Nonetheless it is very enjoyable and well worth attempting, if only as a mental exercise.



All in all, this collection has little or no swashbuckling although it contains some good work which should be brought to the attention of readers of fantasy stories.

TECHNOS and A SCATTER OF STARDUST - both by E.C. Tubb, Ace Double.

Edwin C. Tubb or, as he is known in fan circles, Ted Tubb, has been writing science fiction for many years and he rarely fails to write an enjoyable story. *TECHNOS* is the seventh and latest in the 'Dumarest' series about Earl Dumarest who, while still a child, left Earth in a trading ship and headed into the galaxy. He is searching for Earth, which is considered little more than a myth by the human inhabitants of the many planets he visits.

The plot is fairly simple but nonetheless makes enjoyable light reading. The whole series is another form of basic space opera, though dissimilar to any of his competitors' products.

A *SCATTER OF STARDUST* is a collection of eight short stories dating from 1955 to 1966, the majority of



THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA REVISITED

by R. M. Bennett

We remember *Hell's Angels* and *High Noon* with affection and even the very phrase *The Gold Rush* conjures us a fond chuckle but nowhere is nostalgia given such a free reign as in cinema horror-dom. It is with the fondest of fond memories that one looks back on the 1962 version of *The Phantom of the Opera*, the brilliant British remake of the classic horror movie which undoubtedly has everything.

Even an opera.

Lacking a Lon Chaney or a Claude Rains, it allows Herbert Lom to amble through the title role and borrow its scary credits from Hitchcock's *Vertigo* of some five years before.

The story opens with the turn-of-the-century premier of the London production of *Joan of Arc*, Lord D'Arcy's new opera. The debonair producer Harry Hunter is informed that "no new incidents have occurred," and the prima donna is soon calmed down after meeting the Phantom in her dressing room. This allows the story to move on to the opera's first act which comprises a crowd scene taken straight out of *The Devil's Disciple* with a little music added. As an added twist to the plot, one of the stagehands makes an unexpected entry with his head in a noose. The opera may not have been in the Verdi class, but he might have waited until the third act.

The prima donna refuses to continue and the producer and composer audition for a replacement. This is Miss Heather Sears who plays an Abbott and Esther Costello sweet young innocent with a dubbed voice. D'Arcy invites her to dine with him and makes it clear that there are strings attached to the contract. She is rescued from what promises to be entertaining cinema by the timely arrival of Hero Hunter. She tells him of a mysterious voice she has heard in her dressing room and they visit the Opera House in the dead of night.

Here some four hundred different things happen at once. A handy rat catcher is stabbed by a dwarf who appears to have been hiding on the ceiling and when Hunter leaves Heather to investigate, she is the only person in the cinema who is surprised to find herself confronted by the Phantom,

who unlike his Lee Falk namesake, wears a mask which has only one eyehole. She shows her vocal range by screaming and Hunter saves the day and returns her to her lodgings.

Hunter calls for Heather the following day and finds in the landlady's drawing room a fire screen that prominently displays part of a sheet of music. The screen is revealed to be a do-it-yourself project of the landlady and yes, she has many more sheets of music, left with her by an old music professor, a former tenant who died in a printing works fire. Hunter sits down at a convenient piano and tries his hand at the music and is immediately *suspicious*. Probably the fact that London appears to have but one lodging house? He shrugs aside this quirk of scripting and visits

the printing shop, only to be told that no one died in the fire but that a burglar had been badly burned.

Hunter now visits the police, finding immediately the bobbie who was on duty and actually passing the print shop at the time of the fire. A man had rushed out, he is told, and screaming horribly had run down to the river, into which he had thrown himself. The current had been very strong and he had drowned. Hot on the scent, Hunter now prolongs the agony by halting his enquiries in order to take Heather to dinner. He takes her home and for some reason she draws open her curtains and is shocked when the face of our old friend, the ceiling hanging dwarf, stares down at her in grandiose *Arsenic and Old Lace* fashion.

