



# DISCORD

EDITED AND PUBLISHED BY REDD BOGGS

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## COGITO

### THE GOSSAMER THREAD

It gives me no pleasure to realize suddenly that this spring marks my fifteenth anniversary at the mimeo crank. During March 1947 I acquired a Montgomery Ward mimeograph (made by the Heyer company) for about \$19.75 -- it costs \$34.50 in the current Wards catalog -- and published a tiny one-shot called Caprice in an edition of only 40 or 50 copies. Shortly afterward Bob Stein of Milwaukee and I published the first issue of Tympany (afterwards Tympani), a biweekly fan newspaper, and since then, except for a few periods of gafia and fafia, I have wasted a good deal of spare time trying to coax sharp even impressions onto paper from a variety of balky duplicators.

I think now that little of what I've published has been worth doing, and I would gladly repudiate everything I published, at least prior Sky Hook #12, winter 1951-2, and with some persuasion, big hunks of what came after. One should, I suppose, mature after a while, and foreswear such childish goings-on; I suppose one should advance to the state of writing serials for Analog. Though I sometimes tell myself to take an evening off and write a 60,000 word novel called "Esper de Corps," I have been almost alone among fans in having few ambitions to be a science fiction writer, and I suppose if I had it all to do over again I'd publish fanzines pretty much as before.

But why? What keeps a man flinging out fanzine after fanzine, like Whitman's "noiseless patient spider" launching forth filaments out of itself? Not the hope of egoboo. Though necessary, egoboo in the form of letters of comment or mailing comments is seldom sufficient in quality and never in quantity to justify all the work of fan-publishing. Not for the hope of pleasing one particular friend: the work one hopes will be admired may not even be read by the one for whom it was intended or will be read with passionate disapproval of its most basic qualities. Not even the hope of achieving status in fandom by impressing the inner circle with your wit and wisdom: for fandom is after all a very small and not very important world.

In the morning mail came three fanzines, all grubby and ill-conceived, the graceless result of who knows what creative impulse? I feel very sad when I consider the long hours three fan-publishers spent alone

2 in their fan-dens fighting an unsung battle against the perversity of words that refuse to encompass great thoughts, and against the marshaled forces of gummy correction fluid, slippery lettering - guides, pitted rollers, and jammed staplers that plague all publishing fans. Even the grimmest little fanzine deserves juster recompense than the most generous letter of comment I can write. I hope these fan-publishers realize that the only reason for enduring such torments even once, let alone regularly over a decade and a half, is the hope of pleasing one's self, not the recipients of the fanzine. Shaping one's tinted thoughts and dreams in bright and pure words is the most sensuous pleasure on earth, and fanzines are an excellent mode of self-expression. Some people can scratch the itch by writing fiction for Campbell or Pohl; some can even achieve their desire by pandering to the 50¢ lusts of the lowest level of American literacy. But hardly anybody can succeed better in that pleasure while remaining imperially indifferent to the demands of editors and the public than the fanzine publisher.

That's why I like fanzine publishing, and why I hope the fan press will remain free and contemptuous of all efforts to throttle it. Fanzines will continue as long as fans have the guts to speak their minds despite the best efforts of female softball players in the purlieus of New York and the towering intimidations of the U. S. statutes on libel and obscenity. And I hope I'll continue to be one of the lucky few who are privileged to spend half the night twirling a mimeo crank.

#### POLL RESULTS ARE FOR PRINTING

Last issue Discord took a poll. I mention this not only to remind those few of you who don't follow this fanzine with such keen excitement that you remember every typo and bon mot back to issue #1 but to inform various overseas readers of the event. The most important question in the poll concerned mail service in the United States; also the poll-sheet acted as the mailing-wrapper on domestic copies; hence the poll-sheet was omitted on overseas copies except for five sent for checking purposes. All but one of the overseas copies have been returned.

About 165 pollsheets were sent out; as this is written, I have received exactly 80 replies. Thanks to Ballard, Ebert, Tucker, Galvin, L. McCombs, Wood, Banks, Farnham, Pilati, Jennings, Lyons, Bryant, Budrys, Winkes, J. Young, Coulsons, S. Kidd, Danner, Kaye, Wells, Wilimczyk, T. Carr, Patten, Reinsel, Tapscott, Pauls, Lowndes, Eney, Chauvenet, Hickman, Roberts, Fekete, Wollheim, Knotts, Bergeron, Metcalf, Crilly, Coriell, Eklund, Fitch, D. Thompson, Hickey, R. Graham, Tackett, De Vet, McQuown, Sneary, W. Conner, Lichtman, Lokke, Vanderwerf, Offutt, White, Franson, Langdon, Briney, Calkins, Nirenberg, Robbins, Plott, Gerber, Deckinger, Scithers, Kracalik, Pelz, Breen, Curtis, Moffatt, Sieger, V. Ryan, R. Kyle, Warner, Meskys, Elsberry, Beach, DeVore, Parker, Baxter, Dupla, and Miss TAFF of 1962. A few replies are still trickling in.

