

PREHENSILE





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PREHENSILE 13.5

LETTERS *of* COMMENT

1. BEYOND THIS ORISON Great chroniclers of the age, pundits, and fan commentators are all waiting with bated breath for PREHENSILE to collapse, to fall and splinter like some depeDESTALED granite king.

Well take out your earplugs and get on your contact lenses because here's another issue of the zine that made Sylmar putrid. The Bolwing-Green-Van-Nuys connection has arrived.

Bowling Green. You can tell it's a town with class -- it's a two McDonald's town. The other day at high noon it was 47°. The kid from LA has been staggering around with blue lips saying "I can't believe it" and all the people do is grin devilishly and tell him "Enjoy it while it's warm."

But I don't imagine I'll be getting a lot of mileage out of kid-from-LA-in-the-cold stories, which in a way is unfortunate because I can't really think of anything else to say about this place: forgot to copy the one really good descriptive letter I wrote about the place. And sent it to somebody who doesn't even write back, right? I should have saved the original. (Yes, Norm, that's the one. Who else?)

Ha now that I think of it I could get at least another paragraph out of some polysyllabic snickering over putting a cryptic comment at the end of that last remark. I think I shall. I just did. Hell, what else do I have to show for 13 weeks of work in the Paula-Ann Anthony School For the Hopelessly Literate? "If anyone can cure you of coherency Paula can." This unsolicited and unsaid testimonial from Craig Miller to whom I owe a great deal, but if I explained it to him he'd probably blush, which would be something to see on the face of a man who chaired a Star Trek Convention.

Right about now you're probably wondering where I'm hiding the convention report. Well, if I told you it wouldn't be a secret, would it?

There are definite adjustments involved in moving to Bowling Green, after my heyday as faned-about-town in the city of the angels, but there are compensations. Like I'm a four-minute walk from downtown; what there is of it. That sells it short I admit; it's as busy as say Main Street in Flushing, or San Fernando Road in San Fernando, California. On a Sunday morning you can forget this whole region of the country, though. Naively escaping the sleeping town of Bowling Green a few weekends ago I drove straight for Toledo expecting to see, if nothing else, at least a few people walking around the streets. Nobody. It's not necessarily the sort of place I want to have to myself, but downtown Toledo was my private concrete jungle -- for about as long as it took me to find the road to Detroit. Yes, Detroit was just bustling. There were maybe fifty people straggling into Tiger Stadium, and perhaps half a dozen at a newsstand down the street from the newspaper building. Where were they all? I found 'em! All backed up into Canada behind U.S. Customs on the Ambassador Bridge.

In fact being so near Detroit gave me the idea of disguising myself as a Trekkie and venturing into that part of fandom; but the only club I know of in that area meets on the same night as one of my classes. Which, if these classes don't shape up, will stop being a conflict...

2. TAKING UP OLD BUSINESS While it's true that I get more mail from Andy Porter than, say, Norm Hoehberg or Lou Stathis (do you hear me, Hoehberg and Stathis?!) it's still little enough that I take up each unique missive with trembling hands. But surely this wouldn't be PRHENSILE if I didn't beat the dead Hugo horse some more, and Andy's letter gives me the perfect opportunity:

"How's this for the first step towards a better definition of a fanzine?"

"Prozines are published by incorporated organizations as money-making ventures. Fanzines are published by an individual or group as a break-even venture at best. If the publishers of a prozine, or original SF anthology, etc., were to ascertain that the project would not turn a profit they would kill it immediately.

"So BEST FANZINE: Any generally available publication not published as a money-making venture, ...

"What do you think?"

Whether commercialization, profit motive, whatever, is the thing you want to legislate against there must be an enforceable concrete definition. Only the individual fanzine editor can fairly say what his motive for publishing is -- who will willingly eliminate himself? Things like circulation, payment for material, profits, etc. are facts which can be substantiated objectively. Though with DISCON declining to take action earlier this year, the whole topic of reformed Hugo category definitions is irrelevant.

The continued absence of real functioning category definitions in the fan awards (besides: a fanzine is a zine published by a fan, a fanwriter is a writer published in a fanzine, etc.) has caused some frustration in 1974. Just what the awards represent when two STrek fans are nominated for Best Fanwriter on the basis of fiction, published in zines most of us never saw, has been the source of numerous cynical remarks.

Clearly the 'meaning' or definition of a category and award now and always did depend on what the voters were using as their means of determining what to nominate and vote for. Since I can't ask the nine hundred or so who voted what they used as standards, I can at least try to figure it out on the basis of what zines they did choose, and offer a speculative explanation.

Active fandom has been a minority of total WorldCon membership for years. But until recently it was a significant enough minority out of the fraction of con members voting (especially given the number of walk-ins who did not get to) that its nebulous but commonly held tastes dominated the Hugo selection process. Recently, with significant preregistration and record numbers of participants (930 voted for DISCON, compared to circa 450 for LACON's Hugos) these tastes and values have become less dominant.

Now with the massive memberships and preregistrations enough fans vote to make the former values not completely relevant to the Hugo. What evidently counts is accessibility (ie, high circulation; you don't vote for what you don't see), package, intensive sf discussion and pro names; a good zine with large circulation inevitably beats a good zine with small circulation, and sometimes will beat a great zine with small circulation. The victory of ENERGIUMEN shows, to my mind, that to win a fannish fanzine still has to appeal to values of the other camp: superb graphic package, some pro names and overall great performance.

Then in fanwriting, exposure sure as hell is crucial. Fifteen nominating votes doesn't get the job done anymore. Where are Stevens, Walker, Cagle, Locke? Perhaps where they ought to be. Perhaps not. But in their circles two STrek fanwriters got enough exposure and the quality of their work accumulated enough support to be voted into contention without more than a token appearance in any 'major' fanzine. Their nominations underline the displacement of active fandom as the arbiter of Hugo standards. I deny that interpretation which says "Fandom needed this humiliation to force it to reform the Hugo." We can reform it all we want: who else but actfans are going to get up at that time of the morning in the middle of a Worldcon? Instead we're better off admitting that it's a new set of rules we're playing by, a broadening of values in some areas and a transformation in others, which includes the ideas

of STrek fans, Mythopoeics, Fantasy Association devotees, Anachronists, academics, fringe-fans, fringe-pros and everybody else who composed the circa 950 Hugo balloters this year; the 4000 out of 4500 Worldcon attendees that you never heard of before.

To an extent there's already a con-within-a-con (and for individuals a yet smaller con within), the people you know separated from the masses you don't. It's difficult — and —unfair to attempt the same thing with the Hugos since they are a concomitant of the main convention — one of the two primary functions of the mythical WSFS Uninc. under whose bylaws the WorldCon allegedly operates. So rather than do the reactionary trip on the one hand, or change the definitions so that they are even more permissive than they already are, it may be time for King Log to reign, and an evolutionary adjustment shall come to pass as we become more sophisticated in enjoying a mass-audience Worldcon.

3. TAKING UP EVEN OLDER BUSINESS IN A SEMI-BRAND NEW WAY Each time I finish one of these involved sermons I (and El Cagle too) wonder "Why did you do that?" So instead of giving you a straight answer, let us turn to a loc received from recent fanwriter Hugo nominee Jacqueline Lichtenberg (9 Maple Terrace, Monsey NY 10952.)

"Thank you for the last ish of PREHENSILE.

"I myself stand with one foot in each camp, but somehow I don't feel as if I'm facing any sort of identity crisis about it. I function in fandom basically as a writer. The difference is merely (ha! merely!) that I get paid for things like my Doubleday novel MOUSE OF ZEDOR no matter what kind of reviews it gets (and it has been getting some 'Gosh-wow, how can you write so good!' letters), and I do not get one cent from things like my Kraith Series despite having been nominated for the Best Fan Writer Hugo because of it.

"The SFWA Forum has also been debating the issue of should pros get paid for attending cons. I haven't yet expressed an opinion in the FORUM, and I'm not sure whether I will ever do so there. The question does not seem at all complex to me. The concon selects its guests and pays whatever expenses they agree to pay for the guest, and that is between the concon and the guest and is nobody else's business (except perhaps the IRS)."

