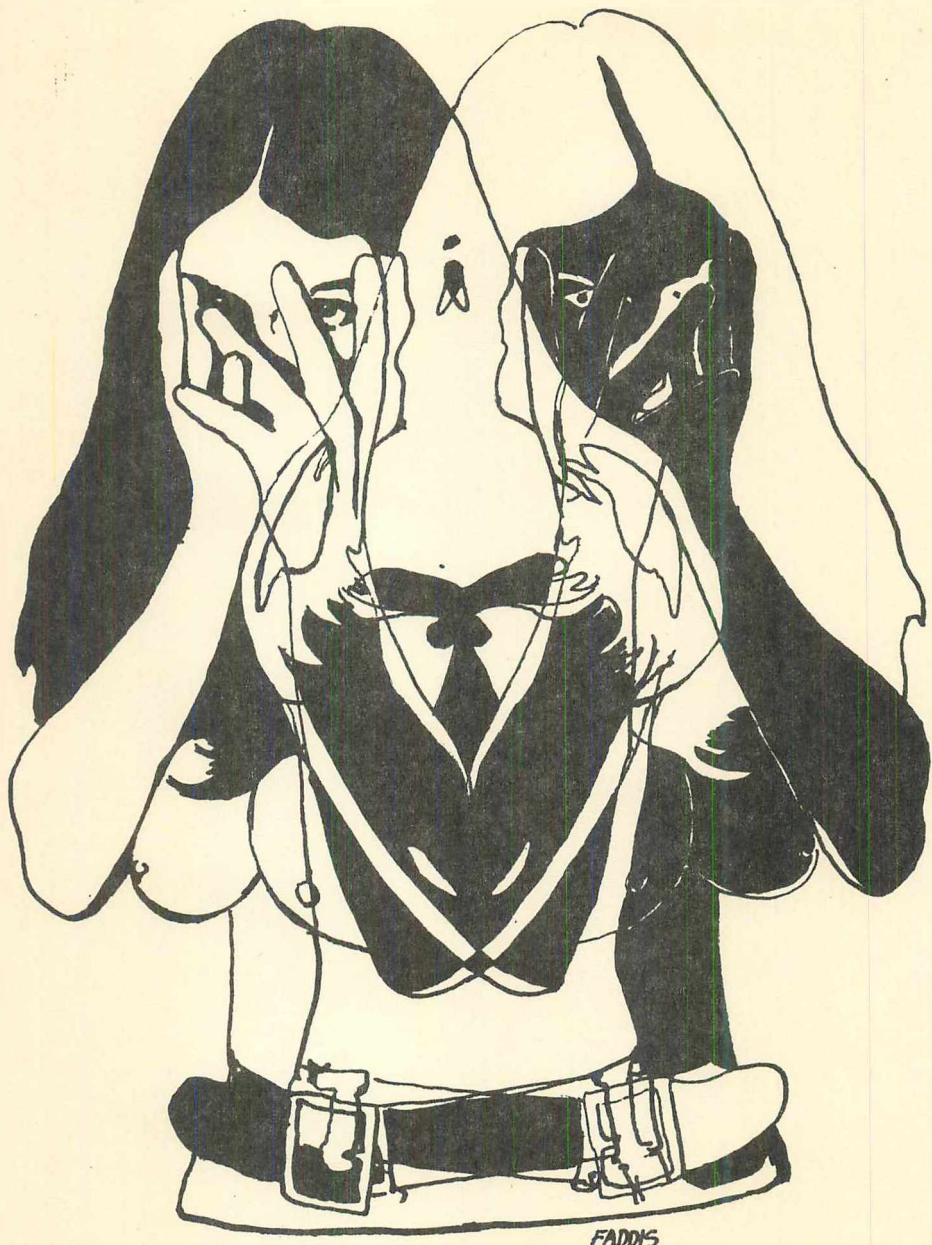


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Brag Dept: The October issue of Analog had a story of mine, "Stretch of Time."

LETTERS FROM ENGLAND
by Jean Berman

June 25, 1972

I am traveling alone. Friday I had told A I would meet him at 3:30 at Victoria Station, as I was having lunch with B & C. I like C, but she's a bit domineering. When I told her I was going to Victoria to go to Salisbury, she called British rail, and found out that trains left from Waterloo & the next train left in 50 minutes. She decided I should make that train so I'd get to Salisbury with plenty of daylight left to find the youth hostel & get settled. And the only way to do that was to take me to Waterloo herself. So she did, and she put me on the train. I meant to get out after she left and take the tube to Victoria, but with the time zone change I get sleepy at funny times, and I fell asleep. When I woke up we were in Basingstoke. So I went on to Salisbury. Probably it's what I really wanted. Besides being a social ignoramus, unable to carry on a conversation, he wanted me to make all decisions. For me an impossible travelling companion. I know what you're thinking, "Oh, poor A!" Well, maybe you're right, but I do think it's all for the best.

C wants me to meet D, the redhead who has just finished med school. Sometimes people's motives are so transparent.

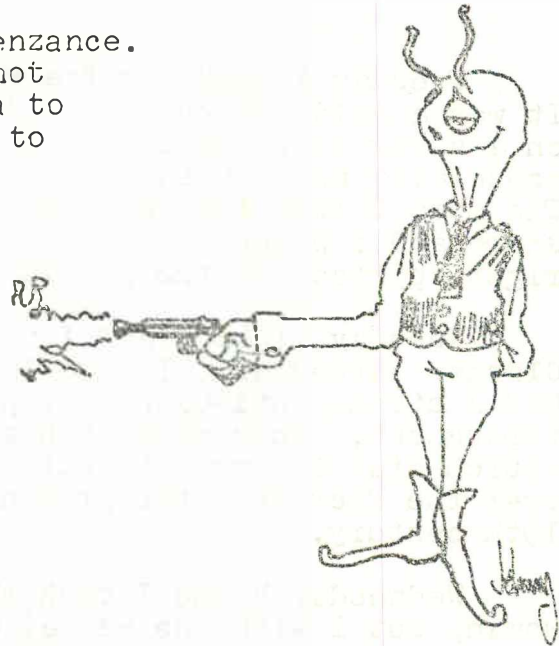
June 26, 1972

You will love Cornwall! Scenery's grand, castle's ruined, people friendly, & food good -- especially for England. They're especially big on clotted cream.

Yesterday when leaving Salisbury I met a girl from NYC that I got along with, and I decided to go along with her to Plymouth before going to Penzance. It was Sunday, and cold, and rainy, and I left my lovely gloves on the train. Plymouth is a religious drag of a town, almost completely rebuilt since WW2. Hardly a place open to get a bite to eat. Its one claim to fame is the Mayflower. Big deal. But there were nice people in the hostel, and we had a good talk.

It was funny to hear E go on and on to these French kids about how disgusting the butcher shops were with the meat just hanging there, and you could smell it, and it was enough to make a person a vegetarian. Or the French girl who thought that today in northern cities like NYC Negroes had to sit in the back of the bus, and a redneck boy from Beaumont Texas thought that though the law didn't put it that way, buses are mostly for colored people because they're the only ones too poor to drive cars. I don't suppose anyone changed his opinions, but it's fascinating to hear other people's views.