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The poll was taken largely for the purpose of checking the speed of mail service given Discord #16. The date of mailing was rubberstamped on the pollsheet and each recipient was asked to write in the date of receipt. Disregarding cases in which copies were delayed for non-pertinent reasons I obtained 72 replies to this question, including four from overseas. All U. S. and Canadian readers reporting received Discord in two weeks or less, the range being one to fourteen days. The mean delivery time was 4.4 days; the median time was 5½ days, though of course these figures indicate little without a tiresome correlation with the distance from Minneapolis of each recipient. Ella Parker's copy arrived in 24 days, Dr Dupla's in 31, John Baxter's in 33, and Ethel Lindsay's took 38 days to reach her in the wilds of Surrey.

It is obvious that all delays in delivery were the fault of the office in the recipient's city, not that of the Minneapolis office. All copies seem to have been dispatched promptly. Among copies sent to the Los Angeles area, Patten's arrived in three days, Pelz' in six, Lichtman's in seven, Moffatt's in eight, and Sneary's and Franson's in 12. (All but Patten's were mailed the same day, Patten's a day later.) On the other hand, all copies sent to New York City arrived in exactly nine days. All were mailed the same day and in a single bundle.

Question #2 asked about damage to copies from handling in the mail and listed types of damage for checking off. Very little damage was reported. Five instances of wrinkling from being jammed into the mail-slot, and one of rain/snow damage, and that's it. The third question asked about damage to previous issues. Three readers reported unspecified minor damage, but only two readers listed severe damage to any issues. Some of the comments on these two questions: "Stamp defaced with the words 'Minneapolis Minn.' between two heavy black lines"; "Front page wrinkled from being folded over"; "Ink all over the pages"; "Some issues have been seriously damaged after I got them. Mainly from being thrown across the room"; "Back page comes loose from the staples occasionally." John Baxter of Australia had the oddest complaint: "Some bastard steals the stamps if they are weakly glued. This is a popular PO practice." On the whole, however, Discord seems to weather rough postal handling quite well.

Question #3 asked whether there was any evidence of postal inspection. Only one person (a Canadian) reported such evidence, but two persons said that one or more previous issues had been inspected.

The fifth question asked for preferences regarding various methods of preparing Discord for the mail. The verdict was almost unanimous for the present method of folding it in thirds and stapling shut, though a few readers asked wistfully for envelopes. Eight persons prefer to receive their fanzines folded lengthwise; and three like them mailed flat and stapled shut at the corners. Two people want them rolled up in a cylinder. Other suggestions: "Close with stickers instead of those goddam staples"; "Deliver in person."

The sixth and seventh questions concerned methods of changing or improving Discord's features, particularly physical appearance. Each question had a list of suggestions to be checked. Fourteen readers signified a desire for more illustrations, and nine wanted a front cover. Four wanted running heads, and a like number asked for a more elaborate layout. However, the majority were reluctant to ask for any important changes, although in question #7 eleven readers said they disliked the

4 present illustrations, and blue ink, the headings, and the elite type were disliked by three persons each. (The category "Not enough sex" was inserted facetiously, and I assume that the 21 readers who checked this blank were being facetious too!) Some of the comments and suggestions on these two questions: "A cover, interior illos, and headings might make the overall appearance more attractive, but these would be merely ribbons on the box -- it's what's inside that counts"; "Loosen up the zine a bit"; "Put page numbers at the top of the page"; "Obtain some good serious art"; "The illos don't fit the neat personality of Discord." Three persons disliked the masterweave paper, and three protested the lack of editorial comment in the letter section. One reader said he would strangle me if I dropped the present Bergeron-designed logo, and another shuddered over the use of purple ink for the logo.

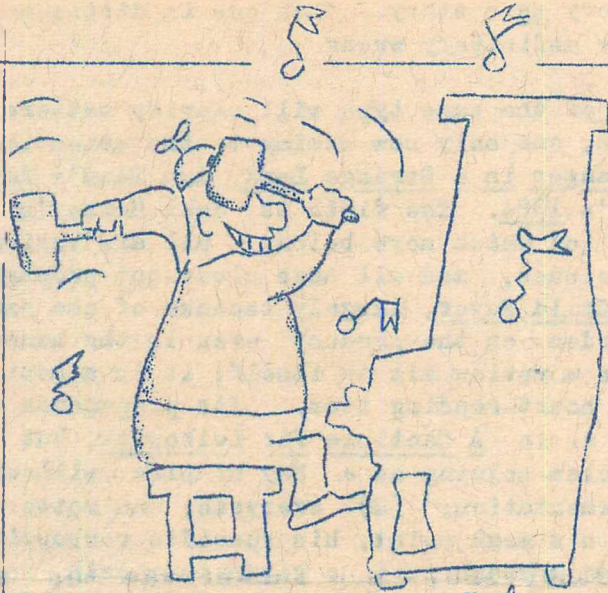
"Do you approve of the practice of circulating riders with Discord?" I asked in question #8. A few disapproved, largely because they find riders difficult to file, and 14 readers were opposed to obtaining riders from someone besides DAG. Otherwise, Bob Tucker was the most popular choice for publisher of another rider with Discord. Among the others nominated: MZB, Demmon, Warner, Bloch, Willis, Speer, Blish, Ber- man, Budrys, Leman, Busby, Pelz, Deindorfer, Eldrin Fzot, Art Wesley, Luke Warmbeer, "the legendary giants," "anybody who does not chitter- chatter," "night riders, freedom riders, riders of the purple sage," and "Boyd Raeburn and other crusty bastards." Know a good lawyer, Boyd?