((It should be the concern of the members of the con, since the con is ostensibly put on by the designated 'agents' of the World Science Fiction Society, Uninc., of which they are all paid members. Despite all those cons which never published financial reports, it is the right of the membership to know how their money has been distributed.))

"I don't see that con guests who have sold stories should be treated any differently from the con guests that have not actually sold. The concon knows what segment of fandom they want to attract, and they know what ENFs and pros will attract these people. The question is not 'Member SFWA', the question is 'is my name used on your literature going to make money for you?' If it is, then I am entitled to some consideration."

"Exactly what that consideration may be is between concon and guest. Perhaps now that the Worldcon pulls over 3000 and shows signs of getting larger (with STAR TREK cons drawing 15,000 and more on each coast, and several thousand per con in between) — perhaps we need an Emily Post of fandom to rewrite the book of etiquette. And fan etiquette has not traditionally involved an exchange of cash, why start now?

"There are other forms of 'consideration' -- for example, a pro GoH may be allowed to pick a reviewer to write a few words about his latest book for your program book. ((Somehow I can't see a pro picking any fan reviewer I know of...)) Or if you are using his name (or 'ners' understood), he then should be allowed to use yours in his publicity. ((Nothing stops them now from doing that if they want.)) Yes, of course, if you invite someone to speak at a banquet you must at LEAST buy him his dinner. After all, you'd do that in any restaurant, wouldn't you?"

((The issue of 'consideration' for professionals continues to be discussed, but it's clear that cash and emoluments are far more crucial to Star Trek conventions; firstly because most of them are run for money; secondly because that's the only way you're going to get many of the names needed to make the con a success, actors who at one extreme have too busy a schedule to go to these things on a lark, or at the other extreme, actors who couldn't afford to come unless they got a free ride. At an sf fan convention the only people who get a free ride are the guests of honor -- and the committee, when the con can afford it; traditionally these cons aren't run for a profit, and despite the income of recent WorldCons I guess that's still pretty much the case. Since the only pro writer advertised per se is the Guest of Honor -- though I suppose the roster of pros on panels listed in a Locus blurb could constitute a kind of advertising -- the 'exploitation' or writers in order to increase attendance is primarily the assumption that since they have usually come to cons in the past, and cons usually have panels with writers on them, a given con (particularly a Worldcon) can be assumed to have writers present. If a convention makes a profit on that basis, does it owe the pros -- or SFWA as one spokesman for them -- a prominent voice in the disposition of that profit? Theoretically, I'd say not, but practically, fans might find it an advantage to have SFWA using leverage to insure that excess income (as from Worldcons) is distributed for the benefit of the science fiction 'community' generally -- the idea being that three or four dozen fans crabbing about a concom's distribution of the money will probably be ignored, unlike three or four dozen writers reasoning out the same argument.))

"Likewise for anybody asked to come specifically to be on a panel or other program event (announced in advance to use his name as a drawing card). But the concom can't possibly be responsible for the expenses of SFWA members (or any groups) who come at large.

"However, concons who think they can afford it might offer special SFWA Group Rates, just as the prozines do, and sell memberships and hotel rooms at a subsidized rate through SFWA."

((Firstly, not all pros are members of SFWA; secondly, the price of membership -- albeit bought two years in advance -- is minimal, and certainly not a significant cost of attending a WorldCon. Thirdly, even assuming the cons could afford to subsidize room rates to pros, pros are already writing off these costs on their income taxes; if you subsidize their rates you're not giving them much more than they can get already, unless you expect that con to start pouring thousands of dollars into the effort. Or just restricted to con participants, if there are 25 pros on panels, that's still a hell of a lot of money, with rooms at \$26 a day or more. Any pro who cares to jump into this discussion is welcome; but as far as I can see, more is accomplished in the furnishing of a SFWA suite, pre-panel refreshments, and morning coffee, than in these other schemes.))

"...If there are ENFs who could not attend without financial subsidy, then the concom must decide how much they can budget to get that fan to the con. They have to decide what that fan's name is worth to them -- and that's something the fan (even if he's a pro) cannot help them with."

((From a strictly monetary standpoint, a ENF's appearance at a con isn't worth a nickel -- just consider the sparse attendance at fan-oriented panels. Hence for a WorldCon to expend cash in that effort would not actually serve the interests of the vast majority of attendees. The individual fan funds seem to me to serve a more exciting and constructive end than that anyhow.))

"So the issue seems to me to be no issue at all. As a fan I have published hundreds of thousands of words. I have attended several Star Trek conventions when my plans allowed me to afford it; and I have had to decline invitations because I could not afford it, even (in the case of Equicon) when they offered me program space to gather a Kraith Debate -- (Kraith is the overall name of my Star Trek series of fiction and nonfiction items which have appeared in countless fanzines, both ST and sf, and is now available as Kraith Collected in reprint) -- I had to decline because I could not get to the West Coast at that time. As a fan, I have received these incomparable honors -- honors which accrued because of my unpaid activities.

"I cannot understand any logic which would decree that I should receive some special consideration for my unpaid activities because of my paid activities. That would be like awarding the Best Fanzine Hugo to ANALOG. Silly. On the other hand, Ben Bova would certainly be eligible for the Best Fan Writer Hugo if he published a fanzine (or wrote in fanzines) in his spare time for no \$ but for the love of sf.

"I guess this controversy is part of the whole scene these days. Sports, the Olympics, so forth, all are having trouble defining the difference between fan and pro. Maybe the distinction is really obsolete in this future-shocked world where mankind is beginning to be able to afford to do as vocation what he loves most as avocation.

"SF has always been ahead of the rest of the world, so as I see it why not abolish fan/pro distinctions as a functional distinction and merely handle all con guests by the same etiquette.

"Membership in SFWA or the Screen Writer's Guild or any other club should never be construed as a 'status symbol' and certainly does not entitle anyone to crash any gates.

"Oh, one other thing, I have been privy to a lot of Star Trek concom hassles, and I think I can honestly state that ST cons are NOT put on for the express purpose of making money, and furthermore they don't. ((Perhaps you can say that honestly, but not accurately. Schuster hasn't been packing them into his New York cons for merely the love of ST, nor was the Equicon precisely poverty-stricken.)) They do break even (or sometimes pay the committee a few bucks, never the minimum wage for hours spent AT THE CON never mind before and after) more often than sf cons, and so do Star Trek fanzines break even (but never more than a few cents over that if you count legitimate business expenses, but that is merely because there are more people desperate for ST material. ((It doesn't hurt that ST zines are about as ready to trade away free copies as Bruce Pelz is to give away LASFS memberships. Further-

more the attitude of the 'suppliers' of ST materials to the consumers is so often one of utter exploitation and contempt that I sometimes find it difficult to distinguish between those who are in it for fun, and those who have visions of dollar bills dancing in their crania.) SF after all has a thriving and open pro market and it is true that anything of value will be pro published. But ST's market is utterly closed. A great deal of vast and enduring beauty is barred forever from the pro marketplace. Thus Star Trek fans are starved out of their minds for ST material. And so ST cons and zines thrive a bit more financially than sf zines. (The two top sf fanzines have begun paying modest rates for good pro written articles because they wouldn't get the best for nothing. ST zines cannot pay and authors cannot take a cent (and don't).) ((Come to think of it, I guess my problem of analysis is that so many fans involved with vending to the ST marketplace enjoy ST and enjoy cons, but are also eager to take advantage of the insensate buying that seems to go on there.))

"So ST cons are not put on for making money. If they were, there would be a lot of bankrupt groups around the country. STAR, the largest ST organization, is a bona fide registered and legal 'non-profit organization' and they can prove it to anybody's lawyer's satisfaction. Likewise the Star Trek Welcomittee, the letter answering organization. Every bit they make on the sale of their publications goes into publishing and postage and running the organization. ((The organizations were not the question -- they are continuous service organizations, but the conventions generally seek to house and feed their operators quite comfortably during the con, with a few bucks left over to split up. More than a few in several cases.))