The dwarf carries her to the Opera House and through a hidden passage to a cavernous cellar which is bisected by a sewer. Here the Phantom sits, unconcerned with petty problems like environmental pollution, instead playing a gigantic organ which is presumably the result of a do-it-yourself project of his own. The dwarf carries Heather through the sewer water but this fails to revive her. The dwarf drops her at the feet of his master. Her head flops back and glides gently to the stone floor. Far from being rendered further unconscious our undaunted heroine revives at once.

The Phantom tells her that she is to have her voice trained and she accepts his offer with alacrity. "You will be a great singer," he tells her, "and when you sing, you will sing only for me." His one eye glares at the audience and he adds, "And you will sing *from here*." He thumps himself several times on his right shoulder.

The singing lesson begins and indeed continues throughout the night, with crashing chords on the organ and trilling scales from our Trilby. Eventually she is exhausted and sinks into a convenient chair. "Water," cries the Phantom and the dwarf picks up a cup, also conveniently handy, swishes it around in the sewer and hands it to the Phantom who dashes its contents into Heather's face. Far from dying from fifty incurable diseases she recovers immediately and the lesson continues.

Meanwhile, Hero Hunter, having no one to take to dinner, has returned to the trail. Discovering that Heather is missing from her lodgings he decides, for some unexplained reason, to explore the Opera House. He hears her cellar-muffled scales and knows immediately that he must rush to the point on the river where the print shop fire victim had last been seen. He notices for the first time that a culvert leads under the Opera House and requisitions the services of a convenient boat. He paddles out into the river, drops into the sewer and follows the fast flowing water which is running *from* the river *into* the culvert, a remarkable sewage system.

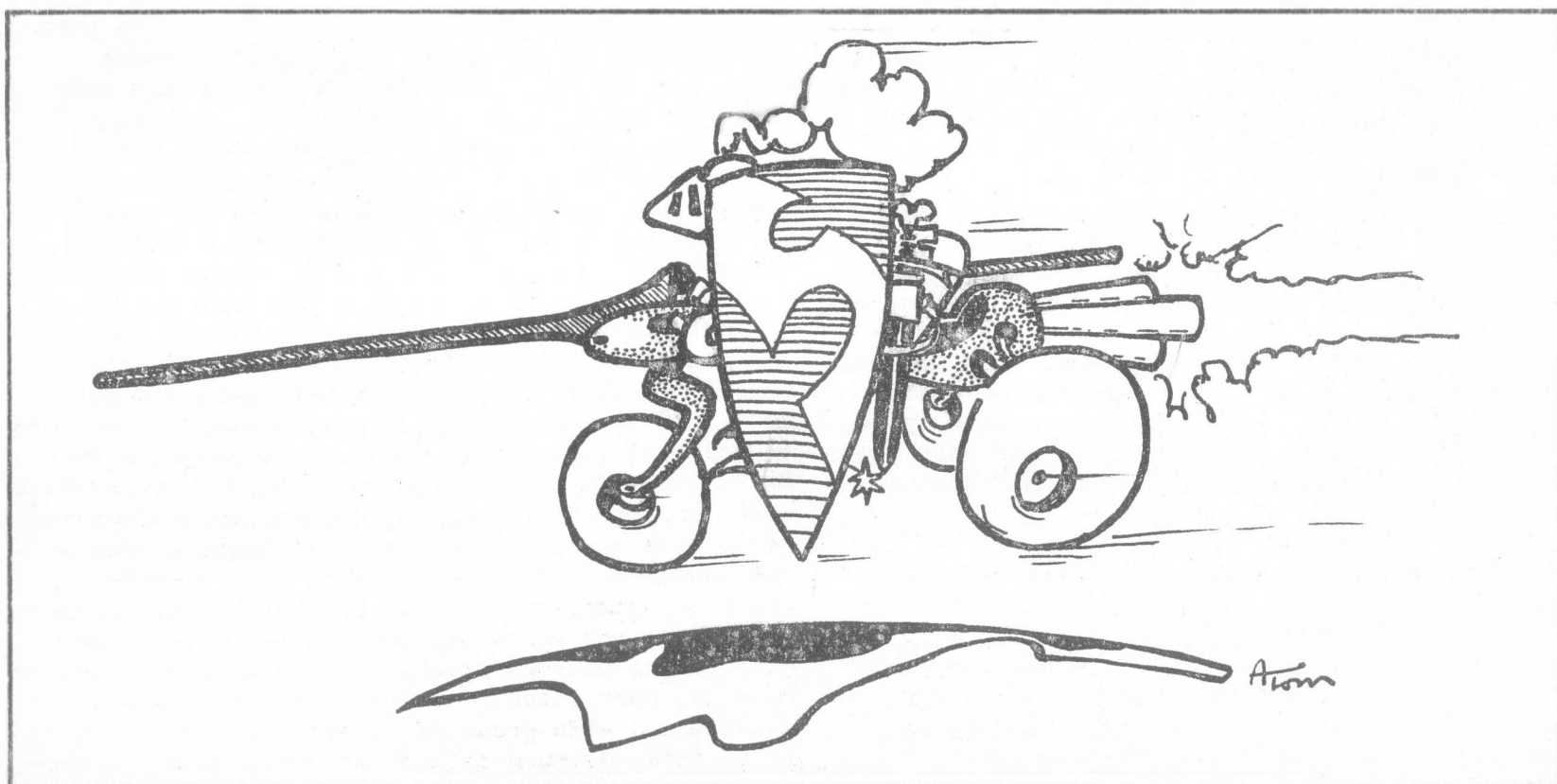
The scene now returns to the subterranean organ-housing cavern where poor Heather has fainted again. The dwarf places her on a convenient and magnificent double bed with its sparkling clean white linen. The dwarf hears our hero splashing around in the culvert and swims out to meet him,