This morning we went on to Penzance. A lovely town, but no pirates -- not even a Gilbert & Sullivan operetta to meet us at the train. We decided to rent a car and drive. But as it's two months to my birthday, E is the only one who can drive, and she's a miserable driver. Not five minutes after we drove away she hit the right fender of a car parked on the left. So much for our £10 deposit. It occurred to me at that point that maybe I should know someone a bit more before going in to something like this. But then too, it could have happened to anyone -- it is certainly a difficult thing to cope with driving on the left. But she was driving. It's so frustrating to not be able to share the hassle.



July 3

Here I am in Glasgow with the F's, having a grand time, but there's no mail for me. All week I've been thinking "There'll be mail in Glasgow," and here I am disappointed. No, I'm sorry. I take that back. I just found out you sent it to G.

Arrived here this morning on an overnight train from Bristol, having spent the last few days in Somerset, -- Bath, Wells, Ilminster, doing brass rubbings. I'll be sending them surface mail to you within a day or two. Maybe if I'm not lugging that around, I won't be so disorganized.

July 4

D took me out for dinner last night to an Indian restaurant, and then to a pub. I had my first glass of beer, but as D said, "It is just a wee one." After a while of listening to these lilting Scots accents, I feel as if I have the clumsiest speech.

July 7

You can't imagine how thrilled H was that D and I got along. I think in the space of three days she let the whole family know it. But there I go being catty.

Tuesday I took the train to visit Cumbernauld, a new town. It was a cold, rainy day. I'm sure it would have looked better on a sunny day, but I didn't think too much of Cumbernauld. It's especially awful when you think it's one of the best in the world. The more I look into new towns, the more I think they are a snare and a planner's grandiose illusions, and surely not the right approach to the problem.

Tuesday night D and I went to a Son et Lumiere exhibition at Glasgow cathedral. It was interesting, but not spectacular. It had a strong anti-Catholic, pro-Church-of-Scotland tone running throughout. They make such a point about "There has been a church standing on this site since before 856" and quickly gloss over the fact that the present church was completed in the 19th century.

Wednesday H and I took the train to Edinburgh. She's a dear woman, but I wish she was a) either less scatter-brained, or b) less caught up in a dominating mother role. A situation: H: And since we don't have much time, we will take a bus tour of the city. Me: (who dislikes bus tours) Don't you think we'd do better walking around on our own? After all, you do know Edinburgh. H: And the bus tours start right outside the train station.

(At the buses) H: (directed into the bus) Can you tell me where the bus goes? (upon getting no straight answer) Well, we'll just get on. It must go over the city.

It went through the 18th century section of the city, which I thought interesting, and then it went all the way to the Firth of Forth, all the while the driver telling sentimental apocryphal stories about Stevenson, and such. It lasted an hour and a half. I didn't mind particularly. I woke up when he talked about planning and architecture, and slept through the rest. But H was frustrated, because she had thought it would last less than half an hour, and go over the old section of town. So she kept poking me in the ribs, waking me up, and saying over and over, "Let that be a lesson to you, Jeanie. Never get on a bus unless you know where it's going."

July 11

I had a nice time with J and K in Lincoln. They are both busy with their own affairs, and they made me feel welcome, and also that I could come and go as I liked. Saturday J had to go to London, and K and I went to a garden fete for the United Nations something. Garden fetes are to raise money, and in theory one can have more people in one's yard than in one's house. But you can imagine what a snare and delusion they are, considering English weather. It was pouring rain most of the afternoon.

It seemed so right somehow to watch some of the men take out their big black umbrellas (impressionistic image of green grass, grey sky, and black circles) and watch people try to eat the cucumber sandwiches before they got too soggy. The tea was undrinkable.

On the continuing story of A. When K picked me up at the train station, he said that my boyfriend had been by, and had left me a note. Knowing only that my relative was the city planning commissioner in Lincoln, A went to Lincoln, and found J. I think with some difficulty. J gave him some tea and talked for a while about planning, and then she asked him, "Does Jean want to see you?" At that point A decided not to stay, and left me a note, that I think is supposed to make me feel guilty. He gave me a number to call him at in London, and said he leaves for the continent in ten days. I'll call, but not today. Tomorrow maybe. You know, there are days when I feel nasty.

July 28

Yesterday I went to Cobham, Kent, and did some lovely rubbings of knights, real Creative Anachronism stuff.

There is talk of a general strike here. Sort of frightening, on an island -- there's the feeling of getting trapped. I don't understand the underlying problems, It's something to do with labour, or social class. Class differences here seems to be a subject as emotionally charged as race is at home.

July 29

C and I went to Portobello Road. She's fun to go with because she knows about antiques, and she is really good at dealing with dealers. I tend to get intimidated.

The first thing she said to me as we walked towards the car was "You walk just like your father! I would recognize that anywhere."

Do you suppose one could do a population genetics study of our family and show that waddling is a dominant trait? Or do you suppose it is hereditary? As I am not a Freudian, I usually take responsibility for my own stupidities and shortcomings, and don't fob them off on my parents. But my duckwalk -- I will say that it's your fault. So there.

My problem with antiquing seems to be that I'm particularly attracted by things that are breakable or bulky or both. Do you want to hear about huge Chinese vases, suitable for umbrella stands or lamps? I can hear you saying, "But, Jeanie, what will we do with it?" And I have visions of myself traipsing around

France in the middle of September with 20, 30 pounds of China as baggage, and I restrain myself.

August 3

Last night I went over to B and C's for dinner, and then they took me to a show. Guess what show we went to see? When they asked me what I'd like, adding that they'd seen most of what is currently playing, I said they should choose. Showboat. I thought about what it was like for you to see it on our Showboat, on the Mississippi. It was incongruous to be in the Adelphi theater seeing an extravaganza production of it, hardly a week after I got the letter from you describing Doc Whiting's production. Oh well. It may not have had nostalgia, but the Adelphi production had singing and dancing that was superb and spectacular staging. The Chicago exhibition scene had the whole stage lit with colored electric lights, like a ferris wheel.

B and C drove me home afterwards. It was the first time they had seen where I live. Islington used to have a rather bad reputation, but in the last 10 or so years that has changed, and many parts are not only nice, but even fashionable. So we were driving along Upper Street, and C was saying how at night even a poor dirty area like this could look quite cheerful and tidy. She had never been in the area before. After a while B said mildly, "You know Islington is changing, darling. Some parts are quite nice." In the car, B drives, and C does a running commentary on traffic in general and B's driving in particular.

I feel guilty about being a little catty. So I'll put in my disclaimer. You know that I really do like B & C. They are both lovely people, and they have been just grand to me.

August 11

I promised I would tell you about my adventures in Limehouse. Sketchbook and camera in hand, I had gone into E. London. First I was dealing mostly with children. They were fascinated with my drawing, and asked if they could draw, too. I had one felt-tip pen, and my drafting pen. I gave one girl the felt-tip, and asked the other if she could get a pen from her house. "We don't have one" was her reply. So I told her that if she sat by me she could use my drafting pen. She was holding it at too much of a slant, so it wouldn't write. "Hold it more vertically," say I. "More what?" "More vertically." "What's that?" I lean over and show her. "Like this." "Ooh."

