



DISCORD

EDITED AND PUBLISHED BY REDD BOGGS

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COGITO

PLURABELLE'S TO BE

My favorite co-editor writes in response to my demand for a review of Danny Dunn on the Ocean Floor by a deadline now past that she is unable to contribute to Discord at the moment. She explained this in emphatic and passionate terms, you may be sure -- she cannot write the merest note to her milkman tepidly. "Please be very certain," she wrote him on 23 April 1956, "to leave one, only one, carton of cottage cheese. Make sure it is thoroughly fresh, for god's sake, and it must be small curd. And no chives; I most assuredly do not like chives in my cottage cheese, do you understand? Emphatically I do not want whipping cream today. Be very careful not to let the cat in when you open the door and if you track up my freshly scrubbed and spotlessly clean kitchen I shall break your goddamn neck. Con Amore. [signed] Mrs Bradley." --Archives of the Haskell County Sanitary Dairy and Ice Cream company, Inc.

You will be glad to learn, however, that Marion's reasons for not contributing to this issue are painfully ordinary and mundane. One is that she is too busy manufacturing literary woozle-water for the money in it -- a concoction built of such preposterous ingredients that I will spare you the details. Another is that her typewriter, a mechanical incarnation of a porcupine, has shed another of its typefaces, this one the letter "I." It broke off while she was stenciling a fapazine, whined across the room like a spent .45 slug, caromed off a bust of W. Somerset Maugham, and plopped into the aquarium where it was promptly gobbled up by a male red-eye tetra named Hephzibah. Without that particular letter she is thus singularly incapacitated for fannish writing, but so far as I can tell from scrutinizing her letter between the lines she does not feel, as yet, that she has grown beyond our ken and she has not detected that the Discord circle, her co-editor and all the readers alike, are imbeciles and damn fools, unworthy of her interest and attention. In short, Marion is still one of us, and still loves us.

ALL THIS -- AND DISNEYLAND TOO

Minnesota is going to the Rose Bowl again. For the benefit of Discord's ultrahighbrows and ignorant furriners I should explain that I mean that the University of Minnesota football team (playing the Ameri-

2 can brand of Rugby) is going to play a game as part of the annual civic pageant, the Tournament of Roses, at Pasadena, California. I don't know whether I can stand it two years in a row. Last New Year's something snapped and I've never been the same as a result of witnessing this TV exchange before the game:

TV announcer (solemnly): ...And I must congratulate you on this wonderful California weather. It's really wonderful.

California bigshot (smugly): Thank you. We're really proud of our wonderful California weather.

There may have been more to this conversation, but at that point I began to shriek (they tell me) and I knew nothing more till three days later when I woke up wrapped in a cold wet sheet just in time to prevent them from stirring around in my frontal lobe with a spatula. Please, Mr TV announcer. It's perfectly all right with me if you congratulate California on its wonderful roses. Or even, say, their wonderful cow manure which helped those roses to thrive, being the best fertilizer for roses when properly aged, according to certain rose-fanciers.

TV announcer (solemnly): ...And I must congratulate you on this wonderful California cow manure. It's really wonderful.

California bigshot (smugly): Thank you. We're really proud of our wonderful California cow manure.

But what the hell did the Californians have to do with their wonderful California weather? Except to nearly ruin it with smoke, gas-fumes, and smudge?

BLAZE OF 8:40 A.M.

It's really too bad that Sam Moskowitz doesn't have any plans to bring his history of fandom up to date; I faunch to know how he would describe and account for the action of Mrs Christine Moskowitz on 25 November 1961. On that date, Mrs M, already well on her way to becoming the leading female neo-fringefan since Zeda P. Mishler, made a bold bid to assume a seat with the most high gods of the pantheon, right up there with Lloyd Fuller and such towering figures, as a leading fannish innovator. Mrs M has discovered a surefire method for winning fannish arguments. When your opponent's shots start to land too uncomfortably close, you merely call in your lawyer and have him issue an order to your opponent to shut up or face "immediate legal action" for libel.

That does it. Or so Mrs M seems to suppose. Of course, by causing such a threat of legal action to be issued against Ted White, she made sure that Ted's remarks about her, which she felt defamed her character, injured her reputation, community standing and professional standing and

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reputation, were widely disseminated in fandom where previously they had been seen only in FAPA. She made sure, too, that her pique over being unable to formulate a reply to those remarks was apparent to everyone. Presumably, in a calmer moment Mrs M, intelligent woman that she is, would never have indulged in such an ill-considered gesture.

Mrs M alleges that her professional standing was damaged by Ted's remarks. Dear me, I must confess that I'd never heard of Dr Christine Haycock before, and I thought Mrs M's title, which turns out to refer to a medical degree, indicated that she was (whisper it!) an osteopath. My abject apologies, dear Mrs M. While her professional standing obviously cannot be damaged by casual chitchat in a fanzine, I am afraid Mrs M's action against Ted White has seriously damaged her standing in fandom. She seems not to realize that fandom cannot calmly tolerate a sorehead who attempts to win arguments by calling down the law on his opponent's exposed cabeza. Fandom is too small and intimate, too perilously dependent on the ties of friendship, to allow us to have any truck with any person sowing fear and dissension in our midst.