Question #9 asked whether science fiction material is wanted in Discord. The answer was overwhelmingly "yes," but with a strong senti- ment, also, for an admixture of non-sf material, as at present.

The final question inquired whether "outside" contributions -- i.e. material by persons other than MZB and Boggs -- was desired. The pre- vailing sentiment here seemed to be that Discord should remain largely an editorially-written fanzine with only occasional contributions from others. So be it. Each person on the long list of suggested contribu- tors received at least one vote: Jim Blish, Willis, Degler, DAG, Ash- worth, Harmon, Farmer, Hoffman, Dr Christine Haycock, Fuller, Speer, Sexton, Art Rapp, Gibson, Tucker, Parker, Gerber, and Ted White. Hay- cock, Degler, and Gibson received more "no" votes than "yes" votes, how- ever. Here again, Tucker was clearly the most popular choice, but it would be difficult to discover the #2 favorite; most everyone was en- thusiastically seconded by many voters. Other persons suggested includ- ed various self-nominations and votes for Burge, Bloch, Ackerman, Mari- lyn Monroe, Elsberry, Hugh Hefner (who he?), Breen, John Galt, Willick, Phil Bronson, Jack Sharkey, Coulson, Davidson, Warner, Leiber, Leman, Bergeron, Budrys, John Clayton, Newton Minow, Damon Knight, Seth John- son, Sneary, Tackett, Lowndes, Terry Carr, Ray Nelson, Poul Anderson, and Norm Clarke.

As a result of the poll Discord will continue to make use of pre- canceled stamps on the theory that this method ensures prompt dispatch of all copies. (We can't do much about delays at the other end of the mail system.) We will continue to fold the magazine in thirds and staple shut, until such time as we can return to envelopes for all copies. We will try to obtain and squeeze in a few more illustrations and perhaps even "loosen up" the format slightly. We hope The Golden Apple will ac- company Discord from time to time, but will try to find other suitable riders. Finally, we will continue to use both sf and non-sf material, and keep Discord largely an editorially-written fanzine.

voices of discord



Ray Nelson

## A CANNONBALL FOR LEIBOWITZ PART 2

IF THE ATTEMPT TO PALM OFF A Canticle for Leibowitz as a novel is thoroughly unjustified -- as I tried to show in part one of this article (Discord #16) -- then its appearance in the "novels" category on the Hugo ballot must reflect, not the facts of the case,

by walter breen

but mere convenience of classification. It also indicates, I submit, certain psychological motives unrelated, though supplementary, to consideration of the book's merits as literature.

In establishing this, I must refer to a previous Hugo winner, James Blish's A Case of Conscience. This book admittedly deserved Hugo nomination for its excellence of writing, characterization, plotting, atmosphere, and idea content. No quarrel here about its qualifications of form; I bring up the book principally because, like the latest Hugo winner, it is another work in which idea content is important and in which Catholic themes are dominant. In Tesseract #2 I subjected A Case of Conscience to detailed examination and concluded that a large part of the book's popularity came from its dealing with religious themes and seeming to show that God wins out in the end. If this is the case, one could have predicted that Walter M. Miller's book would have added popularity for the identical reason. Even New Maps of Hell gave Canticle a grudging accolade for its "genuine religious conviction" (p 83n.).

But, I submit, "genuine religious conviction" is not a valid recommendation outside one's own sect. One should discount claims of merit for any book with pro-religious slant and popular acceptance, and subject it to particularly careful critical evaluation if it comes with such recommendations. I suggested in Tesseract #2 that some of the Blish novel's popularity might stem from guilty consciences. I suggest now that the same might apply to A Canticle for Leibowitz.

I suggest, further, that part of this book's popularity stems from its close attunement to present-day concern about the Bomb. Miller has translated into human terms the cold scientific descriptions about the effects of a few dirty H-bombs. The result is shock value and propaganda value for something which many fans and liberals (and some radicals) already believe.