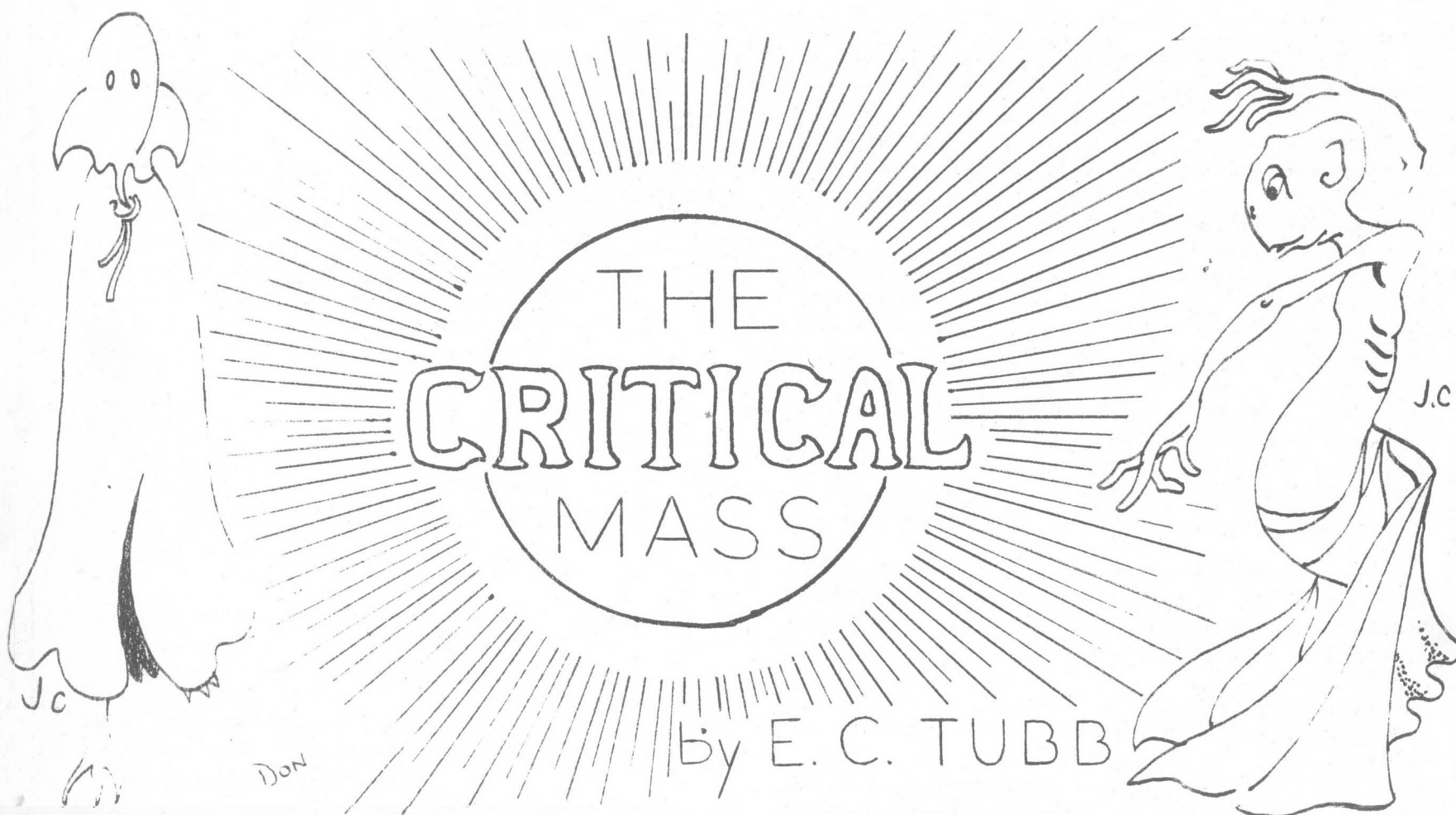
travelling underwater and breathing by means of an air pipe. Surely he might have managed a convenient aqua-lung.