I counsel tolerance toward Mrs M for the nonce, however, because I feel certain that, newcomer as she is, she has not been apprized of the true situation in fandom. Will somebody do the Dutch uncle bit, please? Take her into the corner and explain to her, very politely, that fandom is not a science-fictional equivalent of an osteopaths' convention but rather an isolated Kronweld where mundane laws apply only nominally and we try to win arguments by the terrifying method of bludgeoning our opponent to death by cunningly-chosen facts and not by preposterous legalistic pishposhery about libel and moperly.

THE ROUND FILE

Maggie Curtis writes that she and some lucky fellow named Don are getting married next June, "come hell or the proverbial high water," thanks to a favorable judgment of the high gods at a college Maggie does not even attend. Good luck, you two. # Liz Wilson has married a fellow at the lab where she works, and is now Mrs Elizabeth Lokke. She tells me the lucky guy is a Minnesota man, and I find this a highly significant datum. Her address is unchanged. # Sam Sackett, once a well-known fan publisher and writer and now associate professor of English at Fort Hays Kansas State college, is co-editor (with William Koch) of Kansas Folklore, a book just published by the University of Nebraska Press. As a writer, Sam has slipped a little too. Instead of contributing to fanzines he writes for literary quarterlies like The Georgia Review and The Midwest Quarterly. His essay on Oz in the former journal, Vol. XIV, No. 3, Fall 1960, was reprinted in the Christian Science Monitor. # Ed Cox sends Discord a brandnew Schneeman, clipped out of the Los Angeles Examiner. Schneeman, who gilded ASF's golden age, now draws rather uninspired cartoons for the Examiner's sports page. # There is now an outfit called the Fruit of the Month club. As ftl would say, nominations are now open. # I've got an ancient note here to the effect that Billy Joe Plott says he likes Discord for "psychological" reasons. "You see," he reported, "I've been dating a girl named Judy Boggs." Since he probably doesn't date her anymore, being away at college, he'll have to find some other reason for liking this fanzine. # Richard Elsberry mentions that a news-item about the American Screw company trying to sell out was headlined in a recent Willimantic, Conn., paper as follows: "Texetron Makes Offer to Screw Co. Stockholders." # Fred Galvin sends subscrip-

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"Masters of Space" (Edward E. Smith and E. Everett Evans) 55.1+(22.7+22.8+25.2): 23.9+26.6+64.3da(d,u)cax If, Nov 1961-Jan 1962 (two parts)

"The Last Place on Earth" (Jim Harmon) 29.7+54.3bggabx If, Jan 1962

SOMEDAY, perhaps, E. E. Smith may be blessed with an active coterie of happy and devoted admirers like those already forgathered to worship such lesser writers as Edgar Rice Burroughs, H. P. Lovecraft, and Robert E. Howard, and I hope that one little scholar of the brotherhood will write a long and learned dissertation on "Masters of Space," the Smith space opera purportedly written in collaboration with E. Everett Evans.

That scholarly monograph will probably solve at last the mystery that surrounds the work at the moment and forms the only really interesting aspect of the whole sad and oofus affair: namely, exactly how the collaboration was carried

out and how much each of the joint authors contributed to the yarn. His revelation will probably surprise the hell out of everybody except those of you who have read (as you are about to do) my offhand but thoroughly educated guess on this highly significant point and believed it implicitly, like everything else set forth in Discord. I have arrived at my theory with great difficulty, for I flogged myself across every page of this 50,000 word novel down to the very last word. This may not win me an honorary membership in the Lensman Legion when it is finally organized, but it should certainly be rewarded with an oakleaf cluster to the medal I won for reading that equally painful epic, Man of Many Minds.

My theory, not to keep you in awful suspense any longer, is that "Masters of Space" was Tripoli's magnum opus, left unfinished at his death, and completed by Doc Smith as a gesture of friendship. Of course it is remotely possible that Doc actually contributed to the story while it was in progress, adding such tidbits as a vast concept here and a whole new science there and, in general, beefing up what still remains a terribly thin salmagundi. But as a long-time fan of the "Skylarks" and "Lensmans" I'd hate to suppose that this novel was the product of an active collaboration and that both authors are equally to blame for the result. My theory that it was an Evans botch rescued from the fire (if rather belatedly) by Smith is borne out by the fact that the early pages

REVIEWING STAND

contain by all odds the most horrible writing in the yarn. Sample passage: "Tula turned to her fellows. Her eyes filled with a happily triumphant light and her thought a lilting song." (If you want to puke in here go outside.) Some of the later pages actually attain an almost respectable level of competence and at least two scenes -- the arrival back home of the transformed Terrans, and the interview by the evil ETs, the Stretts, of their "Great Brain" -- are effective enough to have been written by Smith, perhaps on a rather distracted evening between sweaty bouts with his 1959 income tax forms.

Unfortunately the yarn contains very few effective scenes; indeed, strictly speaking, there are very few scenes in it at all. The characters, if one can call them that, seldom do anything except chatter in a particularly inane version of Smith's famous brash and outmoded slang: "I'll tell the cockeyed world," "You covered it like a blanket," "That tears it -- that really tears it!" Conversations and conferences are reported with tape recorder fidelity, word for word, although they consist largely of bright repartee that adds up to nothing of importance. Most such conversations include even the final handshakes and leave-takings: "...it's getting late and Dark Lady and Larry both give me hell every time I hold supper on plus time unless there's a mighty good reason for it. So, so long, guys." Clear ether, Jarvis, old rutabega, and don't take any wooden nickels.