After a while her mother came out, looked at what I was doing, and asked me if I studied heart. Or at least that's what it sounded like to me. It didn't make sense, and then I realized

she wasn't asking me if I went to heart school, but art school. It's one thing to read about cockney accents, and it's quite another to be confronted with it. Instantly I felt both flustered and very middle class. All of this was well and fine. Made me a little class conscious, but everyone was affable enough, charming, cooperative children, no hostility, not even to my accent. Then on the way to the bus stop I passed St. Anne's church, and in the churchyard there were two men sitting under a tree. I thought I would take their picture. They were dressed in black with black caps, and dark hair, and the background was all green with nice diffused light. I didn't take much notice of the bottle sitting between them. I thought they were having lunch. I moved about a little to find my angle, took my picture, and all hell broke loose. One man got up and started yelling and swearing at me and quite literally chased me out of the churchyard. So that's what it means to be roaring drunk.

September 2

Sometimes it's hard to say if it's sadder to have faith or not to have faith. I am sitting in the Dublin airport watching a family waiting for their flight to Loudres. The child is spastic or something like that. The mother is thin and pale and probably younger than she looks. The father looks nervous, folding and unfolding his hands, crossing first one leg and then the other, playing with the empty wheel chair as the mother holds the child. Perhaps he keeps long business hours (he looks successful) and avoids the problem. She seems more accustomed to coping.

So they are going to Loudres, hoping for a miracle. I've told you about Loudres -- pack trains of cripples, masses of people, praying with the patronage of Our Lady of Loudres -- whom not even Rome will recognize as a saint with any miracles.

Do they expect their child to get up from his wheelchair, hold himself erect, and talk clearly? It's sad that they should spend so much time, money and energy on an expedition bound for disappointment. But on the other hand, they can hope. I am sad for them that they have faith, and sad for myself that I have none.



WHAT ASTROLOGY GUFF

A Zodiac for Non-Believers
by Ruth Berman

ARIES

The Ram gets to be New Year's Month for the zodiac. The aggressive, ambitious Aries naturally agrees that the stars understand him.

TAURUS

Tauruses are generally pretty dumb, and therefore often believe what they're told about astrology. On the other hand, or hoof, no one likes to be told he's a plodding, earthbound lot of bull, so many Tauruses balk, stubbornly refusing to believe unless carefully cajoled.

GEMINI

These airy, poetic, artistic schizophrenics are the fair-haired boys of the zodiac. Most of them gratefully accept the account given of them, putting up with a reputation for flighty unreliability in return for sensitivity, intelligence, and creativity.

~~CANCER~~

Cancers all are scared stiff of themselves. In deference to their crabby complaints, and on the advice of the AMA, their name has been changed to:

MOON CHILDREN

Being a lunatic is not quite socially respectable, as anyone who cares to admit to shock treatments in public may find out to his cost, but it is at least more respectable than being ill. Cf. Erewhon.

LEO

The king of beasts is a lordly creature and generally too high-minded to believe in astrology, although inclined to pretend to belief in it out of magnanimity if he hears it attacked too vigorously.

VIRGO

Vigos, the perpetual butts of astrological bawdy, do not believe in astrology, but cannot rid themselves of the fear that there just might be something in it, anyway. Many great comedians and nuns are Virgos. Virgos are shy, sensitive, easily wounded, and given to denying all the foregoing characteristics.

LIBRA

The scales of justice represent the Libras, who would like to believe that they are indeed by birth just and open-minded, except that it seems so unfair.

SCORPIO

The hard-luck kids of the zodiac, these domineering, tyrannical, secretive bullies with the stings in their tails universally disbelieve astrology as a matter of simple self-esteem. Smart astrologists sometimes try to sugar-coat their denigration of the Earth-Scorpio by pointing out that there is also a great-souled, firm-minded, heavenly Scorpio who is an eagle. Eagles are birds of prey.

SAGITTARIUS

The archer is a centaur, a man in front, a horse in the rear. His opinions are naturally divided.

CAPTRICORN

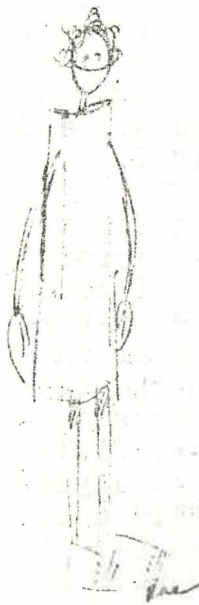
Goats tend to be capricious.

AQUARIUS

It's their age a-coming; they have to believe in it.

PISCES

In pique, because their age is going out of fashion, they are usually aware of something fishy in the state of the precession of the equinoxes.



THE UNDERWATER WORLD OF JACQUES BERRY

by John Berry

Although I am now in my middle forties, I had never learned to swim. This is a sad admission to have to make, and it was recently brought home to me in its true perspective in a very pointed way.

I was on holiday a month ago, with my wife and daughter, in Ibiza (pronounced I-beetha), which is off the eastern coast of Spain. Our first hotel was the LOS MOLINOS (The Windmills), which sported a long, deep swimming pool containing warm, very blue water. Attired in my natty striped shorts, skilfully designed to camouflage the idiosyncracies of Nature, I descended the steps into the shallow end of the pool. The water came up to my waist, and in a typically intrepid way I advanced along the tiled edge towards the deeper part, where the water lapped my chin. I mentally girded myself into a high mental and physical pitch preparatory to launching myself towards the shallow end, using a type of swimming stroke peculiar to myself which doesn't fit into any known category, mostly because my arms and legs are entirely unco-ordinated. A critic once described my swimming technique as "a hesitant threshing movement, indicative of extreme inebriation." This is of course sheer exaggeration, which I find distasteful.

Just as I was about to blast off in order to reach the sanctuary of the shallow depth, about ten feet away, hoping madly that I could negotiate it without my feet touching the bottom, a most beautiful sight met my pulsing eyes. A little girl, no more than two years old, swam past me. Her large brown eyes looked into mine with complete disdain. She was a veritable Water Baby. I admired the way her little limbs thrust her through the water, and I said to myself that if she could do it, so could I.

So instead of aiming for the shallow water, I decided to swim on a parallel course across the swimming pool....it took me about ten minutes, but I succeeded. It was the second greatest sensation I've ever undergone, actually travelling through thirty feet of water on my own volition without having to take a crafty kick on the bottom to assist me. And I speedily improved. By the second day, after many hours in the water, I managed a length, finishing in water a dozen feet deep, although I only kept a yard from the security of the side. On the evening of the third day, with my wife and daughter as witnesses, I swam from shallow to deep in the centre of the pool. I panicked a little, but with my famous grit I concluded the test.