Hunter overpowers the dwarf and confronts the Phantom of the Organ with a surprising guess at his true identity. Evidently unaware that everyone in the cinema has seen the beginning of the film, the Phantom now reveals his murky past, telling how D'Arcy had swindled him out of the *Joan of Arc* score that is rightfully his and how he tried to destroy the plates at the print shop, only to have started the fire in which his face had been so badly disfigured. He had jumped into the river and had been swept down the culvert and into the stream under the Opera House. He now pleads with Hunter to allow him to continue Heather's singing lessons, and presumably to continue to throw sewage into her face. Hunter naturally agrees.

The Phantom now confronts D'Arcy by appearing in his office. D'Arcy tears off the Phantom's mask and...tears off. He rushes from the room and the film. The Phantom is thus installed in a box in the theatre during a performance of the opera. Miss Sears sings, for him alone, and tears are shown to run from the one eye-hole in the mask. Suddenly the dwarf appears in the skies and is chased by a stagehand. He swings on to the supporting rope of a massive chandelier, which immediately begins to fray. The chandelier threatens to fall upon poor Heather, but with one bound the Professor leaps onto the stage, pushes her aside and is himself crushed by the falling prop. His mask is knocked off and we see for the first time his acid pocked face. The audience rushes from the cinema, if only to avoid having to stand to attention during the playing of the National Anthem.

Who said the British can't make horror films?





I don't know if it is because in some previous existence I committed a heinous crime of such magnitude that my punishment is never-ending, or if it is simply that I have somehow lost the faculty of correct association with present reality, but for a long time now I have been convinced that I am the victim of either an alternate-universe shift or have, somehow, been totally ostracised by my fellow man. In other words, for some reason, I am seemingly unable to obtain the same books as those read by various reviewers.