Scenes of action, on the other hand, though theoretically the big attraction in Smith-style space opera, are rushed over and foreshortened whenever possible; they are so incompletely visualized, especially as compared with the dialog scenes, that one suspects that the authors had ears but no eyes. The whole novel consists largely of synopsis, a non-dramatized summary of events which have not been evoked for us. When we switch to sex play or space battle, the picture is lost in a shimmer of snow and only the dialog comes through. We are seldom told much about physical action and we see nothing at all. This is the major and irreparable flaw of the novel.

The first instalment is summarized in exactly 73 words at the start of part 2, which goes to show you how much meat existed in all those pages. More significantly, the synopsis does not deem it necessary to mention a single character in the story. This may be because there is really no one in the story at all -- though it boasts the largest cast since "Around the World in 80 Days." These phantom people consist almost entirely of "husky young men, and their assistants, all surprisingly attractive and well built young women." All the women might be described, as one is, as "the world's best model (and) the most brilliantly promising theoretician who ever lived." Since they are all equally beautiful and equally brainy, individuals are as hard to focus on as a single girl in the Rockettes' front line. The authors' explanation for the unremitting beauty of all these characters is a dilly: The Board "selected for mental, not physical, qualities," but "they found out that -- barring freaks -- the best minds are in the best bodies." To echo Randall Garrett's immortal phrase, "This is what they call science? Heavens to Betsy!" Some inkling of what at least one of the authors calls characterization may be found in an exchange between the hero and heroine, who are having their first heart-to-heart talk. Jarvis Hilton says:

"You're a powerhouse. A tightly organized, thoroughly integrated, smoothly functioning, beautifully camouflaged Juggernaut. A reasonable facsimile of an irresistible force."

"My God, Jarvis!" That had gone deep.

"Let me finish my analysis. You aren't head of your department because you don't want to be. You fooled the top psychs of the Board. You've been running ninety per cent submerged because you can work better that way and there's no glory-hound blood in you."

She stared at him, licking her lips. "I knew your mind was a razor, but I didn't know it was a diamond drill, too...."

As you can see, when everything exists in superlatives, it's impossible even to flatter a girl without telling the exact and ultimate truth about her. Oh, by the way, lip-licking is a characteristic of all the people -- and androids -- in the yarn.

Doc Smith discovered sex instead of L*O*V*E as a motivating force some years ago. Indeed, 20 years ago in Second Stage Lensmen he was depicting a planet full of naked women and featuring a B-girl who turned out to be "just the sweetest thing that ever lived!" While he has gone farther than that since, "Masters of Space" retrogresses 20 years, despite mention of "V.D." and the grand climax of the yarn, in which the Earthling supermen set up a nudist-colony-cum-breeding-farm on an extra-solar planet. L*O*V*E in its wider application characterizes most of the human relationships in the story, and seems based on the simple-minded and sappy philosophy dispensed in such copious quantities in The Time Binder. Disputes between the main characters, which could have resulted in drama and conflict, are swiftly resolved. A hassel between the hero and Captain Sawtelle, "old school Navy brass," lasts almost three and a half chapters, after which "the two grip hands." A hassel between the hero and his second in command, Sandra Cummings, lasts almost a full page, after which "they shake hands warmly." Play that schmaltzy music again, maestro.

The only adversary that lasts for long is the alien race, which is called the Stretts, although it is merely the Fenachrone all over again, or another of those familiar menaces in Smith novels, bent on conquering "every other intelligent race throughout all the length, breadth, and thickness of total space." Unfortunately, except for being slightly more ambitious than most, this ET race doesn't seem very much more evil than our own -- or that part of it represented in the novel (all characters have Anglo-Saxon names). If humanity has matured beyond the Boy Scout level attained by Kimball Kinnison, it has become fascist in the process. Two examples will suffice. Having learned the secret of turning themselves into long-lived silicon-based supermen, Jarvis Hilton and his party consider the idea of sharing the secret with others in the expedition. Hilton suggests calling everybody in to talk it over.

"Not everybody, Jarve!" Temple snapped. "We don't want scum, and there's some of that, even in BuSci."

"You're so right. Who, then?"

"The rest of the heads and assistants, of course -- and all the lab girls and their husbands and boy friends. I know they are all okay. That will be enough for now, don't you think?"

"I do think;" and the indicated others were sent for....

Afterward, one of the beautiful and brainy girls approves of the selection job in these words: "What a wonderful job! Why, everybody is here that I really like at all!" (She sounds like one of the apologists for the FAPA blackball amendment, doesn't she, exulting because it keeps the group so nice and congenial!) On second thought the other example

is not exactly fascist, but cannot be considered highly moral. When the transformed supermen, returning home, approach Earth, they call the head of the space navy on the radio and calmly blackmail Terra into "skimming the cream off" mankind and turning them into supermen. Captain Sawtelle ("old school Navy brass") insults his admiral and disobeys orders. Their justification for this? Simple. "As a matter of cold fact," they consider themselves "no longer human." In other words, they have turned into Stretts without themselves or their authors knowing it.

The whole thing reads like an earnest pastiche of all the Doc Smith epics you've ever seen, and (outside of such obvious potboilers as the Mark Phillips serials) rates as the most disappointing and negligible science fiction novel since "A Bicycle Built for Brew."