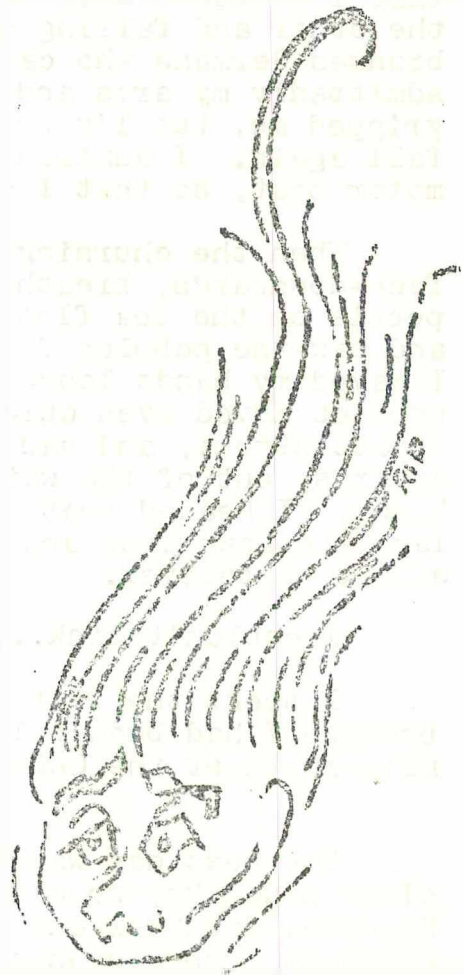
I could now officially swim, although the international group of observers at the same hotel, who had been following my progress opined that the noted bouyancy of this Mediteranean water had radically assisted me.

After a week, we moved to our second hotel, the GALEON, at San Miguel. Ibiza is only a small island, about 20 miles North to South, and a dozen miles in width, and the GALEON was on the west coast, in a magnificent situation. Imagine a long, narrow inlet, a mile long and a quarter of a mile wide, with wooded rocky hills about 400 feet high on either side. On the northern slope, built into the rock, is the GALEON, so-called, I believe, because the step-like progression of the structure from bottom to top very much resembles the rear of a galleon of the Spanish Armada type.

As soon as I saw this inlet, with the water utterly clear, I decided that I would frolic in it, and perhaps swim out of my depth just a little, which I considered to be an enormous stride after my first fumbling swimming just a week before.

Whilst my wife was unpacking, I leaned over our balcony and closely watched the swimmers in the water. I knew that 90% of the hotel clientel were Germans, who, out of self-conscious national pride, assert themselves physically on every occasion, and in the water many of them, with masks and flippers, were sedately traversing the water, diving down every few moments obviously to observe a vagrant fish. I knew that I would have to do this thing, to make deep water my new medium, and although my wife protested violently, I rushed upstairs to the hotel shop and purchased a mask, snorkel and frogmans flippers, impatiently awaiting the afternoon, and my conquest of this new medium.

The Mediteranean has very little ebb and flow of tide, and the beach on the inlet at San Miguel is composed of small



pebbles, with a thin corridor of sand meeting the gently lapping water. My wife selected a site for her deck chair about 30 yards from the sea, her plan being, so far as I could judge, to ensure that the minimum number of persons saw me putting on my underwater ensemble and associated me with her. Between her chair and the sea were dozens of Germans lying in the sun, their raucous, slightly hysterical voices screaming a continuous crescendo of self-assertion, rather like massed seagulls on a narrow cliff ledge staking claim to their square foot of resting place.

I adjusted my face mask, and made sure that the snorkel worked properly. I sat down and put on my flippers, and then struggled to my feet. I stuck my chest out, and attempted to swagger to the sea. It was a difficult route. I tripped over nine times, twice on top of beautiful blonde German girls soaking up the sun. I've never heard such high-pitched screams, especially from one girl who'd been sleeping, and saw my eyeballs spinning behind the face mask when she woke up. The trouble was that I couldn't walk on my flippers; I kept putting one on top of the other and falling over. It was very sporting of the two huge bronzed Germans who carried me to the sea and threw me in. Admittedly my arms and legs were bruised rather badly where they gripped me, but I'm sure it was because they didn't want me to fall again. I admired the unselfish way they threw me over the motor boat, so that I didn't hurt myself colliding with it.

When the churning water had settled, I found myself lying face-downwards, breathing rather heavily, but I could see every pebble on the sea floor. I trundled my flippers up and down, and saw the pebbles drift away behind me as I moved forward.... I waved my hands loosely at the wrists, like fins, and the pebbles moved even quicker. I tried my interpretation of the breast stroke, and saw the pebbles glide away from me. I looked upwards, out of the water, and I saw I was some distance from the beach. I headed that way, and when I was back to my own depth I lay face-downwards and discovered that I floated without any effort whatsoever.

I couldn't sink....

I spent the rest of the day perfecting the basic techniques, because I had been told that there was an isolated bay about a mile north of the GALEON and the water was teeming with fish....

The next day was the same as every other day in Ibiza -- clear blue sky, no cloud, strong sunshine, not a breath of wind. My wife, daughter and myself followed the rough road for half an hour and then descended through a tree-covered valley to the bay. Only half a dozen people were there, and the water was utterly clear. Even better, the shore and sea-bed were composed of sand.

I fitted my equipment, and slowly swam directly into the bay. The sun reflected the delicate undulations of the water onto the sandy sea-bed in the form of yellow wavy lines, and I saw many kinds of fish below me. It was a fantastic thrill because the water must have been at least 30 feet deep, and I felt no fear. Some fish swam up to have a look at me; they were silver, with a thick black vertical splotch near the tail. Others were surface swimmers, and there were shoals of them around me, each fish about three inches long. Other types were sea-bed swimmers, and I also saw flat-fish blending with the sand, shuffling their way forward, two bulbous eyes looking up at me. I lifted my head, looked towards the beach, about a hundred yards away. I scanned the sea again; I felt completely at home in the water because it was warm, and because I knew that I couldn't sink. My wife told me I'd been swimming for over half an hour, and I considered with amazement that about a week previously I'd been frightened to get out of my depth.

After a rest in the sun to put the finishing touches to my tan, I swam towards the side of the bay, where the banks were steep.

I selected a point along the bay some distance from the beach, and swam slowly towards it, surveying the sea-bed beneath me. Here and there the beauty of the rippled sand was spoiled by plastic cartons, and although I knew of the effects of the refraction of water, it did look startlingly deep below me. I saw larger fish, one of them gloriously red with thin vertical black stripes and a wide mouth, sweeping across the sea-bed. A couple of times I looked up for direction correction, and was soon near the bank.

As I neared it, I saw sea plants jutting out from it and undulating, like a crowd of people waving goodbye, and a variety of fish drifted amongst the fronds, but at the same time the water suddenly became colder, but even worse there was a swell of water towards the bank. I felt myself being carried towards the rocks, and my feet brushed the plants as I started to breast-stroke like mad to get away from that area. But I still didn't panic, because I looked up out of the water and saw that I was successfully fighting against the swell. I looked towards the beach, where I saw my wife anxiously looking towards me; I waved, then pushed my head under the water again and leisurely swam towards her.

Suddenly I saw water lapping around my mouth, and breathing became hard, then difficult, then impossible. The water swilled round my eyes....I knew that I was in about 25 feet of water... and at the same instant it occurred to me that the equipment had been very cheap, and the rubber surrounding my face must have stretched, allowing water to seep in. I scooped the mask off my

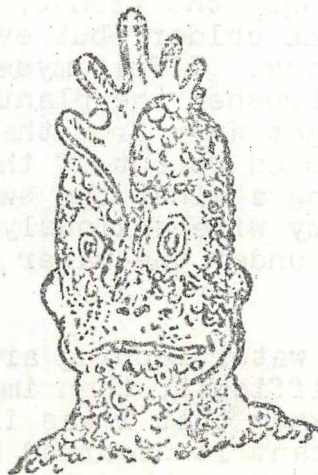
face, and dropped it, and tried to get into a calm breast stroke, without panic. It was my first real test; I still had some distance to go to reach the beach but somehow I managed it.... I swam slowly, trying to take my mind off the pressing possibility that I would lose my nerve and start floundering and screaming for help. But it was a severe strain, because when I finally got to the beach, I started to shake as though I was in a vibrating machine.