Which leads immediately to the big weakness of this book and others of its genre. A Canticle for Leibowitz is overburdened with Message. Not only must it bear the burden of its strongly pro-Catholic orientation but it is swollen with descriptions and tirades anent the Bomb. Either of these propaganda payloads would have strained even the best-constructed story, and the both of them together all but founder it. The tone of the writing becomes, during the latter part of "Fiat Voluntas Tua," shrill -- almost hysterical at times: a sharp break from the tone in earlier sections. Though understandable in terms of the unparalleled violence of H-warfare, it

6 distracted at least this reader from the story as a story. When one is distracted by propaganda elements in a story, something is definitely wrong.

Once again, reference to other fiction of the same type will clarify matters. I have in mind five examples, four well known, one only now coming to the attention of fandom. The four are Robert Heinlein's Stranger in a Strange Land, Ayn Rand's Anthem and her Atlas Shrugged, and George Orwell's 1984. The fifth is John Hersey's The Child Buyer. Except for the Heinlein book (of which more below), all are basically mundanes using minor science-fictional techniques, and all have clear-cut propaganda content. Right now I want to focus on The Child Buyer, largely because of the exceptionally strong effect of the propaganda burden on the product even in the hands of such a master as Hersey. The book deserves a review all to itself; it is a most extraordinary, exasperating, infuriating, and heart-rending item. Its propaganda message: not "Up the Church and Ban the Bomb" as in A Canticle for Leibowitz, but instead, (1) Scientism/scientific method/problem-solving as a Way of Life without an overriding humane value-system leads to regimentation; (2) everyone, no matter how brilliant or how idealistic, has his price, his weak point, his specific corruptibility. Though well-integrated, this propaganda message puts a gigantic strain on the flow and development in the novel and -- despite all Hersey's incredible ability -- makes the Buyer's lyrical description of United Lymphomiloid Corporation's Fifty-Year project seem overdrawn, almost ludicrously unrealistic.

Skeptics about the skill involved in this book should pay particular attention to the characterization of the child. Neither Wilmar Shiras nor Olaf Stapledon was nearly so successful in portrayal of a young superbrain, let alone through the restricted format of transcripts of congressional hearings. It is a fantastic tour-de-force. I do not intend to go into lengthy commentary about The Child Buyer; buy it, read it, then reread Canticle, and you will see why Hersey's novel should have been nominated for the Hugo, but you will also see the perils to a piece of fiction of a heavy propaganda payload, whatever one's estimation of the merits of the propaganda.

In a way, the same remarks can be made about the next Hugo winner, Heinlein's Stranger in a Strange Land. (I don't think I'm being either premature or presumptuous in calling it that, for there seems little doubt that it will far outdistance its competition.) Many, most eloquently James Blish (Warhoon #13), have already remarked that this book tends to fall down as fiction towards the end, well-developed characters being dumped by the wayside, plot threads becoming confused, the whole structure tottering as the hortatory elements increase from huge to mountainous in number and complexity of ramifications. Once again, if even Heinlein finds himself in difficulties with a piece of fiction so burdened down, then surely anyone of lesser caliber will be in even worse trouble. The propaganda-fiction genre is a logical outgrowth of the novel with Idea as Hero (not confined to science fiction, despite Kingsley Amis), but so far it seems to be a genre that nobody has brought under control.

We are then faced, as readers and as Hugo voters, with a ticklish problem: to decide which is intrinsically more deserving -- a successful novel in the usual sense or a formal experiment which doesn't quite make it despite its idea content? A novel of escape, entertainment that fulfills its purpose or a piece of fiction burdened down with not only ideas but a message? The trend of late seems to be to choose the second in each pair of alternatives. Safely free -- one hopes -- of the Gernsbackian concept of science fiction as sugar-coated science education, we are now confronted with a choice between genres: sf as escape/entertainment and sf as social consciousness. Obviously there is room for both. I only hope that in future the voters will be able to choose between novels as novels, rather than feeling they have to choose between genres, as apparently happened with both A Case of Conscience and Canticle. It is clear why knowledge of complete returns of the Hugo vote would be of interest, particularly for this 1960 contest, when the choice was in fact one between a successful novel of escape/entertainment and two less successful propaganda pieces.

# A MEETING OF MINDS

JINX McCOMBS

Discord #15: Perhaps Californians are alone in their proprietary attitude toward the weather; I can't remember encountering same in out-of-staters. However, most Californians do consider themselves responsible, in some inexplicable way, for the whims of Meteora. Not only do we proudly make statements on sunny days, we accept the blame when fog and rain come along. Often have I heard a host or hostess announce that he "really must apologize for the weather." Perhaps it is because most visitors really expect to see California sunshine and when good weather eludes us, we feel that somebody really ought to take the blame.