"LOCUS called Laura Basta and I 'strictly Star Trek writers', and elsewhere I have taken exception to that in print. I am proud to be labeled a 'Star Trek Writer', but there's not any 'strictly' about it. I was active in sf fandom in the fifties, before ST was even thought of as possible. Before I started writing for ST fanzines I had sold my first SF story, OPERATION HIGH TIME, to IF. (It's part of the same series as HOUSE OF ZEDOR, my Sime series).

"True, I have not been contributing to zines like PREHENSILE, ALIEN CRITIC or ALGOL for all these years. But I have had an article in LUNA, and my ST fiction has appeared in sf zines as well as sf/part ST zines. Furthermore, ST has won the Hugo enough so that there cannot be any legitimate segregation of ST apart from 'sf'. Star Trek is sf...

"Likewise, Laura Basta's interests are sf prior and after the advent of ST. And her ST is good solid narrative sf.

"Oh, yes, we know we've scarcely a chance against such competition, but the point is that the contest is NOT between ST and sf, because that is absurd as the above-explored issue of when is a pro a fan'...The two categories cannot be separated because they are two expressions of the same phenomenon. In both cases. The winner must be the one best known and best appreciated by the most readers of fanzines. Voters must remember that it is not the award that imbues the winner with virtue. The Hugo can be of no greater value than its least recipient, just as SFWA membership can have no greater prestige than its least member can bring it. So winning an award or qualifying for membership puts one under an enormous responsibility to live up to the utmost standards of excellence in the future as well as now. It's a frightening thing, and merely being nominated is a heavy responsibility."

4. THE PSUEDO-ZINEOPHORIC EYE Mike Glicksohn has managed to review only one fansine this time, and disguised it none-to-cleverly as a letter of comment. But after submerging it in water, then X-raying it, I have determined that it is safe for presentation in these pages. (141 High Park Ave., Toronto, Ont. M6P 2S3, CANADA)

"A couple of local fans were over here for a short visit yesterday and they were very impressed that I had a copy of PRE 12 and they didn't. So perhaps I ought to say a little something about it. Anything capable of so impressing Canadian neofans must have some redeeming features as well. ((Either that, or they're subscribers that I missed whose lawyers will be commuting down here to serve papers on me...))

"Visually it isn't your finest hour by any means. Rather ordinary covers, too much cruddy interior art, and the printing could be better. In fact, if I were reviewing this for the major California fansine I do reviews for, I'd chide the editor for not being careful enough. Luckily he wouldn't publish a review of a fansine like this, so it's academic.

"I hope you won't be foolish enough as to let your new academic life interfere with the production of PRE. By all means keep us posted on your progress along the road to respectability and unemployment, but don't let academic requirements erode away the time you'd normally spend on fanac. There was a day last week when I had four sets of tests to mark and didn't get started on fansine reading until almost 8pm; I made a mental note to be more careful in the future. One must have one's priorities after all. ((Agreed. That's why I have carefully arranged my schedule to have all day free, and classes only in the evening. Therefore I can do fansines and loc's in good daylight, and lesser activities requiring less time and concentration during hours where the eye-deadening fluorescent lights are my only means of illumination.))

"I didn't attend either of my university graduations, not wishing to waste the time on an essentially meaningless ceremony. (On the other hand, I've been at eight of the last nine Hugo banquets; like I said, priorities.) Now I find myself having to attend graduations as a staff member, complete with rented cap and gown. I now know why my old high school math teacher used to bring a hip flask with him and end up quietly bombed by the time the evening was over. What a crashing bore they are. Luckily I got a lovely hip flask as a Christmas present last year, so next month's ceremony might be a little easier to take.

"I welcome the addition of Marvellous Milt Stevens to your editorial staff. Milt's one of the West Coast's best writers and editors, and he will be a major asset to PRE. I can't help wondering what sort of editorial problems you might encounter trying to edit a fansine with two thousand miles between you in addition to any differences in opinions that you might have. Milt has the money and Mike has the mass; should be interesting if you ever have a serious editorial disagreement.

((It would be rather difficult for us to have an editorial disagreement over anything really substantive since our publishing instincts are essentially alike: fannish, but not to the degree where we have forgotten what science fiction is. And in addition to that, I have great respect for Milt's judgement — so I have trouble envisioning any situation of sufficient gravity which might produce a 'serious editorial disagreement'. And this note: what use is mass in an argument over the telephone?))

"Milt has perhaps the most entertaining writing in the issue with his very amusing Nebula Banquet report. He actually makes the whole thing sound interesting, and almost worth the price of admission. In fact, I enjoyed Milt's piece more than that by Dave Locke, which is high praise indeed since Dave is one of my favorite writers. His piece this issue is rather minor, though. A good title, but a little thin for an article, I thought.

"There surely are a lot of reviews of one sort or another in this fanzine of yours, Mike/Milt. Is this the way to win subscribers and influence Hugo voters? ((Gee, I thought it was. If it's not, that means I can jettison all that crud?))

"Jerry Pournelle makes the SFWA policy regarding its suite extremely clear and it's a reasonable policy. Let's hope that the discussion ends there.

"I think Dave Locke is a bit optimistic on the subject of convention profits. A general fanish consensus as to the proper distribution of convention funds seems unlikely to arise, at least as I see things. Fandom just isn't that businesslike or organized, as valid as the idea undoubtedly is. I imagine the topic will be of considerable interest in months to come, since DISCON seemingly made a sizeable profit, which will have to be distributed somehow or other. ((I'll take my share in unmarked, used twenties and fifties.))

"You're on thin ice trying to define what type of fanzine contribution counts as fanwriting, Mike. It's hard enough deciding if something is a fanzine nowadays without trying to legislate whether book reviews are inherently more worthy than boils on your balls. I know you were expressing just a personal opinion, but I think you'd be hard-pressed to justify it on any logical ground. Of course, no one ever suggested the Hugo awards had any logic to them, so I guess it's all right... ((Precisely -- the Hugos have no real definitions, other than the consensus of subjective opinions arrived at in the final tally.))

"Apparently Eric Mayer thinks that I'm capable of carrying Jack Vance's pencils, but Gene Wolfe doesn't think I'm capable of carrying his interest. How can I resolve this dilemma? It's a good thing I never read anything written by anyone called Gene Wolfe, or his letter might have upset me.

"Despite its size, this isn't a comment inspiring issue of PRE, not around here, anyway. Maybe it's the lazy movement of the fall air, the beginnings of color creeping into the trees, the hints of impending winter with its cold and unpleasant weather, or the general haze I'm in from not having had anything to drink in the last month. Or maybe, just maybe, it's having read over a hundred fanzines in the last month and having responded to about a third of them. Of course, it could also be a boring issue...or is the term "burning issue"?..."

THE BEST SCIENCE FICTION OF THE YEAR # 3 ed. by Terry Carr, Ballantine
24063 1974 \$1.50

I rarely come across a book that I can recommend without reservations of some kind; this collection is one of those rare exceptions. Carr is one of the best (if not the best) editors in the field today, and this book is an excellent example of his skills. It includes the Nebula winning stories "Of Mist, and Grass, and Sand" and "The Death of Dr. Island", and a Tiptree story "The Women Men Don't See" that I feel is better than his nebula winning story. Also available for our pleasure is a good Silverberg story, Ellison's "The Deathbird", Vance's "Rumfuddle" (but then I'm prejudiced - I'm a Vance freak anyway), a Busby story about necrophillia that succeeds not only in dealing with a difficult subject but also in treating it with sympathy, and one of the crop of new Bester stories that I find delightful. Run to your neighborhood bookseller and beg, borrow, or steal a copy of this collection - it is the best of the 'best of the year' books I have run across. There isn't a bad story in the book, and there are a hell of a lot of good ones.... (an interesting sideline - only two of the stories are from the magazines - all the rest are from original anthologies. Does this mean a change in the publishing of sf?) (or that even Elwood can't help but buy a good story occasionally?)