I was rather subdued as we returned to the hotel....my assumed invincibility in the water had been shattered. But I saw one chance to recapture my nerve. The swimming pool at the GALEON...it wasn't so large as the one at LOS MOLINOS....one length before lunch would restore my nerve.

Germans sat round the pool, sunbathing....they booked their seats at about 5am every morning, and many seemed to spend their entire holiday lazing round the pool slowly turning bronze. I stood at the shallow end, and dived in. I began the Berry version of the breast stroke, and nodded confidently to my wife and daughter, standing on the side. I didn't seem to be progressing very well, and as I reached halfway, very slowly, but relentlessly, I subsided....I tried to regain my nostrils above the surface, and dragged myself to the edge, when my wife and daughter and half a dozen Germans pulled me out.

I spat out a mouthful of water....it wasn't salty, it was fresh water....it was the bouyancy of the salt water which had kept me floating, after all.

I STILL CANNOT SWIM....



T H A T O N L Y A N A M A T E U R
by Ruth Berman

"There is a vast difference between being an 'unknown' writer and being an amateur writer." So Harlan Ellison begins his introduction to Greg Benford's "And the Sea Like Mirrors" in Again Dangerous Visions. Somehow, as I think about it, the distinction Ellison is drawing strikes me more and more as invalid. Not that there aren't plenty of awful writers who love the idea of writing so much that they won't give it up and keep on wasting the time of editors like Harlan Ellison with their awful manuscripts. But:

"To be an amateur is to be tone-deaf, without rhythm, color-blind.... The amateur is doomed never to find the right words." What, never? Well, hardly ever. The unknowns start out as amateurs -- or so I would expect. Ellison claims that Benford 'was never an amateur. He was unpublished, but he was ready. He wrote for fan magazines and he sent off manuscripts to the professional journals, but for a long time he was unpublished: he was unknown. But he was no amateur."

The fanac is something of a red herring. Fanzine writing is mostly assorted kinds of essays, and it's quite possible to be good at writing essays without being able to write good stories (or vice versa). The facts that Benford was writing for fanzines and collecting professional rejection slips don't in themselves mark him off from the amateurs who are doomed never to find the right words. Some of them write for fanzines, too, and all of them, as defined by Ellison, collect rejection slips. (There are some amateur writers -- a lot of them in fandom -- who write purely for an audience of other amateurs who share their love for the field. And there may be a few amateurs who write for themselves alone and feel no urge to share their results. For obvious reasons, neither of these groups is included in Ellison's discussion.)

Well, then, how do you tell an amateur from an unknown? By the quality of the writing? Can't be. Writing is partly a craft, a skill that must be learned, and everyone starts out writing badly. And even at advanced stages, that particular test is no use to the amateur-or-unknown himself or herself, because writers are rarely good judges of their own work. How about the length of time a subject has been writing badly without showing signs of improvement? It's a good indication, no doubt, but it's not a definitive characteristic; people don't all learn at the same rate.

No, finally, the only way to tell the difference between the two is in retrospect. A new writer is an ex-unknown. Oh, there's

usually an intermediate stage when an unpublished writer can be identified as non-amateur by a collection of handwritten rejection slips saying things like "not this time, but try us again," but sometimes the subject jumps directly from printed "no thanks" to sales without any inbetween stage.

And in the meantime, before reaching the "try us again" stage or actual sales, the unpublished writer has suffered considerable embarrassment at the idea that he or she may be a hopeless amateur wasting the editor's valuable time. I used to agonize over John Ciardi's approximately once-a-year columns in the Saturday Review devoted to the subject of what rotten poems people submit to him for SR. I'd comb the description, trying to see if there was any hint that he was thinking specifically of One of Mine. Eventually, I was lucky enough to get two poems accepted, after about five years of trying, so I was able to stop cringing. But I still think he gave me (and his other would-be contributors) unnecessary pain in writing those columns -- I doubt that the subject interested his non-contributing readers very much, and it obviously didn't discourage the rotten writers from continuing to send him their work. (Ciardi no longer writes for SR; he's writing similar columns for Norman Cousin's new magazine, World, but the magazine doesn't seem to be printing any poetry -- unless you count Buckminster Fuller -- so perhaps Ciardi will drop the topic of the awfulness of amateurs.)

Complaints about the awfulness of amateurs are probably about as likely to discourage the "unknowns" as the amateurs. In fact, Ellison claims in introducing one of the other stories in the book ("Harry the Hare" by James B. Hemesath) that "many fine stories by unknowns languish for years and eventually go into the trunk as the writer goes into plumbing or CPAing." The authors of some of those languishing stories may have been scared off by editorial complaints.

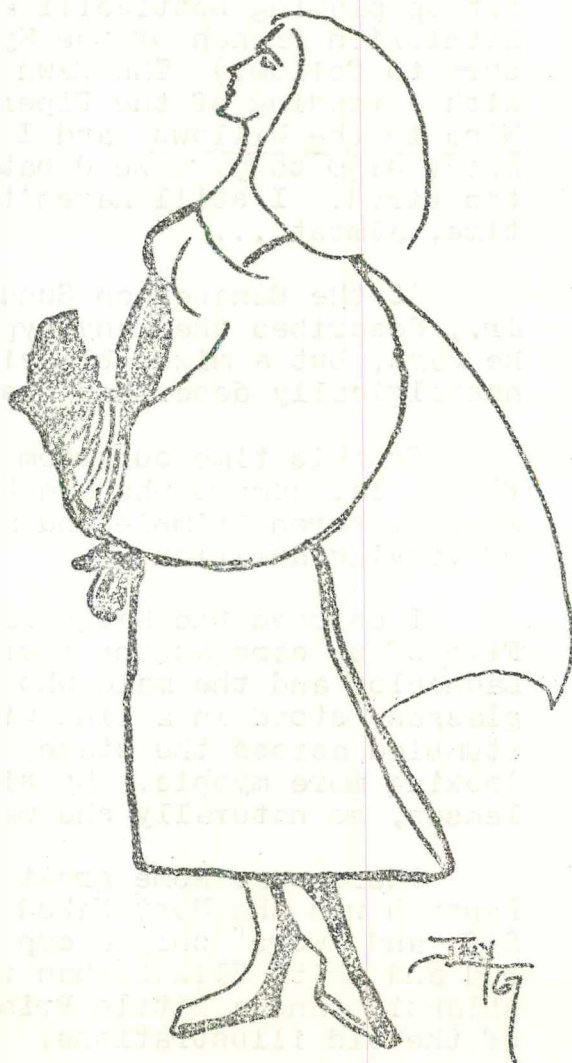
And one other point. Ellison says that amateur writers think that being an unknown writer "is inherently noble, somehow umbilically linked with greatness." I'm not sure what he means by that. If he means that unpublished writers frequently salve their egos by claiming that greatness is uncommercial, publishers take only mediocre work, and their own work is too good to be accepted -- well, certainly some do just that. But I doubt that "hopeless amateurs" do it any more than "promising unknowns." On the other hand, if he means that amateurs think that there is something innately noble about trying to write, that it is better to try to express one's feelings in writing (or painting, sculpting, composing, etc.) than to let them disappear -- aren't they right?