Naturally, this letter is not to get into the hands of the chamber of commerce. Californians are strictly forbidden to use such words as fog, rain, and (heaven forbid) overcast, in letters and such. The crime is so horrible that no specific punishment has been defined by law. Rumor has it, however, that offenders are banished permanently to the Brazilian rainy season. (Wasco, California)

JOHN M. BAXTER

I fail to see any basis for Andy Young's statement [Discord #15] that "fans...claim to be interested in science." The effects of science, perhaps, but not science itself. About every definition of sf, fumbling and longwinded though it may be, has stressed the point that sf is a field of fiction dealing with the relation of technology to people, and the changes that science will make in everyday life. It certainly is not a kind of sugarcoated dose of data, designed to educate without tears. Gernsback seems to think that. His MIT speech, widely quoted some time back, said quite honestly that he felt the primary function of sf was to educate, but I think most of us are past taking notice of what Mr Gernsback says on any subject outside sexology.

Yes, I for one would pay good money to see you do a buck-and-wing, Redd. You should put yourself up on the Auction Bloch at Chicago -- with a reserve price, of course. If they will pay \$25 for an hour of Ed Emsch, what would it be worth to see you shuffle off to Buffalo? I wonder what it would be like. A while back on local TV a compere asked some visiting hooper to demonstrate the buck-and-wing, but after a great deal of doubletalk and foot scraping he had to admit that he didn't know how to go about it. He demonstrated a buck and then a wing, and suggested that somewhere in between those two was a buck-and-wing. It looked rather unlikely to me, rather akin to that scene in Fitzgerald's The Last Tycoon (I think) where a director or some such rare animal grabs his behind in both hands, lets out a screech, throws his legs in both directions, and disappears, singing wildly, out the door. If this was a regular act of vaudeville, I can understand why many mourn its disappearance.

Ethel Lindsay's choice of the two best prozines shows a lamentable lack of patriotism in that it excludes both New Worlds and Science Fantasy. I personally would mourn the loss of either rather more than that of Analog, not so much because of the material in the Nova pubs (which is, let's face it, not always the best compared even with the Z-D twins) but because New Worlds has a fine editorial attitude, and God knows we need that in these dark days. Ted Carnell is the only editor who will go to the trouble of writing a personal note of thanks to anybody who sends him a letter of comment. He is the only editor who prints letters in any kind of length,



"Oh, but this present is the least I can do to show my appreciation to the post office for all the splendid service it's given me."

8 and who uses letters that actually say something. When it's going strong, "Postmortem" is as good a lettercol as you will find in even the best sf-oriented fanzines. I can't think of a man who more deserves the award of "Most Unappreciated Man in Science Fiction." (Sydney, N.S.W., Australia)

KEVIN LANGDON

Scotty Tapscott's point [Discord #16] that the methods sadists use are not important is a good one but does not take into account the sort of latent sadist who goes around doing no more than kick dogs when no one's looking until he reads a book on torture methods that inspires him to action. The difference between censoring pornography and censoring torture methods is that sex is a Good Thing and sadism isn't. The ultimate solution is, of course, education.

I'm inclined to doubt that Rog Phillips' letter was meant to be taken seriously in view of his dog that was human. At least I hope it's not serious. Does he think "the Catholic indoctrination is somewhat realistically tailored to the human structure both emotionally and psychologically" because it suppresses natural sex impulses and creates guilt feelings? The reason for the Iron Curtain is to keep spies out, not to keep the Russian people in. The almost unanimous opinions of travelers in Russia is that the Russian people are satisfied and happy. The family is not the result of some natural human drive. It is absent even in many comparatively primitive societies. It is rather the result of the psychotic possessiveness of society.

The army is designed for the average clod, so the intelligent and the stupid do not fare well in it. The intelligent person will escape the army by feigning psycho or by other means, so naturally David Hulan finds that the ones who wind up in the stockade are the stupid ones. Violence settles the question of who's going to rule, all right, but that question is hardly pertinent in a nuclear war; there isn't going to be much left to rule over. (San Rafael, California)

LES GERBER

It takes someone with Ruth Berman's serenity of mind to write up an interview so coolly and at such short length. Good grief! I particularly liked the way the sentence describing Mordecai Roshwald's manner of speech was written in the same manner it described -- slow and precise.

Marion's enthusiasm may have run away with her this time. Just last night, at a small Fanoclast meeting, Lin Carter and Ted White were discussing Anderson's The Broken Sword and Three Hearts and Three Lions, which they both had enjoyed very much, but neither seemed ready to call either book "a work of art." I don't believe in throwing about the term "work of art" so freely. The only sf novel I've considered applying it to was A Case of Conscience, and I'll have to reread it again before I make up my mind.

Walter seems to make his point effectively, that A Canticle for Leibowitz is not a novel. He doesn't explain, at least in part one, why that should keep someone who admired the book from voting for it as "best novel." There is obviously no other category for it in the present Hugo setup, and it hardly seems necessary to set up a category for "best series collection" or something of the sort just in case another Canticle comes along. Replacing "best novel" with "best book" would make short story collections eligible, which might not be a bad idea, but I don't think that's what Walter is suggesting.