ALIEN HORIZONS by William F. Nolan, Pocket Books 77928 1974 95¢

Nolan dedicates this collection to Ron Goulart. An apt dedication, since over half the stories are imitations of Goulart's work. Anyone who has read my reviews previously knows that I'm not exactly fond of Goulart's work - much less what is essentially poor imitation. After a few stories and novels words like pseudoglass and neartoast begin to become very boring - and so do the authors that write about them. Happily, the rest of the stories aren't nearly as bad. A few, like "The Underdweller" and "Kelly, Fredric Michael: 1928 - 1987" are really quite good. Predictably they center around the psychological insights of men in danger, facing the unknown. Also on display is "He Kilt It with a Stick" which is something of a classic in the field (although I found that it was a little too skimpy for my taste and could be filled in with more background and characterization). There is also a story that succeeds in being humorous. "Fasterfaster" is a James Bond take-off with enough twists in the plot for a whole bag of pretzels. As usual with a collection of this type, there are a few bad stories, a lot of forgettable ones, and two good ones. Par for the course I guess.....



HARRY WARNER, JR. 423 Summit Avenue, Hagerstown MD 21740

8/10/74

It's your own fault. Once again I was all keyed up, on the verge of finally writing that long-promised loc on the last Prehensile. Then you send a new issue, the 12th, human frailty forced me to read it promptly, and now here I am, writing a loc on that issue and again averring that I'll get comments on the 11th issue to you eventually. Maybe I can hand them over in person at Sydney next year. ((And given the character of the Postal Service, I'd get them all the sooner if you did!))

I don't know exactly which books I would choose as texts for a first year college course in science fiction. But I can think of some guidelines I would use in making the choice, for psychological reasons.





I'd choose most or all of them from stuff written in the past four or five years, because so many teenagers are impatient with anything which dates from the distant past like the 1960s. I would make one title a Vonnegut book, simply because he's the in writer for people with just a passing knowledge of science fiction and the course might be regarded with contempt if he was overlooked. There would be one book that would have much the same spirit as *THE CATCHER IN THE RYE*, which as far as I can tell is the one novel that every young person likes, although I haven't read any science fiction that would really qualify. At least two or three of the books would deal with the immediate future and would reflect at least in part current problems like ecology. In other words, I would do my darnedest to make sure that the class will be genuinely interested in the books, to avoid the kind of reaction that literature classes have long gotten when they tried to interest students in *SILAS MARNER* and *MOBY DICK*. I don't think such concessions to the students would be harmful to the quality of the course; it's how you teach the subject that really counts, once the cooperation of the students is guaranteed.

((In order to guarantee that cooperation, would you recommend .22 or .45 caliber weaponry? I've always had an abiding fondness for the .357 Magnum, though depending on the size of the class a rack of grenades may prove more serviceable. Ah -- dedication, what a wonderful thing!))

Every time I feel dissatisfaction with a fan for doing something strange, I run across something like Milt Stevens' information that the Nebula Banquet was a black tie preferred affair, and I realize that fans aren't so bad after all. And I wonder why the SFWA has trouble getting adequate press coverage for the Nebula affairs, while world-cons usually receive more attention from the media than they would really like to have?

THE CURSE OF THE ATOMIC PILES sounds as if author Henry Orvis Roide had been strongly influenced by Dorcas Bagby's later fiction. Dave Locke's failure to point this out was the only flaw in an otherwise thorough treatise on his subject, one that is strongly reminiscent of a lot of other scholarly articles on science fiction that have been turning up here and there.

I doubt strongly that there is any solution to the worldcon bid expenses questions that Dan Goodman brings up. No matter how much time might be spent drawing up regulations for future worldcon committees to follow, a new year is almost sure to bring up some kind of new source for controversy. Much the same holds true for the question of spending at worldcons themselves. One possible solution to the latter point would be to require all profits from a worldcon to go to future cons, on a fixed ratio between the emergency fund and next year's committee. But I don't like that idea, partly because I think there should be some kind of reward for the people who work hardest to produce a worldcon, partly because it might cause worldcon committees to leave too little margin and therefore begin to go annually into the red. I think the worldcon finances matter will work itself out in the natural course of events: if worldcon committees should constantly mishandle money, fans will lose interest in worldcons and patronize regional cons until things change. (Which sounds to me the surest way to guarantee that nonfans will take the worldcon and go their way with it — either capable, businesslike moneymakers, or some haphazard crew filling the resultant vacuum of leadership. If actifans want the worldcon changed in some way, withdrawing from it is their least viable tactic.)

However, there is one matter which I've never seen anyone suggest, even though it seems like an obvious and good idea: begin the practice of hiring a CPA firm to audit each year's worldcon books. It would cost several hundred bucks but it would settle a lot of disputes before they get started.

I share the common admiration for Mike Glicksohn's fanzine reviews. They read like locs from which all the fat has been removed, written after more time has been given to thinking out matters than most locs enjoy. One fortunate thing is Mike's lack of preoccupation with any particular aspect of fanzines. Too many reviewers are obsessed with their hatred of fiction in fanzines or their desire to see fanzines laid out like a professional magazine that they can't pay proper attention to the other important things in fanzines.

Something else I'm happy to feel a part of is the favorable things people are writing about the Weinbaum collection. But I don't think many reviewers of the new Ballantine collection have felt the complete thrill I experienced the first time I read those Weinbaum stories. I encountered them when they were new, when there was nothing remotely like them in print. Someone who is 20 or 30 today and encounters Weinbaum for the first time has already read vast quantities of science fiction which is far superior to most stories the prozines had published in the mid-1930s, and imitations of Weinbaum's beams are still turning up today, to dilute a little the novelty provided by the 40-year-old Weinbaum stories.

I must side with the Jeff Smith theory of what to do about fan Hugoes: nothing. Any new regulations or restrictions would simply lead to a demand for still more regulations and restrictions because no imaginable set of rules could cover everything. But I do feel there's a lot of merit in the proposal being bandied about fandom now to establish a set of fan awards divorced from worldcons and from convention fans, limiting voters to those who are active as publishers, writers or artists. Incidentally, Jeff exaggerates the danger of gag nominations: LORD OF THE RINGS couldn't qualify for Best Fanzine under existing rules.

There's only one thing wrong with your art. It comes from too many people with fine talents. Just a year or two ago, I could look through any new fanzine and admire the illustrations, most of which had instantly recognizable styles. Hardly half of your artists in this Prehensile give that sense of know-it-all to me. This Albrecht Durer seems to reflect too self-consciously today's mania for violence, but I'm sure Dr. Wetham will take care of him in the next edition of THE WORLD OF FANZINES. You would perform a service for impatient art-identifiers if you could squeeze the number of each page in, for quicker location of a picture's creator in the credits.

ANDY PORTER PO Box 4175, New York, NY 10017

7/26/74

Your lettercolumn is most interesting indeed. Being called "incompetent" by Mike Shoemaker is high praise indeed, especially in the same letter in which he damns John Bangsund's writing. ((Should I tell him that the next regular issue of PRE contains a Bangsund piece? No, I guess I shall save that and surprise him...))

But on to convention business. The letterhead above tells you many things, I think. (Montreal In '77 letterhead, bilingual)) The proposal by Locke to put a tighter scrutiny on worldcon profits comes after the IRS has ruled that such profits are liable to a corporate income tax. No longer can American Worldcons be incorporated as nonprofit ventures, freely dispensing money to all and sundry. I foresee some interesting financial reports in the years ahead.

In Canada it is a different story, however, but one of which my financial knowledge is rather limited (we're looking for a Montreal lawyer interested in SF). Dan Goodman seems to feel that convention bidding committees are rolling in money. Surely the bids for 1976 aren't, and the 1977 bidders are all paupers. I've been gathering the threads of convention bidding around myself and the committee, and the best way to bankroll a convention seems to be the pre-supporting membership. Britain (is fine) in '79 is using the ploy, and we will as well, as soon as we print up Nice Cards and get our publicity rolling effectively. Dan Goodman's discussion of whether to pay bidding concon members to go to conventions misses the point: if you haven't the money to spend, the problem doesn't exist.