WESTERCON--MYTHCON 1972
by Doris Robin

When Ruth asked me to write a report on Westercon-Mythcon, I said okay, but that I'd never written one before. But I have read some, and I asked Dave Hulan how to write one. He said that conreports are really just ego-trips, and if they happened to be interesting to read, so much the better. (He also said that of course he intended to write one himself.) So here's my ego-trip, and if it's interesting, so much the better.

Since ego-trips are mostly opinion, I'll describe only the events that I really liked. One of these was our final room situation. When I arrived on Friday evening, I registered in Mythcon and then located some friends, Chryste Whittaker and Maryanne Ramirez, who wanted to share a room.

Since we all shared in the fine old Mythopoeic Society tradition of being poverty-stricken, we began searching for a fourth room-mate to bring our expenditures down to a minimum (so we could spend our hard-won savings on important things like books, sketches and tribbles). We began asking strangers in growing despair; some of them may not even have been with the Con! And then Ruth Berman arrived. I hadn't seen her in a long time, so I was doubly pleased when she agreed to be the fourth room-mate. So we got our room -- at the uttermost end of the hotel. We stockpiled it with the food we had brought to cut down our expenses even more. We brought enough for a long, cold winter, or even a long, wild con: oranges, hard-boiled eggs, instant soup, canned tuna, Vienna sausages, bananas, soda crackers, and pudding cups. Ruth went out and bought hot dogs, cherry tomatoes and strawberries. We hoarded it all in the cupboard under the sink and prayed the maids would be lax.



The opening ceremony and procession for Mythcon III was very colorful, if not authentic, with most of us in "courtly" dress and with representatives of all the branches carrying their banners and walking in the order of the branch's founding.

This con was inconsiderately prompt, so I missed most of the panel, "The Making of Fantasy Worlds" with Poul Anderson, Katherine Kurtz, Robert Silverberg, Larry Niven, and Ruth Berman. But I did see "The Interloper" -- or hear it, anyway. This production of the Mythopoeic Performing Arts Workshop was on tape, in imitation of a radio program. It was an adaptation of Guest of Honor Poul Anderson's story of the same name. The sound was rather unclear and hard to follow, especially at the beginning, but what I did get was good. Members of the PFA promised that next time, sound effects dubbing would be done during the taping, not added afterwards!

The night before the Greet the Dawn Party, a group of us sat up playing Botticelli and talking until 4:30. (Where the Lothlorien Branch of the Mythopoeic Society goes, Botticelli is sure to follow.) The Dawn Party was traditionally at 5:30 a.m., with a reading of the Piper at the Gates of Dawn chapter from Wind in the Willows, and I hadn't made it to one yet. From about 4:30 to 5:00 we debated going, and then decided we were too tired. I still haven't made it to a Dawn Party, but this time, almost....

At the Banquet on Sunday, Westercon Pro GoH Lloyd Biggle, Jr., described the many types of fan letter writers -- a blessing, he says, but a mixed blessing, evidently. Fan GoH Len Moffatt nostalgically described his early fan experiences.

By this time our room had a shifting tenantry occupying the floor, latecomers who had known a haven was available. Joyce Muskat, Karen Trimble and my sister Marcy all came for visits of varying duration.

I enjoyed the Masquerade, though it was crowded and hot. Five of us came as the four Queens of Faery who imprisoned Sir Launcelot and the maid who helped him escape. We took off our glasses, stood in a line with linked little fingers, then stumbled across the stage, trying to look disdainful, but looking more myopic. My sister was the only one with contact lenses, so naturally she walked at the end of the line.

There were some great costumes -- and non-costumes. Lisa Deutsch won the Most Naked Lady Award. She came as Thor's wife Sif, and "wore" only a cup of mead. I also noticed a gorgeous red and white Elizabethan riding costume, a fantastic Queen of Atlantis, and a little Prince Charming who could have stepped out of the old illustrations. The humorous presentations were

outstanding, especially the Bored of the Rings group ("Yew have a long, hahd jerney ahead a' yew....Yew staht at dahn"), the 40's comic strip, and the Vampire story with a twist.

The Art Show was one of the best I've seen, combining SF and Mythopoeic themes. Tim Kirk's Master thesis, a series of paintings from Lord of the Rings, was unbelievable. I especially liked his "Mirkwood": dark, foreboding forest overshadowing the low, bright flower-colors of the dwarfs' hoods; and his "Frodo Meditating": sunny, dusty air and light.

Altogether, I felt this was one of the best cons I've been to. The combination made the Mythcon less insular and petty and made the Westercon more varied. The combination was well organized. Let's do it again!



THE SAGA OF OLAF LOUDSNORE

Chapter DC

by John Boardman

When Jarl Olaf and his vikings returned from raiding the coasts of Fife in Scotland, they brought with them a Scottish damsel named Wanda. This Wanda came willingly with the Norsemen as their mistress in common, rather than continue in the same office to a brotherhood of cruel monks in Fife.

As they neared port, Olaf ordered the girl to hide beneath decks when the longship landed. "For," he told her, "my sister Gertrud will meet us. She is a follower of the White Christ, and holds herself for a most upright woman. If she finds a crew-girl aboard the ship, she will raise such a storm as will breed ill-feeling under my roof-tree."

But Olaf's sister suspected such a ruse, and she searched the ship so thoroughly that she found Wanda. Angered, she asked Olaf's bosun Hogni the Horny, "What is this wench doing here?"

"To while away the passage of time at sea," Hogni replied, "she sings us songs of strange voyages to the stars, and of heroes doing battle against wizards and monsters."

"You lie!" Gertrud replied. "Who is this girl, in truth?"

Hogni, caught in a lie, hung his head:

"Wanda, Miss, a lay of Fife."

Letters

A

Yes and No

F

from Harry Warner, 423 Summit Avenue,
Hagerstown Maryland 21740

You may not be completely straightened out even now about "Trouble with Water." I gather that you think it was written by someone other than the Galaxy editor. But I remember clearly a little essay in the "Wish I Had Written That" tradition in an anthology or fanzine or somewhere, in which Gold looked back from his fame as editor to his start as writer and wished he could again be the poor but energetic youth he had been when he wrote the story. There's a theme for a parallel universe essay, incidentally: what about a space-time continuum in which none of the famous prozine editors had given up their writing careers for the editing field? How would Campbell, Gold, Pohl, and some others have influenced the field as writers, if they hadn't cut down or stopped creating fiction after taking the new assignment?

A lot of women seem alien to me. But a lot of men also strike me as alien to my own species. Either I'm a person who differs in many ways from most of humanity or there are major differences between most individuals in the world that some people try to hide by joining clubs, siding with majorities, listening to the Top Forty, and doing similar things. In any event, Harlan is going to start feeling alien to a lot of men, too, if he doesn't get off this youth culture kick: he's getting too old for the youngsters to feel real empathy for him and he doesn't seem to be making any particular hit with older fellows.