I especially enjoyed Phil Kohn's highly charged writing in the letter column this time, since he's on my side. I would, of course, disagree that the other troubles Phil mentions should be worried about at the expense of one's opposition to capital punishment. You can disapprove of capital punishment and highway deaths at the same time, if your brain is normal. A 20 mph speed limit is absurd. It may be possible to travel anywhere in Israel at that speed and not lose your sanity before you reach your destination, but I'd like to see Phil try it for a trip of 3000 miles, or even 300. The real solution would seem to be stricter enforcement of all driving regulations -- particularly bans on such dangerous practices as highway weaving at



high speeds, failure to observe certain rules, like "Yield Right of Way," and even driving too slowly on high-speed roads.

If Pavlov didn't mention that the dog wagged his tail in friendship, how does Rog Phillips know he did? That the dog "forgave him his Experiment" is sheer pathetic fallacy. Now my dog would undoubtedly behave that way, but I've known dogs which would not. The "human structure" I will admit does not respond very quickly or easily to change, but assuming that it cannot be changed is assuming quite a lot. Try handing a Bircher over to communist brainwashing experts and see how fast he changes.

Your reply to Andy Offutt doesn't hold water. When the cops drag a car-crushed animal off the road, they don't scrub the road with acid until every last molecule is gone.

I would like to ask David Hulan who there would be to defend Walter Breen from if there were no "trained killers." It's been a long time since armies were needed as police forces, except where other armies were involved. (Brooklyn 26, NY)

#### TERRY CARR

"The Night They Invented Coca-Cola" is disappointing, and even somewhat irritating. It's merely sour, and though reasonably well written it's just a lot of old sour grapes pulled up and resquished. The result is not a light domestic wine which amuses by its presumption, as you apparently intended. I get the impression you got most of your gratification from this piece in the simple act of stomping around red-footed.

At the moment I'm listening to Jelly Roll Morton's "Dirty Dirty Dirty," which I suppose you would hate to hear. I think it's very fine music. A few days ago we were listening over and over to Jean Baez' folksinging, which is nothing short of beautiful; I doubt you would have liked it either. I might give more examples, but you are a perspicacious sort and probably already see my point: there's music and there's music, and there's beauty and there's beauty; you have to listen to the music on its own terms. Now I know that to many "Good Music" buffs the idea that Bessie Smith's singing can be called beautiful despite her growling voice seems strange, but it seems to me it takes a peculiarly determined ego to refuse to admit the possibility that one can't appreciate everything that is good. Yet that's your attitude here.

Honest to Koechel, Redd, even some rock-and-roll is good. It took me quite awhile to see it myself, but it's a fact. Maybe you've never heard any that was good but even so that's no reason to assume that your experience is all experience. And as I've intimated above, I don't think you should decide that your taste is all taste.

Ruth Berman's interview with Mordecai Roshwald was almost entirely disappointing. She tells us next to nothing about the man, and the questions she does ask him are mostly uninteresting. I'd still like to know Roshwald's background, personal and academic, his views on life and love, his political affiliations or leanings, his opinion of Level 7 itself, and a lot of other things. If Ruth interviews other writers I hope she prepares a better list of questions next time.

If Phil Kohn thinks we should get upset about something else besides the death penalty, perhaps he'd accept us being upset at the fallibility of our court system. Any study of the situation will show that it's unlikely more than four out of five prisoners are guilty as charged, if that many. And given this perhaps legitimate complaint, would it not be permissible to carry it a step further and get upset all over again at a court system which is so sure of its infallibility that it often closes the case permanently in such a bloody fashion? In any case, every one of us is "most likely...guilty of something," Mr Kohn. You too, I'll bet. Not that I object to the list of grievances you give; they're all legitimate ones. But isn't there room for one more? Particularly since capital punishment is merely another form of police brutality, which you oppose?

Les Gerber: The US's laws on conscientious objection are, in the final analysis, an admission that you can legislate against an idea and get away with it, but you can't legislate against a belief. People hold their unlogical (as opposed to illogical) views much more strongly than those which they have logically considered, both because an attack on religion or superstition or prejudice is an attack at

10 one's weak point and because those views are unlogical in the first place because people have a real need for them. So you can be a conscientious objector if it's for a religious reason, but don't bother telling them you object on logical grounds, because nobody needs logic. Therefore nobody really has a right to logic -- Q.E.D. (Which, as we once decided at a gathering in Seattle, means You Stupid Clod of a Woman -- or man, as the can may be.) (New York 14, New York)

#### POUL ANDERSON

I'm not the least mad at Marion Bradley, especially after she said such nice things about me, but one paragraph in her column revives an old irritation of mine. Only I'm surprised that she, a fellow writer, should make that kind of statement.

Okay, she dislikes the Hoka stories -- that's her privilege, entirely a matter of individual taste. But why should she therefore assume that Gordy Dickson and I, not to mention the editors concerned, were just cynically giving the morons what they wanted? The fact is that we liked the series personally; enjoyed writing each one; considered them not as insults and/or degradations of any particular genre, but merely as friendly ribbing.