In recent years it's become the custom for the winning bid to reimburse its members for the regional and worldcon attendance expenses (like Fred Patten's and Bruce Pelz' trips to Heidelberg). Certainly some expenses should be reimbursed. Ted White was apprehensive over the effect on fandom of the NYCon's reimbursing him for the \$120.00 expense of those shopping bags at Tricon. None of the other concon members were ever reimbursed for expenses in going to several Midwestcons, throwing parties at various conventions, and the two trips to Westercos in 1965 and 1966 (8 of us went in two cars to the infamous San Diego Westercos, where H. Ellison showed a new TV program called "Star Trek.") The 4 basic members of the committee later split \$1,000, although none of us were reimbursed for at-convention expenses (I paid for my room, a hole-in-the-wall single at the Statler Hilton in New York).

I do think that in this post-Watergate, post Slush Fund world, a great deal less will be spent in a much more effective way on worldcon bidding. We plan a sensible campaign with a lot of facts doing our persuading for

us. Beer bashes don't work; common sense does.

JERRY POURNELLE 12051 Laurel Terrace, Studio City CA 91604

((First of two letters)) When we read Jack Chalker's charge that ten SFWA members had stiffed the TORCON committee for banquet tickets, SFWA immediately offered to pay the bill. As you know, we couldn't do it: the incident never happened. NOBODY took a table at TORCON and then didn't pay.

As you also know, SFWA has asked Mr. Chalker to name the persons to whom SFWA was supposedly so rude at the "Three separate conventions" in incidents that he supposedly was personally aware of. At the time it seemed difficult to believe, because when he wrote his letter telling of four incidents at three SFWA suites, there had only been two conventions at which SFWA had a suite.

Mr. Chalker has not seen fit to reply, and diligent efforts by SFWA to find out the names of the people involved have turned up -- nothing. We must assume that these incidents have the same source as the great banquet ticket fiasco.

Why Mr. Chalker would choose to make up stories like this and say, nkt that he'd heard them told, but that he was a personal witness to them, I don't know, and as he isn't answering letters, I don't expect to find out.

I do thank you for printing the retraction, and I can understand you'd be reluctant to assume that the stories were made up out of whole cloth. Unfortunately, they were.

((Second letter.))

Thanks for Prehensile; you seem to have hit a very good editorial formula. Something for everyone, and then more of it. I can't imagine how anyone has the time to produce that much material, or for that matter, how you find enough good writers to fill Prehensile.

I always like Bill Warren's movie reviews. Since I seldom agree with anyone for more than two consecutive paragraphs it's probably not surprising that I can find bones to pick with Warren: particularly over ZARDOZ.

The problem with ZARDOZ, I think, is that it wasn't just a quick low-budget effort. It had a big budget and the producer was given both independence and support. I think what drives most writers crazy when they see ZARDOZ is the loss of what might have been the best sf movie of the decade. After the preview viewing I found myself at a table with Harlan, Larry Niven, Norman Spinrad and a number of other writers. The opinion was universal. It stunk.

We were wrong, of course. There's a lot of good stuff in that movie. Spinrad pointed out that what we'd seen, without anything additional, could probably have been cut into a hell of a picture; and if they added some scenes that must have been shot but ended on the cutting

room floor, they might have a great film.

But what we saw was not so good -- and it was irritating because of what it could have been.

Take the characters in saran wrap, as an example. Sure, I know, the theory was they were Immortals being transported back to the Vortex for resurrections.

But that violates an explicit premise of the film, namely, that the Loki character was the only Immortal who had much contact with the Brutals and Exterminators. If other Immortals had been sufficiently involved with the lower forms of human life, then the governing committee of the Vortex would have made a number of drastic changes in policy; and if there weren't any involved with the Brutals, how did they get themselves deaded?

What the hell were Immortals doing outside the Vortex anyway?

Or take another point: in both the movie and the book version, old Zed becomes so powerful that he can reverse time. With a curt order to the others to "stay within my aura", whatever that means and however they are suppose to detect the limits of said aura, Zed makes time run backward for everyone except himself and those in his immediate vicinity.

He uses this fabulous power for what? To cure the ills of the society? To make them go back to the place where they took a wrong turn and start over?

Hardly. He uses it to get out of a room full of aged mobsters whom he could have handled with a few karate chops. And he never uses the power again, nor is it ever referred to again. It was just a way out of a room.

Another time, all the Immortals are standing around with table-cloths over their heads. Now I presume there's some form of transcendental meditation requiring checkered tablecloth head and body coverings, and that's the reason for this phenomenon. Maybe. But it doesn't happen again (like the scene in which the Immortals are roosting in trees like birds when Zed first sees them; maybe there's a reason why once a year they roost in trees and never do it again?) and I suspect the reason for the tablecloths was to let Zed have a great seduction scene right on stage without having the film labeled hardcore porn.

And on, and on. Friend gets aged, but unlike anybody else in the Golden Years Pavilion, only half of Friend gets aged. How? And more to the point, why? Was his crime so much worse than anyone else's, or was he only half a Renegade?

In other words, there are a lot of gimmicks in ZARDOZ that one wouldn't especially notice in MOTHRA or a Godzilla flick; but a multi-million dollar epic designed to Save the Studio with Science Fiction should, it seems to me, have paid a little more attention to internal consistency.

And as for the final secret, the Great Denouement, the Humiliating Event that makes Zed decide to make war on his God -- come on now. A childish pun?

Or the ending --

Unlike Bill Warren, my wife and I both thought ZARDOZ was filled with cliches, tons of them, all taken from written science fiction. And when Zed and Consuela set out from the Vortex to go live their lives in the simple paradise death has made for the Brutals, Roberta turned to me and said, "Watch. When she gets outside she'll turn to old-age dust. After all, the producer must have read Rider Haggard too."

And so help me, that's damn near what happened, although it took a little longer than we expected.

I guess the reason most of us had such strong feelings about ZARDOZ is that we knew damned well there are at least fifty good sf writers who could have taken the basic premises, and even the basic plot, of that film and turned it into something that would have had viewers screaming for more and more science fiction. There was so much good in it; but all the good stuff was film technique, the magic of a good producer and director and camera-man and special effects team, which made it a hell of a picture despite a plot and details and writing and lines that would have made the Space Turtle blush.

Sigh. Why is it that when a man's as good as Borman he gets flattered into thinking he can do everything?

I think the saddest man at the preview, by the way, was Roddenberry. He was damned near in tears.

GENE WOLFE Box 69, Barrington IL 60010

8/7/74

Thanks for sending PREHENSILE 12. Every so often someone asks why there are so few stories presenting a truly alien viewpoint. In the future I can point to Stan Burns' review of my story "Peritonitis." In case you've forgotten: "...lacks any common reference on everyday experience, impossible to relate to on any level..."

"Discover Why Prehensile Wasn't Nominated For A Hugo" is a gem. If you aren't really running it as an ad, you should.

Those kind words about "Forlesen" are appreciated. I did not intend it as an "afterlife," but after the blurb Damon gave it, I can't object when people think that was what I was trying to do. ((And here I thought that Knight had supplied some crucial bit of interpretive information obtained from author-editor correspondence, or the like. On the other hand, you could write nine more stories to reflect the remaining afterlives hinted at by Knight, and sell them as a collection as if you'd planned to all along.))

I'd like to venture a few comments on Jerry Pournelle's letter. Since I am a pro, but not a member of SFWA, I at least have the advantage of a middle view. First off, I couldn't help noticing that Jerry appears to contradict himself: at one point he says that the SFWA suite is open to any professional writer, member or not -- but much later, in the letter to Jack Chalker, he asks a "gentleman" who happens to be unwelcome to an unnamed former president of SFWA, "Pardon me, sir, whose guest are you?" and adds, "I knew damned well he wasn't anyone's guest."

Yet I can see SFWA's side of the thing too. I have seldom attended a convention at which I have not been gratuitously insulted by some fan. Tell me, Mike, if it were your professional Marc Schirmeister was talking about, would you still have printed PRO'S SONG? "Greedy"? "Swine"? "Crazy"? "Bwe"? "Stinkin"? Would you Mike? Really?