Jim Harmon's "The Last Place on Earth" is another of his nightmares masquerading as science fiction. It contains all the elements of a bad dream: a string of preposterous occurrences in a distorted, surrealistic setting, peopled with vague characters pushed by obscure motivations or pushed by none at all, and strewn with trash from the subconscious that has no rational purpose in the sequence at all. The big nightmare, of course, takes place when the protagonist battles mindlessly and almost matter-of-factly against his personal doom -- never any other doom -- while people who could help him ignore or disbelieve the reality of his peril. The end of the story leaves the reader grinning sheepishly over its absurdity but obscurely impressed by the drama of the unconscious.

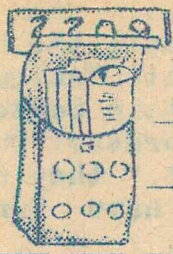
A couple or three random notes seem to fit in this department. I would like to express vague wonderment at any editor who would hire Ted Sturgeon merely to write filler material -- but on the other hand, I suppose any appearance of Sturgeon should be cause for rejoicing. I'd like to express cautious praise for Analog's new format, which makes the magazine look better than it has in a decade, even if it doesn't read any better. At least it gets rid of that wretched piece of whimsy that depicted a pony express rider on a six-legged beast loping along amid a storm of arrows -- the Van Dongen drawing that had headed "Brass Tacks" for some years. This is the biggest single improvement in format since the spaceship was dropped from the table of contents page. Finally I'd like to acknowledge receipt of a sample copy of F&SF for September and thank the publisher even though I already had a copy. I would feel a bit more confident about F&SF's future, though, if the copy hadn't been sent in an envelope intended for a sister publication and fitted up with a business-reply card with F&SF's address hastily rubberstamped over that of Mercury Press. Such evidences of F&SF's tentative and Cinderella status fill me with a dreadful feeling of unease and hardly persuade me to chance a subscription to the magazine.

I wonder often what the Call-Girls buy...

COGITO

CONCLUDED FROM PAGE 3

tion money sealed up in a little envelope labeled "Monthly offering for the building fund, Church of the Holy Redeemer," for God's sake. # And Ruth Berman sends a clipping that reports that a Minneapolis attorney, John A. Yngve, is "definitely interested" in running for the state legislature in 1962. If Bob Tucker's view of politicians (Discord #14) is a true one, the little fellow in the Fire Giants dungeon may have been right after all.



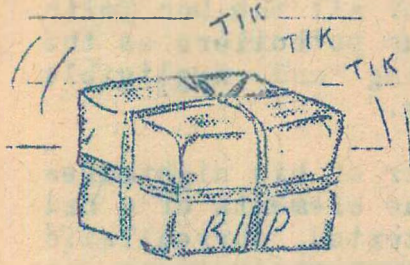
A MEETING OF MINDS

JEAN YOUNG

Damn, but A. J. Budrys

writes good (like a pro-writer should). Him and Bob Tucker write best -- in fan-zines, anyway -- I think. Nice straightforward and usually hardhitting stuff. No crap. No crud. Honesty and then there birds.

Marion likes Galaxy, even in part? The world will end any day now. I'm going to buy me a white robe while there's still time and commandeer a hilltop. (The fire tower at Agassiz Station will do nicely.) That is a neat ATom cartoon that goes with Marion's review, too.



Like Bob Lichtman, I like rock-and-roll sometimes, too. I have a strong lowbrow streak in me, and am often hit to the dubious core of my so-called being by things that the more intellectual among us consider the lowest kind of trash. I haven't heard the current wave of popular taste (Andy and Wayles keep the radio on pretty highbrow stations when it's on at all), but several years ago when I did listen I was really shook by things like "Unchained Melody" or "DaRk MoOn" or "Heart-break Hotel" or "Boulevard of Broken Dreams" or Lenny Dees' vulgar barrel organ "Birth of the Blues." I like the simple repetative beat of r&r up to a point; it's hypnotic and comfortable. Much of the stuff is, indeed, too awful; some of the voices are too dreadful. But not always. There are songs that I'd normally despise which I like under certain circumstances -- the ones in which they "belong," in which they complete a scene, make perfect an atmosphere. Yes. When they make something that was almost there perfect, complete and right, then they are art -- accidental, because a scene in reality is not generally a coolly contrived product of one person's mind; nevertheless, it makes reality verge on art.

That sounds like a lot of blither, but surely you know what I'm talking about: those moments when life, reality, what you will, seems imbued with a reality or significance beyond itself, or seems to be trying to do this; and then some tiny thing will send it over the edge to perfection, will cap it off, and make it true. The chime of a bell. A torrent of swearing from a workman in the street. Or a cheap rock-and-roll tune. If you've heard a tune in a situation like that, then it becomes a piece of art in itself, because it will carry echoes of its former perfection and meaning every time you hear it. And it will be a good thing to hear it (if not too often) later, without trying to remember in detail the whole scene, because it will remind you of some truth, or at least that truths exist, without requiring you to muddy your perception with bad memory. (Somerville 43, Massachusetts)

FRANK WILIMCZYK

Discord #13 is excellent reading, which means that there are many things I disagreed with. Reading

"Reviewing Stand," I was dismayed at MZB's dismissal of R. A. Lafferty's "Aloys": I immediately reread the story, and was more impressed than at first reading. MZB's Sneaky Device of attributing to "Aloys" "A Message for Today" seems to me to be equally applicable to "The Gatekeepers" which, though a good story, for my money is not in the same league with "Aloys," which is one of the best short stories I've read in a long time. McIntosh's "Gatekeepers" is an example of what I think of as the "new" space opera, in which Important Problems (I'm fond of Sneaky Devices too) are the mundane frame. That's an improvement over the oldtime space opera, but the fascination is still with an exotic setting of a parallel problem, a seldom convincing never-never land which makes the problem itself a fantasy. Just as Budrys doesn't

dig Gernsback's sugar-coated science, I don't especially go for the modern version; sugar-coated cold war.