Reader reaction was always sharply divided. People who otherwise seemed in general agreement on science fiction questions, either loved or detested the Hokus. The detesters have now had a long vacation from them, which will probably be eternal. From time to time Hoka-lovin' types, sometimes total strangers, write and beg us to resume. We'd like to. Not for money -- such a collaboration is as much work for both writers individually as a single-authored story, and the check splits two ways -- but for fun. However, though we've discussed the idea often enough, it's improbable that anything will ever come of it. You see, we're perfectly well aware that the series was getting into a rut, and haven't been able to devise a fresh approach. Therefore, no Hokus.

Far too many fans -- who, in contrast to ordinary readers, are far too conscious of the commercial market and its complicated problems -- make an automatic leap to the conclusion that any story they happen to find unpleasing was deliberately written badly by a morally corrupt hack author. That may be true once in a while, but by and large it's not. Most failures are reasonably honest failures. Speaking for myself, after a few experiences with formula writing a good many years ago, I took a private oath to write nothing which I didn't enjoy and feel worth doing. Not that everything has to be a masterpiece, but it has to give me a certain minimal pleasure and sense of accomplishment. If you or Marion sometimes get the opposite impression, that may represent an error of judgment on my part or it may simply represent a difference in our tastes; but you won't find any badness that was put in consciously. You'd be surprised how many assignments I've refused. Nor is this any unique integrity all my very own. The majority of fiction writers whom I've met feel the same way. In short, the argumentum ad hominem is as much a fallacy in reviewing a book as it is in constructing a syllogism. What slight hostility there may be between pros and fans as two distinct classes can largely be traced to this sort of attitude on the part of some of the fans. (Orinda, California)

#### ROG PHILLIPS

Sorry about the stupidity of the postman [in not delivering Discord #16 sent to Rog's old address].

Ah, I could tell you stories of postal foulups, such as the time my mother mailed me a fruitcake and some fried chicken for Xmas and it arrived in April. (Hmmm. How would I open such a story? I smelled something at the door and went and opened it. It was the postman.) My best True Postal Experiences story, however, concerns the Palmer Institute of Authorship. Somehow, shortly after the Solacon, I got on their mailing list. At first I ignored it. I had gotten on the list of some other school of writing at the same time. Maybe it was a gag of some fan, to get me on their lists. Finally, one day, I sat down and wrote both outfits, saying, "Look. I am an established writer. If you need a good faculty member I might consider it -- but please don't waste postage on me trying to get me to learn how to write. Okay?"

The outfit in Chicago stopped sending. The Palmer Institute sent me a form to fill out with my name. If I signed my name they would take me off their mailing list. The form said, "I do not feel that I can learn how to write at this time. If I feel that I can learn how to write at some time in the future I will let you know. Signed: \_\_\_\_\_." Well!

The P.I. of A. grew subtly diabolical. They got to timing their mailings with my returned manuscripts. I would get a story back from an editor with a rejection slip -- and in the same mail would be an engraved invitation from the Palmer Institute saying, "WOULD YOU LIKE TO LEARN HOW TO WRITE?" It began to get me. My income dropped from a steady thousand a month to five hundred, then almost nothing. I had to switch to Muscatel, and my friends stopped dropping in. I could no longer afford to pay dues in the Little Men and the GGFS, and had to drop out of local fandom. Our garbage can was filled with Muscatel bottles and P.I. of A. mailings each week.

Then one day Honey threatened to cut off my allowance unless I found some way out. So I turned my talents from writing to the problem of how to stop getting Palmer Institute mailings. And one day I got an Inspiration. When the Palmer Institute envelope arrived in the noon mail I didn't open it. Instead, I wrote on the outside of the envelope, in a bold scrawl, "Once more, shithead..." Then I took a slightly larger, expensive manila envelope and typed on it the address of the Palmer Institute and AIRMAIL SPECIAL DELIVERY RUSH. But no return address. Then I put the P.I. of A. unopened envelope inside, sealed it with Scotch tape, and dropped it in the corner mailbox. Without stamps on it.

Two weeks later an envelope arrived with no return address on it, and a Los Angeles postmark over the stamp. I opened it. It said, "Dear Mr Phillips: We have made three photographs of your obscene remark. One is for our files, one has been turned over to Mr Stebbins, our president, and the third has been turned over to the postal authorities for prosecution. Not only that, we are taking you off our mailing list. Yours truly..."

Walter Breen is one of what I call the "ninetypercent" boys. That is, he has an IQ in excess of 150, but he is 10 percent off, even in simple things. He is like a watch that is always within five minutes of the right time. Now you, Redd, you are like a watch that doesn't run. You are exactly right twice a day -- but you have the added faculty of sensing when you are exactly right, and expressing it in exactly the right words. It is a joy to behold.