A possibility which has occurred to me is that the books sent out for review are not the same ones as those obtainable on the stands, but this does not seem likely, despite all the evidence to hand. Another explanation is that, when receiving a book for review, all reviewers suffer an immediate change in which they are either gifted with an acute and sensitive understanding or are blasted with a fit of temporary madness. Certainly they seem to be granted the gift of tongues in which mundane words have no place and adjectives form the common means of communication. No matter what the reason, all too often I have read a review and then read the book reviewed, only to find that the reviewer and I could not possibly have read the same story. The reverse sometimes applies, in which I've actually read the book and then been totally unable to recognise it from the later review.

Now I am fully aware that there are two ways to review a book: you actually read the thing or you simply read the blurb. The latter saves time, rests the eyeballs, and usually pleases the publishers, not to mention the author. The blurb, after all, contains all the information any reviewer really needs to know. For example:

"A work by a new, young writer which delves deep into the darkest passions of human nature set against a future civilization in which men are dominated by machines and the threat of alien invasion. The author, a noted expert on cosmology, anthropology, sociology, psychology, and computerology, has not hesitated to rend established frontiers in his savage depiction of a future world in which insanity rules and love is a dirty word. A book frightening in its implications. A book to shock you, to terrify you, and certainly not for the squeamish. A book you will remember."

Now you could write a damn good review on that. All you need is the names of a few characters which you can get by dipping if they aren't conveniently laid out at the beginning, and any old hand at the review game knows that names aren't all that important. We're giving a review, remember, not a goddam run-down of the plot. All the publishers want us to do is laud the damn thing. So:

"This novel by a newcomer to the field shows a depth of sincerity and depiction of character unusual to be found even from more established writers. The background is meticulously drawn with a wealth of fine detail which makes you seem to be actually living in a grim, harsh future in which every action is governed by coldly logical motivations with the resultant conflict between humanistic ideals and the iron-expediency of survival. The plot, complex though it is, becomes of secondary importance which weighed against the tremendous social changes which, terrifyingly, are already upon us. Not often does a new writer to the field show such a wide grasp of relevant sciences and it is this, as much as his intensely human charac-

ters, his tightly knitted plotting and his untrammelled vision added to his courageous disregard for accepted literary restrictions, which makes this a book to remember. I urge you to buy it. A certain nominee for the Hugo and Nebula awards."

I've kept it short because you've all read it before and, of course, it's a load of tripe. A review it just isn't, but at least it's honest. It doesn't say anything and when you get the book and find that it's all about a man and his bird bravely going on social security and then having to battle with ants which stream out of the basement of the crummy house they are living in, well, you aren't too disappointed. You might fling the thing against the wall with a curse, but you don't feel as if you've been cheated. Well, you shouldn't. The trouble is that I do.

I expect a reviewer to do just that. I expect him to tell me about the book and then to judge it on the basis of what it set out to do. I don't want a lot of fine detail--I want to read the thing, damn it, not be told all about it, but I don't want to hear the monotonous thudding of his head on the floor as he crouches at the feet of a *big name*.

You know the kind of thing:

"B.N., of course, couldn't write a bad story if he tried."

(Why not, for God's sake?)

"I'll admit the story drags between pages 150 and 350, but this doesn't matter."

(Jesus!)

"His writing shows the new approach and is so economical that it is hard to believe he wrote it. But the old magic remains and the hand of the master is apparent in every word."

(Ugh!)

"Don't be put off by the beginning, which is obscure, or the shallow characters which is deliberate as he is obviously negating them for the sake of the stunning revelation which hits you fifty hours after closing the book."

(It does?)

"This isn't easy to read but if you stick at it the rewards are stupendous. Not only does the action take place on a multilined level of consciousness but the characters display a chameleon-like diversity which shows once again that B.N. knows exactly what he is doing and how to do it."