The Grant Canfield cover on No 10 is interesting both for its high quality and for its style, which seems to differ quite a bit from what Grant Canfield has been drawing of late. It used to be that an artist's style was recognizable in every picture, but now that Rotsler is suddenly altering so wildly in subject matter and techniques, I don't know where to look for permanence any more.

The front cover on the 11th No sticks in my mind. It's simple and yet distinctive, the small animal should remind me of Snoopy but doesn't, and the main figure is somehow lovely despite the tent-like garment and the meagre detail in the face. The back cover doesn't have the stand-out-in-a-crowd quality, but it has an appealing face and a good sense of energy in repose and the different angle of a feminine face on the Pan figure, if I'm not so sex-crazed that I mistake this phase of the picture.

"Avalon" appealed to me. This is more encouraging than it seems on the surface, because for the past two or three years, poetry has failed to get through to me as it once did. Maybe the world has been too much with me, or I might be manifesting the masculine form of change of life in an odd way, but whatever the cause, I haven't been reading poetry anywhere except in fanzines where of course it is a ritual to read everything.

Mary Schaub's article on Kenneth Grahame made me wish I hadn't been such a realist when I was small. During the first few years of reading ability, I couldn't get interested in any fiction except stories that concerned the scenes and people I knew, contemporary small town America. My aunt sent me a nice children's book entitled Way Out West and I never got past the second page because it happened in California. I would listen to fairy tales when my mother read them but wouldn't read them for myself. So why did I go wild over science fiction when I found my first copy of Wonder Stories at the age of ten? Anyway, this explains why I didn't get acquainted with Kenneth Grahame's writing, because The Wind in the Willows is the only one of his books that might have been available in Hagerstown and I would have spurned animals that talked.

Mary Schaub might have drawn a semi-parallel between Grahame and Lovecraft. The early loss of parents, unsatisfactory marriage late in life, conflict between dreams and the real world, are all there. Would Lovecraft have written less horrifying stories if he'd grown up amid some brothers and sisters as Grahame did?

"A Box in a Box" is startling first of all for its length. You don't expect a twelve-year-old to write a story that runs more than a couple of single-spaced pages. I don't know how much help an aunt may have given with the plotting and development ((None)), but it's a real story, which seems to have had its

denouement in mind from the outset instead of growing by improvisation. Something else that impresses me is the apparent influence of television on the story. I seem to detect fondness for "Star Trek" and "Land of the Giants," plus a general visual orientation: characters respond to what they see, not what they feel or think. In any event, it's a remarkably good story for a person of that age and I don't doubt that the author will become a fan in another year or two and will quit fandom at the age of 16 or thereabouts because he is spending all his time writing professional fiction.

Owen Barfield is just a name to me. But I can't help thinking wistfully how nice it would have been if literary people had been visiting universities in this manner early enough for Stapledon, Wells, and similar celebrities to be met by fans and described in fanzines in this way.

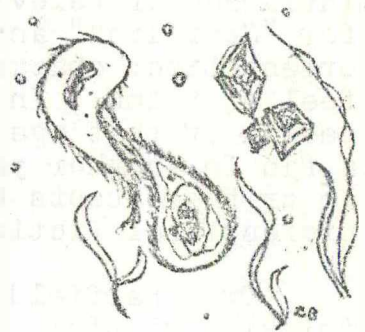
from Charles T. Smith, 620B Front Street, Brainerd Minnesota 56401

John Boardman's "Olaf Loudsnore" chronicles are, I think, something to look forward to. In fact, of all the regular columns in all the regular fanzines, "The Saga of Olaf Loudsnore" is the one item I am anxiously waiting for, and so far each issue with this stirring epic has been a hit with me. Yes, yes, I realize that it is not generally accepted to admit a craving for clever puns (feghoots), and even the usually jovial and genial Isaac Asimov had some definitely un-nice things to say about puns in his Treasury of Humor, but nevertheless I enjoy the Boardman wit. I am thinking of asking J.B. if I could publish a folio of sorts, reprinting the chronicles of poor Olaf.

James Appelbaum is your nephew, you say? Any relation to the food chain people? ((Distantly)) Only twelve years old, eh? He has a nice flair for words, and makes me sigh because at his age I was content to play with plastic dinosaurs and climb trees; ah well, I've always been immature for my age, I guess. (Hint: I no longer climb trees.)

The Kosher SF article was interesting, partially because I am totally ignorant of Judaism, but mostly because it started me thinking. SF strikes me as being more religious than you and Dave Hulan indicate. I realize that you two were probably considering overt religious tones in sf. But religion, of sorts, seems to be a main ingredient of sf. Take for example the traditional simplification of pulp fiction: Super-human scientist saves the world from a fate worse than death (or the Martian Tree Vampires anyway). Science in many such stories becomes a "god," whose high priest (the hero) hands out bits of wisdom and knowledge for the salvation of humanity. (Of course, on closer examination there are some major differences; a religious savior intends to play with the immortal soul while the pulp hero concerns himself with physical well-being. Yet the awe and mystery

given "Science" resembles what we are told to feel towards God. And there is supposed to be an elite who can translate God's power (Science and technology in pulp fiction) into usable blessings; also, this elite gain their knowledge through some means unavailable to the rest of us poor louts. That is, the prophet receives guidance -- visions. The pulp hero is considered a "man of vision" who can see what the rest of us cannot.)



Then of course, there are the New Wave and fantasy stories which use a great deal of mysticism to explain events; coincidence, fate, destiny, etc. Not to mention outright miracles.

from George Scithers, the terminus, Owlswick, & Ft Mudge Electric Street Railway Gazette, Box 8243, Philadelphia PA 19101

...of course, the English translation of No would be just W?

from Norm Hochberg, 89-07 209 Street, Queens Village NY 11427

Covers. Ugh. Sheryl's central illo for the front cover is almost palatable save for that amateurish thing peeking out from behind the tree. But with that frilly border the entire arrangement is sub-standard. I think I know what Sheryl was trying to do -- create an Olde English sort of effect -- scrolly almost (at least that's what the lettering indicates). But it doesn't come off for me. Backcover: a well-developed top but disproportionate, and a too-plain bottom. The top is too "heavy" (too many lines) for the bottom. One more thing (and I don't know if it would have looked good or not), I am a little uneasy at dead center illos. What, do you think, would have happened if you'd have moved the figure down and to the left?

So Sandra didn't like Carol Carr's ethnic story because it was strained. Perhaps that's what I liked about it. Same thing with the writings of Philip Roth in which he attempts to show the "typical New York-New Jersey Jew." It's one of the few overdone stereotypes that I can usually laugh at. You see, I've read the story three or four times and each time I've found myself reading it aloud. And it sounds real done like that.

I don't know that religious questions "are essentially independent of time and space" as Dave Hulan believes. Religions are a human construct which arise because of the particular social conditions of a society; as such they are directly dependent upon space and time. In this case, sf might be useful in

postulating other spaces and times in which other (or no) religions hold true. (I know, I know -- it's been done.)