A Canticle for Leibowitz is one of the most penetrating novels of all time. By the time I was halfway through it I was securely ensconced in the central, timeless hub of eternity, watching the panorama of finity, with human ants going about their too serious lives with their Cosmic motivations reduced to temporal echoes of the laughter of the gods. But underneath was the seriousness, the true meaning. This, I suspect, is something that Walter Breen can never see, but which most others can. This is the difference between a Walter Breen and a Redd Boggs. And a Marion Z. Bradley, for that matter. I enjoyed her analysis of Poul's stories. It is accurate and 100 percent right, NOT 90 percent. The only way in which it may be wrong is in her optimistic belief that Poul will eventually write a Great Novel. She may be wrong there, but she is not wrong in her estimate of the potential in him.

Walter Breen asks, "What is a novel anyway?" He then states that the Britannica does not attempt to define it, and without having made an explicit statement defining what he, Walter Breen, considers the definition of a novel to be, he concludes, "The attempt to palm (A Canticle for Leibowitz) off as a novel is therefore unjustified." However, Walter's definition of a novel is implicit in his article. It is, "A novel is a story with one principal character (the protagonist) and a unity evidenced by a central plot line in which the protagonist is the principal character. The central plot line consists of (1) the protagonist's problem, (2) the successive ways in which he tries to solve it, and (3) the way in which he finally solves it or fails for all time to solve it."

Now, there are other types of stories than this, but we don't need to bring them in because A Canticle for Leibowitz is this type of story. What Walter misses

is that a person can have a problem whose solution extends far beyond his lifetime. Christ was such a protagonist; Leibowitz is also such a protagonist -- so much so that his life is incidental, and only his attempts to set in motion the solution to his problem are pertinent. The signers of the Declaration of Independence were similar protagonists. Miller's novel is therefore a legitimate novel, in that all the "living" characters are dominated by the motives of Leibowitz, in his attempting to solve a problem that extended far beyond his lifetime.

In this respect, Leibowitz is not three novelets, but a single novel. This basis for its being a novel is so stated on the flyleaf in simple language. Leibowitz had a problem beyond the capabilities of his muscles and his life span, but not beyond his know-how of human engineering. Plotwise, Leibowitz is little different from a murder mystery in which the victim, knowing he is to be murdered, creates a trap that will expose the murderer after he is dead. That is, the protagonist, faced with his problem, creates the machinery for solving it, then dies, leaving the machinery which continues its way toward solving the problem. Miller's novel is different from most stories of this type only in that the solution to Leibowitz' problem could not be accomplished in a few days or a few years after his death, but only over a historic period of time. However, the basic elements of Leibowitz' machinery were a masterpiece in human engineering skill which will make Miller's novel a classic that outlives him.

Let's go into Breen's statement, "I think even the most sympathetic reading will compel the admission that each of the three sections is complete in itself..." So is any proper scene in any well written story. A scene has a scene purpose -- which is accomplished at the end of the scene, and a story purpose -- which advances the story ONE STEP. Walter Breen could improve his story perception by reading 50 or 100 three-act plays, and observing the unfoldment of act-purpose and act-accomplishment within the act, plus play-purpose and play-accomplishment within the act. (Play-advancement is perhaps a more proper term.) Such a study would give Breen a beginner's understanding of what Walter Miller, the master, put into Leibowitz. The ordinary reader, of course, does not bring such analysis to a story. He feels, and his feelings are much more accurate than the analysis of a self-qualified "expert" who is ten percent ignorant of the subject he is an "authority" on. (Berkeley 2, California)

A. J. BULIYS

Goodby, Daisy Bacon my foot. The dear departed daisy was in large measure connectible with the demise of one S&S title after another, according to my sources.

Oh, come on, now, Walter Breen, even Webster admits a novel is whatever you're pointing to when you use the word. In what category are you suggesting A Canticle for Leibowitz should have been nominated? Are you saying that since there was no appropriate category, one of science fiction's landmarks ought to have just been left out there in the cold and wet? This hair splits with eloquent difficulty.

Jesus, is it really true that going into the US armed services is an admission of willingness to (1) slaughter peasants, (2) endorse Franco, Salazar, and that arch villain, et al, (3) be slaughtered in turn (presumably by peasants who will do so with expressions of sorrowful regret, as in dealing with willful children), (4) walk around with a dripping mop, hollering "A bucket, a bucket, St George and England for a bucket"? If it is, then I offer this much comfort to those thus willing: Taken as a class, peasants are the most willful, narrowly avaricious, parochial sort of people in the world; for a civilized man to be accepted by them is impossible, to be tolerated by them is a status earned only by paying unremitting service to the most complex code of mores in existence. They are, in fact, the most exasperating people under the sun, whatever their present nationality, and I fail to see what makes them such handy objects of especial pity. They are no more or less deserving than, say, Australian bushmen or Kalahari bushmen. And they number among them, such sterling personalities as Francisco Franco and Nikita Krushchev, as well as the undersigned. (Evanston, Illinois)

HELD OVER: Letters from White, Warner, L. McCombs, Breen, Eklund, Knotts, and others.