This doesn't mean I'm against current events in sf -- in fact, I'm all for it. It's been done well many times, but most convincingly without Denebian substitutes for the US or Russia, or whatever. An especially good example of the genre appeared in ASF not too long ago (before Analog, I'm pretty sure) -- an American is dropped into Russia to promote a revolution. This was a darn good story, without the trappings of superscience thrown in to beguile the more wide-eyed enthusiasts.

MZB seems to be conscious primarily of the smoothly working mechanics of a story, and rather impatient with any ambiguity. Which she's entitled to be, of course -- but sells short, besides "Aloys," a story like Jim Harmon's "The Air of Castor Oil," where the "fuzzy thinking" is deliberate. His technique is a subjective one, where the effect (if there is one) is achieved through shifting scenes, disordered sequence, and at the end near-incoherence, dramatizing the breakdown of an already senile mind, not able to cope with rejuvenation.

As for "Aloys," it's not really a Message story, as I understand the label. But it is a farcical, slightly bitter little thing, somewhat reminiscent of the incident in Rabelais, in which Panurge debates the English Philosopher. (I've made this allusion so anyone who doesn't like "Aloys" is condemned as anti-culture.) Admittedly it's subject to a running string of interpretations, but that's the intent, I'm sure -- almost every sentence is a wryly satiric dig at the contradictions and idiocies that are too much taken for granted. And isn't this typical of a part of what most of us consider science fiction should be? (New York 1, New York)

ANDY YOUNG

I have a cold. Not a very strong one; not one powerful enough to make me want to lie miserably in bed in a darkened room waiting for the milliseconds to crawl by, but just enough of a cold to make me grotch. Beware, O readers and contributors of/to Discord, I shall grotch at you shortly. But first I must explain that I brought it on myself by staying up all night in a cold room listening to practically the entirety of my record collection the night before a work day. That requires such a display of General Stupidity (whom I had thought was killed in the Battle of Bull Run, or was it Manassas?) that I am even more grotched than I would normally be by the cold alone. Stand by to repel grotchers.

All right. I would probably have done something as bad as you have done in your two lead paragraphs; I lose all sense of proportion myself under flattery. But that does not excuse the adoption of Matheson's inexcusably cute style -- may he rot in Hollywood -- for your response. Ugh. Even so you are funny at it ugh. How I hate people more humorous than I.

Another grotch: by devoting your editorial to the wholly unnecessary business of business, you avoided filling it with your mordant wit. What good is Discord without that funny Boggs editorial? Fortunately you had Budrys to fill in, in a sense. He is funny. He is, in fact, one of the best (if not the best) essayists in fandom today. I genuinely regret that I cannot stand his pro writing. I think it is dull and pedestrian. I like him in person and I like him in fanzines, and I would like to like him in his science fiction. But that's how the world is.

.....
Algis met a bear. / The bear was Budrys. / The Budrys was Algis.

.....
It's about time somebody wrote "After 1929 -- What?" I myself have been grotched on this point for a long long time. An equally grotching point -- and a related one -- is that fans, while claiming to be interested in science (via sf), have just about as little scientific knowledge or interest in science as the nearest panhandler. There are, to be sure, a few people in fandom who have some technical education -- the people who can read Gernsback-type science fiction and separate the wheat from the chaff. But the rest of the microcosm can't (to continue the metaphor) tell wheat from corn. It is, I think, more than just the ignorance of ordinary people

10 about science -- no, I take it back; fans aren't really any more ignorant about science than the general public is; they just feel more qualified to talk about science than the general public does, and thereby display their ignorance all the more.

On the other hand, I feel that sf writers are about as well acquainted with science as one can reasonably expect an educated non-scientist to be in this day and age. There are a few who are exceptionally well-versed, and a few who don't give a damn, but the average writer is, I think, a bit better educated in science than the average person of comparable intellectual attainment. I shall pass over the question of whether they are as well educated as one could expect a science fiction writer to be. This brings me to Daphne Buckmaster's letter.

I should have thought that such basic ideas as the distinction between scientific "laws" (which are man-made formulations) and what one might call the "real" laws of the universe (assuming that such, in fact, exist) would be well known to any educated person; this is a notion which underlies all scientific activity; it is, more than the famous and nonexistent "scientific method," something right at the very heart of science. And yet, in this supposedly "scientific" age, we see that most people do not even realize that this notion exists.

To explain: One can either assume that there are some sort of "natural laws" or rules which, taken together, "explain" (in the scientific sense) all natural phenomena; or one can assume that such hard-and-fast rules do not exist. This is a completely metaphysical question. But beyond this, one can certainly point to a great number of apparent, statistical, regularities in the behavior of matter and energy, and can try to deduce or induce rules which "explain" these regularities. If you assume that there really are "natural laws," then you regard the task as one of finding them; the process is clearly one of successive approximations. If you assume that such "natural laws" do not exist, you can still be a scientist and try to make up rules that will enable you to make predictions about the universe which will tend to be right, and which therefore will still be useful to you, even though you attribute to them less significance than in the former case.