(Earn money?)

"Go out at once and buy everything you can find written by this author."

(A relative, no doubt.)

Let's face it. Guff like the above says nothing except that the reviewer is either trying to stun

and blind the reader with his armoury of words or that he is doing his damn best to stay in favour with author and publisher of the books he is reviewing.

Another trait the breed uses is to take a portion of the book, carefully selected, of course, and then to build a castle without straw. This is sometimes called a review 'In depth' and if you don't yawn yourself to sleep wading through it the rewards can be illuminating. Thus:

"He stood, very still, his eyes huge as they stared at the sign above the portal. EARTHMAN - GO HOME! Blood had gone into that sign, blood and sweat and the countless tears of women not to speak of the dead babes and burned soil and the dreadful thing which had appeared to torment the Zyzsht in the night. The growing conviction that they had lost their identity etc., etc., etc.,"

Our reviewer speaks:

"The sensitivity in the opening few lines sets the pace for the rest of the novel. A lesser writer would never have shown the implications behind which is apparently a crude scrawl on a sagging door, but B.N. knows that it isn't the outward symbolism which is important, but the inner conflicts inescapable from the meeting of two divergent cultures, the implication of inherent strife is displayed in the masterly handling of the reaction of Gzock, prince of the Zyzsht, in this, the first moment of his meeting with Mr. J. Smith of the Terran Foundation, the entire sombre tapestry of the book is laid out for inspection and the solemn drum beat of inescapable doom is already loud in our ears."

Which would be interesting news to B.N. who probably only wanted to get the damn thing off the ground in the first place.

So, between the reviewer who writes with his tongue in his cheek, knowing that the value of his words are exactly nil, and who is writing to literally fill space in some mag or other for fun or for reward, and the self-opinionated producer of metaphysical adjectives and meaningless word combinations who really takes himself as the arbitrator of what is good and what is bad and who can do nothing but slavishly follow in the footsteps of others of like mind who just so happened to get into print first, where do we go?

As a suggestion, I'd like to see the end of all the high powered, over flowered guff. I'd like each book to be taken as what it is, an individual work to be assessed as exactly that and never mind that old B.N. must have had an off day when he started this one but, what the hell, how dare I say a thing like that, so better play it safe and stay friends. Or, worse, it must be me because the rest like it and who am I to be the only one out of step?

I'd like to see a reviewer become an honest man and not a pander to external opinion.

I'd like him to read the book--really read it --and not just scan it. I'd like him to judge it on the basis of what it set out to do, and then

judge its success or failure within these limitations.

And I'd like him to ask a few questions.

Does a novel which uses all the furniture of the feudal age really own the right to be called science fiction at all? Does a novel which is the manouverings of politicians, no matter how funny the hats they wear, be anything but a present day novel set in a phoney background? Can a novel which screams its illogic all over the place have any claim whatsoever to be a serious work of speculation? Where does science stop and magic begin and, if we deal with magic, is it and can it be called science fiction?

But most of all I'd like him to read what he's written and ask himself 'what the hell am I supposed to mean?'

There are good reviewers and they write some good reviews and the best reviewers are those who have some knowledge of words and stories and what

they are all about. Unfortunately they are few.

There are more who should know what they are doing but for some esoteric reason find it impossible to be humble or honest or open and camouflage their opinions with a mass of garbage and jargon which obviously pleases them but which leaves me in a cold sweat of frustrated rage. Rage because they know better and 'shouldn't do what they do and yet are so wilful that they do it anyway.

And the rest don't know what the hell they are talking about but insist on talking about it just the same.

Well, as I said earlier, it isn't hard to write a review--if you don't give a damn about the worth of what you're doing.

But think of me when you do it. Me and all those who must suffer from the same irritations. We buy the books, we read them. At least let us have the assurty that we're both reading the same book. Please?