I suppose that it's almost superfluous to say that "A Box in a Box" reads like something written by a 12-year-old. It telegraphed its surprises throughout and was fairly unoriginal in thought, but it wasn't all that poorly written in its first half where James is dealing with common sf reality. Where he begins to deal with sf concepts his sentences get choppy, his meanings unclear, and his development sloppy. Still, I should only have written so well when I was 12. I really don't know why you should apologize for publishing fiction. You publish John Boardman's wretched Olaf Loudsnore things. What's the difference? "Olaf" isn't serious -- it's supposed satire? That's a poor reason.

from Bill Rotsler, 8420 Ridpath Drive, Los Angeles CA 90046

I am not Johnny Chambers. I have never been Johnny Chambers. I do not plan to be Johnny Chambers. Shape up there, Ruthie baby. Clean the Minnesota outta yer fingertips.

Is "NO" a title with hidden significance? Is this some sort of social or sexual withdrawal from the world? ((Why, "NO")) What are you hiding, Rith? Why are you this way? Lie down here a moment and let me open up your head.

Screwdriver.

Scapel.

Geodesic converter with a .5 fraggis, left-hand thread.

Saw.

Suture.

Ah...

Watch it! Damn! That butterfly just got away! Send a neofan after it with a net.

Now, let's look in here...

Ah...

Aw...

Ah?

Ah.

Hm.

Hmmm?

Hm.

Who plans to tell her family?

Serious matter this. Terminal fanac is no laughing matter.

Look at that purple blotch there, doctor. Malignant

ditto ink.

And that, a mess of nasty typos.

Unusual cervix construction.. oh, we weren't suppose to open her up that far? Ooops, sorry. Well, she's out, who will ever know? The three foot scar? Tell her she fell off the table and

we saved her life by applying copies of SLANT just in time and
bill the hell out of her.

Suture.

Clamp.

Sponge.

Stapler.

There!

Good as new!

How are you feeling? That's nice. Take two ENERGIUMENS
and call me in the morning.

Get her out of here, I have an emergency coming in. A
mass contagion from the LA Con!

((my apologies to both Bill Rotsler and Johnny Chamberlain.
The drawing last issue listed in the ToC as being by WR was
really by Johnny Chamberlain.))

from Mary Schaub, Box 218 c/o C.S. Schaub, Apex NC 27502

As an amateur King Arthur researcher, I particularly
enjoyed Nan Braude's poem "Avalon." The sympathetic slant on
Guinevere's later life added a poignant touch to counter the
more dream-like stanzas. Your nephew's story was also impressive
-- not what one would expect from a 12-year-old!

I don't know why, but I thought Owen Barfield had died --
glad to hear from your report of his appearance at the Univer-
sity that he is quite alive. I can't completely agree with his
statement that science tends to concentrate on the elements of a
unity, rather than the unity itself. It seems to me that numer-
ous branches of science deal with the unity of their subjects,
as well as the fragmented details -- the cosmological theorists
in astronomy, for instance, and mathematicians who construct
discrete systems from limited numbers of axioms and postulates.
His choice of Newton and Einstein as examples of specifists
appears a bit odd, considering that both were attempting to
formulate theoretical explanations for the totality of physical
and relativistic reality operative in this solar system (and,
for Einstein, the extended, possibly curved, universe).

from Tom Collins, Lakemont GA 30552

You should have received IS:5 and IS:6 by now. I am,
incidentally, making a request that anyone who liked or enjoyed
either issue tell others about it -- so that I can get enough
subs and sales to pay enough of the print bill to start the
January issue. ((#6 contains general material, much of
it by professional writers. #5 is the History of SAPS issue. I
enjoyed both very much. In scope and quality #5 is somewhat
similar to Dick Eney's A Sense of Papa, although it's shorter and
is made up of reminiscences rather than reprints. \$1.50/issue
or \$6 for four.))

from James D. Allan, 144 Mary Street, Orillia Ontario CANADA

I've published "A Glossary of Eldarin Tongues," containing glossaries of Quenya and Sindarin with appendices on Khuzdul and Westron and the various writing systems in The Lord of the Rings. 52 pp., 5½x8½, photo-offset, 70¢. If people order it, please ask them to include the words Eldarin Glossary on the envelope and NOT to use U.S. stamps as payment.

from Marty Helgesen, 11 Lawrence Avenue, Malverne NY 11565

A while ago the library where I ply my trade got a copy of The Art of Editing by Floyd K. Baskette and Jack Z. Sissors. I'm not much of a natterer, and often forget about writing. But I particularly enjoyed Nan Braude's report on U.N.C.L.E. activities. ((No 8))

from Jackie Franke, Box 51-A RR 2, Beecher IL 60401

I enjoyed the religion-in-S.F. discussion carried on in No 10 & 11. Not being up on the subject, I tend to agree with both your viewpoints -- at least as expressed. There is very little "kosher" S.F., the ratio of religious scientists to agnostic or atheistic scientists is apparently low, neither point is refuted by Dave, as you never denied the existence of some religious people in the scientific fields.

I question Dave's assertion that only (or especially) Christians and Buddhists would eschew this world in a search for Higher Reality. Aren't there Jewish sects who feel that study of the Talmud is the highest calling a man can aspire to? -- even to the extent of neglecting "worldly" matters. From the little I've read, Jews, like Christians, Buddhists, what-have-you, tend to develop differing views from the "main" and evolve into various sects. ((True. But a general tendency often remains fairly clear, and, as Dave pointed out, Judaism generally tends not to be mystical, although it has a number of more or less mystical sects.))

from Dave Hulan, PO Box 43, Monrovia California 91016

Len Bailes was always wondering what I'd do if I ever got really interested in Sound. I finally went off the deep end and have recently acquired a tape deck, stereo receiver, headphones, and a good bit of miscellaneous stuff. Looking at my record collection, one wonders why I bother -- half of it is Gilbert & Sullivan, and since the only duplicate I have is two editions of Yeomen (didn't care for the Angel recording, which I'd bought first, so I got the Richmond with Greene), and I'm missing Sorcerer as well as Utopia and Grand Duke) you can see how small the collection is.

I haven't read Perelandra in years, but a reading of the first few chapters looking for a reference a couple of years ago annoyed me so much I've had no desire to. I think the thing which chiefly bothered me -- I could feel my mind screaming "No! No!" at the time -- was when Ransom tasted some kind of fruit that was delicious, and somehow he knew he mustn't indulge in eating more than a little of it. My reaction was, why not? There was no reason to believe it would be bad for him, other than that it brought such an exquisite pleasure. And I simply don't believe that a pleasure loses its quality by being over-indulged in. Not for me. That's how I got so fat -- if I like to eat something I can eat and eat and eat it. (Although with a great surge of will-power I've lost 40 lbs. since Passover.) ((The reaction must vary from person to person. I find that eating as much as I "want" of something tasty means not enjoying the taste of it as much towards the end.))

from Dick Eney

I was going to say that the catfish on page 10 had a leer that reminded me of Ken Fletcher's rats until I thought to check the art credits and found it really was by Ken Fletcher. I am not sure the world is ready for leering catfish.

from Sandra Miesel, 8744 North Pennsylvania Str. Indianapolis IN

Did you watch Little Women on TV? ((Didn't get it here.)) We were thinking about you and how we missed seeing Alcott's house with you & Devra at Noreascon. Both our daughters identified with Amy, very curious.

Dave Hulan's piece in No was excellent & certainly novel. Occurs to me that one of the only examples of Protestant religious feeling in sf is Wellman's Who Fears the Devil?