The point is that while I do not expect an educated person to be familiar with General Relativity, I can expect any educated person to appreciate the difference between our different concepts of gravitation and the nature of gravitation itself. The fact that "educated" people widely believe that scientists "understand" gravitation in some ultimate sense shows the failure of modern society to assimilate the notions of science. Attempts to popularize science are generally failures; and if they are failures when done carefully and intentionally, how much more so must they be when they are disguised as science fiction. But this is where Budrys came in. (Somerville 43, Massachusetts)

GARY DEINDORFER

I certainly intend to write LoCs for my Discords rather than sending you dough. Much more satisfactory to you, I suppose, and I always feel better. It's a funny thing about the Boggs fanzines, though; I'm very nasty about not commenting on them. A few years ago you sent me a few issues of Skyhook and, as I remember, I never bothered to comment. It is a failing of mine, and I wonder if it's a failing of other fans; namely, the more impeccable the zine, the more doubtful it is that I'll comment or submit material. A Warhoon will get a postcard of acknowledgment; a Probe gets a long letter and a nine-page article. I suppose this is because I feel guilty about brushing off such a fanzine, while a zine like yours doesn't need any encouragement I might offer.

"Log of the Honeybee" was well-written, especially in the vivid images of dark rainy nights which it brought to mind. I see that you call your car "Honeybee" and that it is a Nash Rambler. We had a series of Nash Ramblers a while ago, and each of them had its own nickname like Homer or Willie or Hector. Now we have a Chevy, but it doesn't have a nickname of any sort; it is just "the car." What strange anthropomorphic quality is there about a Nash Rambler which warrants its always being nicknamed? Are Nash Ramblers alien, sentient beings who happen to look like cars? (Morrisville, Pennsylvania)

JAMES BLISH

In recent years, it seems to me, the natural history of most of the important currents of thought in the US can be summarized like this:

(1) A new and valuable social idea or discovery is put into circulation: e.g., the Eisenhower recession was at least partly attributable to the intransigence of Detroit designers; the level of science and mathematics teaching has become dangerously low; or, conformity is increasingly prevalent.

(2) In accordance with Gresham's law, large numbers of half-educated people adopt the terminology of the new idea as conversational cant.

(3) The inevitable academic ostrich mistakes the cant for the substance, and writes a book mechanically inverting every point of the original idea.

(4) Marion Zimmer Bradley loves the book.

I am waiting eagerly to see the outcome of the current national discussion of "the pursuit of excellence." If anybody writes a book praising mediocrity, you may need a whole issue of Discord to contain MZB's enthusiasm. (Milford, Pa.)

LIZ (WILSON) LOKKE

Must I have conformity, or nonconformity, shoved down my throat? To be a peasant for a minute (at least), I know what I like. Even more so, I know what I don't like. I also know that my likes and dislikes change. For instance, I like our 1954 Dodge because it runs well and gets fair gas mileage. But my 1948 Stude was prettier! Neither is as nice-looking as the new Buicks -- but the back end of the Cadillac is not only phallic, it's scatological! The VW looks silly, but it's a nice car.

Now -- can't I hold the above (conforming/nonconforming) opinions without regard to my opinions about music, houses, clothes, or people? If I have to be all conformist or all nonconformist, I'll choose the former: I can pay lip service to it and still read what I want, hear the music I like. In other words, if I don't offend people, I can get away with more. By the way, I don't intend to read Confessions of a Conformist.

Regarding patriotism, my brother was in the army, and from what he said, it isn't worth much except dodging. Thank goodness I'm female. (Livermore, California)

BILL DONAHO

Marion's review of Confessions of a Conformist was quite interesting and made me determined to get my hands on a copy of it. However, I raised my eyebrows at a number of things. Either society at the University of New Mexico is rather different from the rest of the country or Mr Freedman is somewhat out of touch with the conformist stream -- I suspect the latter. In his list of things he likes, though "in certain circles you all but cut yourself off from civilization if you make such a confession," he mentions American movies, jazz, and animated cartoons. In these charming circles it has been perfectly OK to like American movies -- some American movies -- for at least ten years, and you would cause some negative reaction if you didn't like UPA cartoons. But it's jazz he's most wrong on. Liking jazz is In; it's not liking jazz that's Out. You cut yourself off from civilization if you don't like jazz, and it's been that way for at least 15 years.

Freedman's account of The Insolent Chariots must be rather peculiar. Marion quotes him as saying, "It is not enough for critics to boycott Detroit products; they don't want anybody else to buy them either. Detroit, like drink, must be totally prohibited." I thought Chariots was pretty exaggerated, but evidently Freedman read a totally different book from the one I read. The one I read didn't say anything about prohibiting Detroit or Detroit cars; it was a muckraking expose of Detroit's motivational research and planned-obsolescence engineering and the fact that Detroit cars are aimed at the lowest common denominator of American taste. Evidently Keats also thought that anyone who likes Detroit cars is either an ignoramus or a fool, but that's his privilege and he has plenty of facts to support his case. I prefer Detroit iron to foreign cars myself, but certainly Detroit could make a far better product if it chose to do so.