RUTH BERMAN 5620 Edgewater Blvd., Minneapolis MN 55417

8/13

I have some comments on SFWA & guests. It's not really an example of a member's guests being thrown out of the SFWA room at Torcon, but it's an example of unhappy feelings resulting from not making the rules clear. I took two guests into the SFWA room, and we got into a pleasant conversation with Michael Coney. After awhile I got sleepy, and, as the other three were still absorbed in conversation, I left, intending to come back later. But before I got back my two guests were told to get out...Obviously, I should have asked them to leave with me, or asked Michael Coney if he would call them his guests if they were challenged. But I didn't know that the SFWA Bouncers were so vigilant as to go after people already there. Well, now I know better. The solution I'm expected to prefer, I suppose, is to take better care of my guests. But I don't like being made to feel like a nursemaid, and I'm afraid that the solution I prefer is to stay out of the SFWA room hereafter.

HAL DAVIS 26 W. 95th St., New York, NY 10025

8/10/74

If PRE 11 did nothing else, it melted my previous indifference to illos, especially:

Grant Canfield's LAP CAT (p49)
Marty Larson's 'please don't snlork' (p79)
Rotsler's 'Yes my dear, I shall care for you'(p41)

But PRE 11 also had Eric Mayer's strange literit loc on the sensation of reading words. He is wrong, but spectacularly so.

He seems to feel that graphic arrangement of words detracts from writing's intrinsic function or "main purpose." Well, the main purpose of writing is to communicate. Everything after that is legitimate.

Words come graphically in more ways than a linotype. Consider THE LAND ON THE TIP OF A HAIR: Poems in Wood, selected and carved by Wang Hui-ming (Barre Pub., Barre MA). The impression made by the poems, some of them familiar, in woodcut is intriguing. A sinuosity in the words lends them more individual weight than, say, ten-point pica.

Of course it's possible to be right in general while wrong in particulars. Someone called Hunter Thompson's FEAR AND LOATHING ON THE CAMPAIGN TRAIL '72 "the least factual and most accurate" book of that genre. And Mayer is wrong in many of his particulars without necessarily damaging his thesis, such as it is (from what I can tell, he is a printed-word parist). For example: "Through training we come to quickly bypass /direct/ sensations in order to get to the symbolic content. The vertical stem of a 'd', the curve of an 'r' holds no intrinsic importance to the reader." Perhaps, but Thoreau, in a divine attempt at what one academic called "creative orthography", tried to describe through discussion of the lettershapes, why the word 'lobe' was perfect. Especially the 'b'. It mattered not that he was wrong — as with Mayer, it was fun getting there. He also ventured into linguistics, discussing the sounds (which Mayer seems to ignore completely) of the letters, alone and in concert.

After all, why "bypass these sensations"? The beautiful thing about reading Auden is his sense of the sound of words:

"At the Grave of Henry James"

The sky, less intransigent than these marbles,
Has left the defence of whiteness to these tombs,
And all the pools at my feet
Accomodate blue now (...)

B'leeme, there's more there than, um, symbolic content. I would love to hear Mayer on Style. Seriously.

An aside: "(No doubt some modern writers, like most modern painters, are trying to point, deliberately, to the artificiality of their work, rather than striving to imitate reality...)" I should hope so. Usually a technical advance shoves it in the artist's face: photography for the painter, films for the writer, ie, "what you're doing does not Reflect Reality." If the artist has any sense, he will try — sub- or unconsciously perhaps — to influence the goddam reality. Anyway, I don't think a true artist tries to imitate reality so much as preserve a unique vision in the medium of the artist's choice. Theories come later. Modern writers — the ones I think Mayer is referring to — are aware of the limitations of their craft, and attempt to use words as a tool to influence the reader's perception. Alter it. If they succeed, it's a powerful thing for a book to do.

Alain Robbe-Grillet deals in the discrete points of, you'll forgive the expression, objective existence. He described objects singly and their relations, actions but not motives, and the reader draws meaning from the sequence. Sort of like Life. He once made a film, his only successful one, TRANS-EUROP-EXPRESS, in which the elements of the film are developed as you watch. It does not self-destruct.



In fact, Mayer's portrayal of his sensations while reading a portion of "In The Deadlands" comes off as a deadly parody of Robbe Grillet. He obviously found all this "extraneous" interference with his perception of the symbolic (literal) meaning of the words a deathly bore. Or profoundly unnerving. ((Thy prose doth trap thy philosophy in webs of rhetoric. Prithee an explanation of how symbolic and literal ended up as synonyms in that last sentence. Either thee hath erred, or been confusingly redundant. Takest thy choice.)) His next paragraph begins:

"Each page presents a new and therefore disturbing visual experience." Aha, methinks, the artist has succeeded. But no, Mayer don't like it. "...we are never able to focus on the symbolic content of the words." Two thoughts: a) so what? (b) what you mean we, linear purist? Mayer sounds like an easy reader to knock off balance. He must really freak out over typos. Or ee cummings.

I once wrote someone half in jest, "The thing we have to get across is that the difference between James Joyce and an air conditioner repair manual is one of degree." This is, of course, sophistry.

((while I wasn't too happy with this loc's tone of gratuitous pat-downs of Mayer, maybe it's idea content will make up for that by restimulating discussion of the topic of graphic design in sf stories.))

((Davis' closing:)) I found Don Keller's reviews -- as usual -- incredibly sensible, and Lou Stathis' life among the mutant pygmies worth the price of admission. Only one suggestion for him if he goes back: don't give them a Moskowitz "In the beginning..." lecture, just ask them "what if..." Kids got weird heads before they get buttoned down.

RICK SNEARY 2962 Santa Ana St., South Gate CA 90280

8/3/74

I'm not sure what Goodman is saying. Some points are all right, but it reads more like a letter than an article, as it doesn't build up to a point. That is of course the very reason I write so few fan articles, and so many letters, as I can't build a consise article.. = In my opinion, fans vote for a con sight for primarily three reasons. The Committee, the hotel and the City. The ConCom can do best to get all

three well known. Giving parties doesn't seem to me to affect the voting very much. Few of the bidding parties I've attended even did anything to advise their bid (such as giving details of the hotel, program, guest). I don't think advertising the programs makes much difference -- to the people who will be voting, and I doubt there is anyone whose appearance at the Con would draw votes. What really counts is a Committee that appears to be alive and know what it is doing. Thus the better, and more favorably known the members of the Committee are, the better. Thus general fanac, not related to the conbid, is advantageous as it builds recognition and reputation for the members. Apparently a problem for all three sites up for the 1976 bid. Fans in a contending site should do what they can to build the reputation of the area, either in fanzines (and I don't mean in direct propogandia, but just by being there), and being visible at other Cons. If some one isn't enough of a Name to rate being on a pannel, they should volunteer to help man the desk, or registration, or anything visible. Good deeds pay off. --I, of course, can clame that starting early and repeating a catchy slogan long enough is a great help. It sure doesn't hurt to be the first to announce your bid -- if you have a viable one. On the other hand, I don't believe in making any promises or deals I couldn't or wouldn't keep. Or spending more money than you can afford to lose. Every Actifan ought to serve on a Worldcon committee just once to see what it is really like...but getting the Bid shouldn't be so important. You have to be willing to lose, before you can win.

Glicksohn on fanzines is toooo long. Again, it may be that I'm just not in a reseptive mood. The indepth review usually comes off better than the five-liner. But it seems to me what he has done to often is just give an expanded list of the contents, without much critical appraseal. His words on OUTWORLD are an example. He says it is the best fanzine there is, but he doesn't make me feel it. Of course, when I did fanzine reviews they rarely were more than five-liners, and numerical rating. (I still think a rating system on a 1 to 10 scale, while not telling much does give a clear indication of what the reviewer thought of it. But that is an old argument. By the by I'd rate Pre about 8+, on my rusted old scale.)

I might end though that I represent a committee of one, trying to blow up a groundswell of fannish opinion, urging Roy Tackett to stand for TAFF in 1975. Please keep the thought in a warm dry place, in case you might find use for it.

ROBERT BLOCH 2111 Sunset Crest Drive, Los Angeles, CA 90046 7/25/74

PREHENSILE 12 is better than #11, and that's saying a whole bunch. I find myself in total or partial disagreement with many of the opinions expressed therein, but the layout and format and artwork are all so good that I don't mind a touch of controversy in the content. The back cover illo of Bill Warren admonishing Harlan is particularly striking.