12 But where Freedman really stoned me was his comment, "Colleges have become populated with...anarchistic mediocrities who blackmail their fellows and their professors into accepting them at far more than their worth because of the current high value of nonconformity." Society in New Mexico must be very peculiar indeed if he can speak of the "high value of nonconformity." Few colleges accept nonconformity, much less give it high value.

And on one point I think he is totally wrong. Civilization is a function of large cities, and when it exists in smaller cities and towns it is derivative from them, from their publishing houses, theaters, orchestras, etc. Civilization is a cooperative product. It doesn't exist in a vacuum. Intelligent minds require the stimulation of other intelligent minds. These of course can be found in colleges, but in practically no other small groups besides these. And Freedman is certainly theorizing in a vacuum when he says that people in New York and San Francisco read and talk less than people in smaller places. 'Tain't so. (Berkeley 10, California)

BETTY KUJAWA

"Log of the Honeybee": I told Ella that either you were in such a fright to learn that she had arrived that you willed your car to break down, or that you were so anxious to get to her that the car fell apart. I note that due to the breakdown you ended up in the back seat with her, kiddo. Speaking of Ella, it was really a fine great moment for both Gene and myself to have her here. Never had a more congenial friend visiting me -- nor one I missed more when she left. Like, Redd, it was so quiet afterwards.

I too write books in my sleep, you know. Detective fiction -- the most ingenious clever-clever plots -- but unfortunately upon awakening I can't recall them.

Gwan with you, Bob Tucker -- you aint gonna hurt my feelings. (Anyone who gets hurt by comments on what she/he puts in a LoC should ruddy well get out of fandom.) Bob is half right -- politicians are stupid and blundering, but it's the Democratic ones. We all know the Republicans are always correct and never no never wrong. Seriously, though, I don't like to see Tucker, of all people, go in for generalities. I don't want to put him in the same category with folks who go about saying "All doctors are butchers and out to rob you blind." All politicians are not on the level of pimps and thieves in my book. Some are even kind to their mothers, I'll betcha. Now if he was talking about labor leaders, well then... (I am smiling while typing this, Redd.) (South Bend 14, Indiana)

AVRAM DAVIDSON

I am willing to accept, if I must, the granite white Discord, seems how it is, but only on the understanding that when it's used up, back we go to russet. Or -- you could maybe unload the granite white on Ruth Berman; it would be an improvement over the fish belly (almost said, sow-belly. Whew!) white she's using now...I ask you. Girl is nice enough to send me an unsolicited, free copy of her publication, and what do I do but go a-knocking of it. Shameful. However, the blue ink does go well on the granite.

You are, I sincerely believe, confusing the issue raised by Larry Shaw, by confusing pacifists with draft-dodgers -- which is something a lot of gung-ho boys have been trying to do since 1917. As an overseas veteran of the second world war who respects but disagrees with pacifists, I object. Anyone who sincerely believes that military service teaches him "the trade of assassin" has only to say so. He will not be drafted; he will not even be given noncombatant duty if he refuses it. He will be required, I believe, to perform duties not connected with military service for an equivalent period of time -- and this, I further believe, is what draft-dodgers are trying to avoid. Dainis Biseniecks, a fan whose name you may know, is just concluding a term of such service at Bethesda hospital, where he was a control patient. He didn't believe in taking life, but neither did he believe in lying, faking psycho, etc.

"A man so dead-set against entering the service [so as to fake psycho] will spend most of his service career in the stockade or the hospital." I incline to doubt it. Anyone capable of sufficient canniness to make the attempt to "outsmart the draft board psychiatrist" is likely to be canny enough to realize that, once in, it's

better to soldier than to resist -- better to drill on the drill field than in the stockade. I venture to guess that few of those who spend most of their service career in hospital or stockade tried to keep out of the draft by faking.

So a genuine pacifist has an out -- he can help his fellow man as Dainis is doing. And a genuine anarchist, who believes that all governments are always evil, has at least an excuse for faking. But if a fellow is unwilling to contribute either to the community's defense or its health service, but is willing to accept all the services the community offers him -- willing to call the cops to his aid, to use the courts in lawsuits to his advantage, to apply for medical treatment, etc. -- but refuses to return aid or service: this fellow is a prick.

Your claim that Larry Shaw, in trying to be patriotic and conceal his eye defects, is on the same plane, will not hold up. More than a matter of "refusing to abide by the rules" was at stake.

Why the individual will not abide by the rules is a question germane. The average draft-dodger is not an anarchist, not a pacifist, not a communist (conscription is all right in the Soviet Union, sure; but I won't serve capitalism). He is a guy who is perfectly willing to take all the benefits of the society he lives in, but not to return an equal measure. I know a guy who said he got out of the draft, he says, not by faking, but by earnestly explaining that he felt he "would not make a good soldier." He may even have convinced himself that this was his reason, but he hasn't convinced me. I know he would have made a good soldier; he is intelligent, healthy, quite capable of accepting discipline. But he didn't want to accept discipline, he didn't want to give up his nice big income, his well-furnished apartment, gourmet meals, winesmanship, being complete master of his time, etc. He is willing to accept every damned benefit he can from country, society, and system. He just doesn't want to give in return, is all.

The devotion of the Czechs to liberty has always stopped just short of being willing to fight for it; as a result, twice within one generation they have been enslaved, and they are still.