I would feel easier if I was certain that Dan Goodman was kidding in his article on Worldcon bids, but I'm not all that sure: a bidding project such as he outlines should be summarily aborted. Hoping you are the same--

D. GARY GRADY PAO, USS DEWEY (DLG-14), FPO New York 09501

8/27/74

"Curse of the Atomic Piles" was great. Incidentally, if the film really exists, I'm sure AFPTS owns the rights.

Mike's "Zineophobic Eye" is the best fanzine review column I've ever read, bar none. I really hope he can keep it up. The idea of in-depth reviews has been tried before, but never with such style. The only other long-running (ie, more than one issue) extra-long review column I can think of offhand had a tendency to be viciously unkind to zines the reviewer didn't like. Maybe I'm not calloused enough, but I don't like to see people's feelings hurt simply because they are not experienced.

Richard Wadholm's piece, I'm sorry to say, didn't come off for me at all. I was only vaguely aware of what he was trying to say, and my main impression is that he is trying very hard to sound sophisticated. In other words, like early New Wave Dangerous Rhetoric.

About the only thing I really didn't like in PREHENSILE though was that interminable parade of book reviews. Come on, now, after a few dozen reviews they tend to start merging in the mind. I'd like to see them limited to books that are extremely good or so bad they're hysterical. (I used to laugh for days at Buck Coulson's tirades against books like THE ELIND SPOT.)

PAULA-ANN ANTHONY PO Box 195, Tempe AZ 85281

I usually never, ever, ever write notes about other peoples' zines -- just consider yourself unlucky. ((The offended Herbie hath hopped me with his cosmic hard-to-get cinnamon!))

I know, you are asking yourself -- "What brought on all this waste of paper, typewriter ribbon and ten cent stamp???" Answer: your *gasp* editorial.

The gasp was added free of charge for whatever dramatic effect it may incur.

Your comments about graduation made me wonder.

Did they really have all the rigamarow you described??? ((Yes.))

Did they still have the age old tradition of walking across the platform to grab your hard earned diploma away from some senile old man?? ((You betchum.))

Here, at ASU, they simply announce "The College of Sickies" (for example). Then the whole college stands up, makes faces and sits down. The whole affair takes maybe an hour.

Sometimes I wonder -- "What makes society worship an artificial piece of sheepskin?!" *sigh* The sigh was thrown in for the same reason as the gasp.

((What makes you think society does worship a college degree? The educated are held in the same popular contempt they always were, for the same bad and good reasons. Degree-holders are being generally ravaged by unemployment -- hamburger stand owners have been traditionally leery about hiring Ph.D's, whereas the Ph.D's aren't getting hired at the firms which once welcomed them with open arms and checkbooks.))

Going to Bowling Green, eh? I can assure you, sir, that the interior of your hamburger stand will be greatly improved by your Master of Arts in Popular Culture degree hanging on the wall. I envy you though. My spies tell me that BG's Popular Culture library is fantastic. Imagine having a giant collection of cigar bands, Big Little Books, trading cards, theater programs, pennants, matchbooks, picture postcards.....hey, I don't envy you anymore. I can stay at home and go through the attic and find all that stuff. ((Here I insert something appropos, like, "Get on down, right on!")

SAM LONG Bx 4946, Patrick AFB FLA 32925

8/25/74

Allow me to compliment you on the repro &c and the art -- but I must draw your attention to the fact that the edges of your pasteups show in numerous places, faintly but definitely; and in Gene Wolfe's letter, that's Jorge Luis Borges -- but that's his mistake. ((Gee, I hope so, but somehow I just can't bring myself to bet on it.)) What would Albrecht Durer say if he saw his illo in a fanzine? ((Something to the effect of "Ich kann nicht meine Gummischuhen finden", which, literally translated, means "Pay up or I'll sue."))

I always thought Bowling Green was in Kentucky -- until I got the old atlas out and looked BG, Ohio up in it. Sho'nuf, there it was, just outside Toledo. Would the tone of the place be higher if it were called Boulingrin, which is French for Bowling Green? (compare redingote and riding-coat, biftek and beefsteak, and so forth.) Well, good luck in Ohio. Would you like a position at Osteen University, the world's only fannish university? No residence requirements, no need to be a TA -- as Vice Chancellor I could appoint you Professor. Of course, there's no pay or anything like that... ((So what makes that different from most other university appointments?))

The Curse of the Atomic Piles! Quick, the Preparation H! Very funny, very enjoyable. Speaking of Preparation H, have you noticed (he added, rather grossly) that they never show you how to use it on those TV commercials?

Mike Sohn of Glick (I'm trying to popularize that for of address as fannish) is always enjoyable to read, and I rather agree with him on his verdicts. ((Can't bring myself to hope Sohn of Glick succeeds as popular nomenclature...))

JODIE OFFUTT Funny Farm, Haldeman KY 40329

8/12/74

Whenever I see a reading list for a course, I think about all that reading, and wonder how they have time. Maybe I ought to know more about how it works, but I don't. Is everybody expected to read every book? ((Yes,

but if anybody did read them all, education as we know it would collapse.)) Maybe this is old hat and everybody knows it, but here's how a philosophy teacher handled it in a Social Ethics class I took:

There were several works under the several subjects we covered during the course (Education, Women's Liberation, Religion, Sexuality, Drugs, and so on.) Each of us was to read and report on/lead discussion about at least one of the books. Our own choosing. Written reports were accepted for those not wanting to talk it out. Each class meeting was pretty much student-led. Why wouldn't something similar work in an sf course? Students who were already familiar with sf could talk about and push their favorite writer and stories. Students unfamiliar with the field could have a choice. Of the classes I've taken, the most interesting have been those that were class discussions rather than lectures. ((Absolutely,)) For all I know, Mike, all sf courses are set up this way and I'm talking dumb by telling you about it. Some of the topics could be Fantasy, Science Fiction, New Wave, Classics, Magazines, and maybe short stories and novels. Anthologies, Hugos and Hugo winners, maybe even fandom, cons and fanzines.

((I've only been through one SF course, but I gather that they're usually combinations of lecture and discussion. It's the content of the lectures that gives each course a remarkably different flavor -- namely, whether the instructor is eagerly applying classic standards of literature towards an analysis of the subject matter -- which can be interesting -- or is leaning on some other aspect.))

Milt will be a good addition to PRE. I can tell. Your account of the Nebula doings was beautiful. And the Passing Parade put me in mind of the unlikely combination of Buck Coulson and Dave Locke -- but uniquely yourself.

Speaking of Locke, is that review for real? ((No.)) I can never tell about stuff like that. I suppose it really doesn't matter, tho, does it? As long as I was entertained, and I certainly was that.

Hell, Mike, maybe that history prof is a baseball fan. Have you any idea what the price of a ticket to Dodger Stadium is these days? ((Sure -- \$1.50 general admission. Hasn't changed in 10 years since Dodger Stadium opened. \$3.50 box seats, if you prefer. To repeat one exchange between two LA radio personalities: "You can get into Dodger stadium for a dollar and a half -- when was the last time you could get into anywhere else for that price?" "Hell, I can't even get into Jockey briefs for a dollar and a half anymore!")

CHRIS HULSE 955 Ellis Court, Eugene OR 97405

8/9/74

Your editorials are toned down since the last issue I read (#6) but still very readable and interesting. One thing that hasn't changed is your concern for any and all matters relating to cons; in fact, this aspect of fandom permeates the whole of PRE 12. Fanivore and Richard Wadholt are still with you and you have acquired some admirable fanwriters for PRE...

What happened to Mike Glycer, the fansine editor? Mike Glycer, the letter-back, comes across as opinionated, crusty, insightful and controversial; Mike Glycer, the faned, comes over to me as mellow, almost sedate.

Whahoppen? But, fortunately, you've lost none of your ability to write in an interesting manner and certainly none of your ability to edit to near-perfection PRE, so I have no complaints. It is just a slight shock to read Mike Glycer, the beaming, beneficant faned. ((I just love these letters -- here and elsewhere -- pushing me into fansenility like the dying flower of some force-bloomed hothouse plant.))