End of passion. I suppose that after all the above you will not be surprised that MZB's review of Freedman's Confessions of a Conformist makes me want to read it. Although I doubt that I am one, or that those who know me think I am. Well, I guess that everybody but eremites conforms to some extent -- it's a question of extent and area. I note that a midwestern school has just been ordered to discontinue using McGuffey's Readers or be cut off from state aid. Any cries for nonconformity or academic freedom from the liberality or left? I guess it all depends whose (non)-conformity is being gored -- it usually does.

And I have docketed your Tokrasillo, the character in the novel you dreamed one night: he's a Basque vampire who squats like some huge spider spinning webs, the insidious Dr Tokrasillo. Dracula was a thin vampire; Tokrasillo is heavy. Full, droopy red lips. Oh, a name to conjure with in the Western Pyrenees, where garlic sells for its weight in gold, is Dr Dikran Tokrasillo... What? What's that you say? Dikran is Armenian? Hmm. You are right. But I can't help it. It's the obvious name for him. Maybe his mother was a traveling saleslady for a rug firm.

Does Walter Breen know that the Mormons are increasing more rapidly than the Roman Catholics? Does he realize that they are far more "rigid, authoritarian"? Does he tremble? Me? Why should I tremble. If the Mormons ever Take Over, I'll be a Gentile for the first time in my life.

Midnight. Time to rattle my chains and prowl the bloody tower. AND to say Floreat. (New York 25, New York)

ETHEL LINDSAY (for taff)

I would rather like to see you do that buck-and-wing; why don't you offer it for the con programme?

Will be interested to see if Larry Shaw will answer your remarks on draft-dodging. It's a question of ethics, of course, and here one man's need not necessarily be the same as another's. Nor better. I dunno; for myself it isn't anything I have ever had to face, so I cannot and anyway would not judge others. I must admit

4 it is easier to accept a conscientious objector than a coward -- and how can we know which is which? I worked beside COs during the war; as they were nearly all Quakers I knew they were genuine and respected them accordingly. Yet the coward: what right have I to despise him? Am I any less afraid? How can I possibly know what I would do were it my duty to kill?

It certainly is a wonderful thing -- that you have met our Ella. If she would only stop gallivanting about New York and come home I could get her into a corner and, breathing heavily, ask, "What is Redd Boggs really like?" She will tell me too. How I agree that her report would be just marvelous if she really writes it as she saw it and no toning it down. Toning down her opinions, I mean. Don't worry, though, she couldn't ever disguise herself as me. I'm wee.

When it comes to the letter column I fear I must echo Bob Tucker when he states that it induces a "me tooism" in him. Very rarely do I find a statement with which I would wish to argue. They are also so well written that I cannot find anything much to add, alas! Yet I am always attentive to any sf criticism or discussion. I rather hoped you would give your opinions of the Hugo award winners this year. How did it happen, can you tell me, that the winner was published before 1960? At the moment I am toying with the idea of stopping many of the mags that I have on order, and using the money to buy hardcovers instead. Maybe some of the jaundice that sf produces in me lately stems from a surfeit of short stories. Now if you were to cut down your sf consumption to only two mags, which would you choose? I think mine would probably be Fantasy and Science Fiction and Analog. (Surbiton, Surrey, England)

EC: Hugo winner A Canticle for Leibowitz was copyrighted in 1959 but no copies were distributed till early 1960. If Ella tells you what I'm REALLY like, she had better not dare to come back to America! On second thought, I note elsewhere that you envision me as a man with a long white beard; the truth might be an improvement!

WALTER BREEN

Redd, I honestly don't see the parallel between the "eye chart" sentence and your parody of it. Of course many will say that trying to fool the draft board psychiatrist into thinking one was a hebephrenic schizo was less patriotic. I notice, though, nobody has yet attacked patriotism as such; and so far I've seen only one justification from a member of the better-red-than-dead school. It consisted of the remark that once you're dead you're dead, even if you died in defense of the status quo, but if you're alive and a slave, you still have a chance to revolt and overthrow the commie tyrants. Personally I think he's underestimating the latter by assuming that they have failed to learn the lesson of 1984; and I would hate to think that there were only these two roads facing us, just as I would hate to think that Heinlein is right and that there are (as in his Seacon speech) only two roads ahead: collaboration with the commies or perpetual battle in the underground Resistance Movement.

Leaving aside the question of whether or not there is a god to define behavior as pleasing or offensive to him, I cannot in good conscience, on the grounds of common humanity, complacently look on trained killers and think that they are defending me, let alone consider joining their ranks. No. There is a difference between unavoidable self-defense and dropping bombs on women and children; and it is a big enough difference to silence arguments based on economics or power politics.

Bob Lowndes in Warhoon #13 said it as effectively as anyone I've yet heard: "...All violence really settles is the question of who can be the more successfully violent...resort to violence further changes the subject whenever that is not the original question. (Violence certainly settled the question of whether the Confederate States of America could get away with secession from the Union; it did not settle the question of whether, under the Constitution of the United States, 1860, a group of states legally had the right to secede. Upsetting the chessboard solves no problems whatsoever)...". (Berkeley 4, California)

HELD OVER: Letters from Lowndes Himself, Don Wollheim, Rog Phillips, & Other Big Name Letterhacks from all over the known universe. Thanks to all, and season's greetings!