If you can't get good results from offset printing, and it's eating into your \$\$ situation, why did you decide to go offset? Even Geis has been doing runs of 2000+ the last few issues on mimeograph; and I think that mimeo has a warmer quality to it. I would assume a faned chooses offset mainly for its aesthetic appeal and you are definitely flanking out in that category. The only reasons I can see left are (1) it frees you from some of the drudgery of mimeo repro -- collation, culling, typing stencils and running them off, (2) photo reproduction.. For these reasons is it really worth it? You used to do a fine job of mimeo; all the art could be electrostenciled and presto! You'd have a fanzine just as good as #12 but with better repro; when offset is blown it looks horrible. (And all the different typefaces! Now that aspect of PRE wasn't cohesive at all,)

((PREHENSILE 10, my first offset effort, looked pretty good all told. Since then a variety of technical difficulties have indeed fouled up the effort. My original reason for choosing offset, aside from the outrageously cheap rate I get, was to save myself the zillions of hours involved in producing the zine. That remains a good enough reason, particularly since I have no access to mimeo other than driving a couple hundred miles to one of the nearby Publishing Giants and imposing on them for a weekend while I pub a zine. But more than that, economics seem to favor offset as much as anything. In order to publish PRE #2 mimeo would have cost me \$63 for paper alone. That assuming I could have gotten electrostencils through NESFA at its inexpensive rate -- which I couldn't have, because the vinyl shortage has created a shortage of electrostencil material. On the whole I estimate that the mimeo production of that issue would have saved about \$30, accounting for the increased or decreased expenses in the areas of collating, stapling, envelopes and mailing. Now I've got to figure that my time saved by going offset is worth several times the margin of difference in the price of the two media.

((Therefore the question remains whether I intend to be heartbroken over the zine's appearance. No I don't. The black areas on the illos were nicely filled in; the paste-up lines, and some of the graph-paper markings -- which, being blue, ought not to reproduce -- were printed. Such is the trade-off when you're dealing with an Itek machine. Otherwise many of the rough-looking places in the fanzine were the result of my inexperience. It took me about 14 issues of NEW ELLIPTIC/PREHENSILE before I learned how to create an adequate-looking mimeo fanzine; it stands to reason that I'll take a few issues to learn the ins and outs of this medium. As for simplistic statements like "mimeo has a warmer quality to it" -- aside from a shrug of my shoulders and the muttering of "Huh?" I need only ask "Are you seriously telling me that the mimeo ALIEN CRITIC seems somehow warmer to you than the offset ALIEN CRITIC? If so howso?")

Even now, having read PREHENSILE, it is a joy to hold and look at. I don't know how you can afford, even with such a generous lender, to do so professional a job, but, what the hell, there's always welfare.

I do have one major criticism, and that is, for me, big enough to tilt the balance against Greatness for the issue -- yet it is not your fault, but that of the potential contributors: this is, that nice as it is to have book reviews, fanzine reviews and letters (and maybe this is what you as an editor really want in the first place!) in PREHENSILE, they take up more than half the book. This is a regrettable, but not necessarily deplorable overbalance; individual articles, stories, etc. etc. are it appears to me the heart and muscles of a magazine, and the rest are merely the departments.

As I said, you cannot have more articles if no one sends them, so it is not your fault... ((But of course it is my fault if I have failed to actively solicit articles -- assuming of course that I want them. It's just that the people I've been actively soliciting are in the grip of ennui, gafia or overwork. It's not simply a matter of asking people, but of asking the right people. Though for the LASFS issue the field was limited, and the resulting disappointment more inevitable when so few 'historically important' LASFSians could be prevailed on to contribute. I know I'm asking for trouble using words like 'historically important', but in fan affairs trouble and I seem to run into one another often enough that what would I do if normalcy returned? Ook ook.))

((Ben also included lengthy comments on ideas for an SF course, which I appreciate but will edit.))

Milt Stevens is a great guy for helping you out with his solvent green, and his two articles were okay. If he were to send ME a C-note, I'd even say they were GREAT, but, otherwise, I'll only say they were okay. And, I've already mailed Dave Locke, from my pharmacy, six tubes of Preparation H plus one package of suppositories.

DICK GEIS: PRE #12 is vert nice...a bit sloppy in layout and so on, but it sprawls nicely and has that ol' personality. Milt adds a lot of character. Make him add a lot more writing.

You eat crow and I eat words. Taste awful, don't it?

FLIEG HOLLANDER: Have you read A MID-SUMMER TEMPEST yet? ((No, but I've had whole passages related to me verbatim, if that's any consolation.)) Fascinating book. The plot is good standard Anderson, but the book is really about words. The language that Poul uses in the book is the sort that would soon put you to sleep or scare you off if any other

writer attempted it -- poetic, archaic dialect. Poul makes it live and sing and plays games with it and makes it bound through hoops and sit up and beg. Beautiful, beautiful! As he goes on, Poul proves himself more and more a master of language as well as ideas. ((COA for Flieg -- PO Bx 317, Upton, NY 11973))

BY THE GREAT HORNED WAHF: Ann Chamberlain, Laura J. Haney, Jerry Lapidus, Eric Lindsay, Michael Carlson, Terry Bohaan, Mike Gorra, Richard Shaver, Harry De La Ree, Sheryl Birkhead

I find it difficult to know where to begin in reviewing this novel. The style and characterization are so good, and the ending so disappointing that the only way I can really handle it is by taking on each aspect one at a time.

To start off, the cover is the finest I have seen on a SF hardback in recent years. It is beautifully executed in soft pastel colors, and wonder of wonders it actually reflects the real situation depicted in the book. Whoever the artist is I hope the publishers use her again in the future. (Her name, incidentally, is C. Linda Dingler)

The story itself resolves around Shevek, a physicist from the planet Anarres (a commune type economy that is similar to that foretold by Marx after the withering away of the communist state - but that is so harsh toward man that only a semi-subsistence type of existence is possible). It tells of his struggles and development on that planet, contained within himself in a community that forces sharing upon its inhabitants, and of his journey (forbidden by his isolationist society) to the sister planet of Urras (the moon of Anarres - the mother world from which his ancestors emigrated to establish their 'perfect' society; a planet composed of many different political groupings but mainly one (A-I0) that is capitalist and one (THU) that is communist-totalitarian), to try to bring the two planets closer together. The two planets exhibit the two types of personal irresponsibility demonstrated by Fromm in his ESCAPE FROM FREEDOM. Anarres degrades its citizens through the agency of mass conformity; Urras through giving allegiance to a totalitarian state. The story concerns Shevek's search for some common ground of understanding between his home and the capitalist country of A-I0, and his failure in this search (demonstrating Le Guin's apparent belief that man has no real influence on events; man's actions lack free will. Also showing the major failure of the novel itself - it has no definite conclusion).

The background of life on Anarres is finely detailed - down to the current loss of personal freedom through the failure of the colonists to continue their revolutionary doctrine, death in a society established upon the inevitable existence of change. The society of A-I0 is, in contrast, poorly drawn. The presentation it receives changes in the final third of the novel without enough preparation for the change to be fully acceptable.

Structurally, Le Guin alternates chapters on Anarres and Urras - contrasting to good effect Shevek's early life with the situation that develops in A-I0. The book starts with Shevek's arrival on Urras, and then switches to his early life and development on Anarres, and then alternates between the two 'til the end of the novel. But this use of structure in itself sets up the reader to expect some major revelation at the end of the novel that will tie

up all the threads that have been created by the story; instead we are left with a half-completed tapestry that is unraveling at the ends.....

The characterization of Shevek is fully realized - some of the best I have ever run into. Following him as he gradually drifts within himself and away from his culture, with its emphasis on conformity, as he begins to do original research that he can share with no-one. There is this beautiful scene at the beginning where he is at a 'sharing' and is trying to explain a theory he has just thought up to the other children - only to be castized as being 'elitist' because he is far ahead of his contemporaries. Le Guin seems to work best with the 'loner' - someone that is an outsider even within his own culture, much less when he is exploring the facets of an alien one. I cannot help but wonder what the effect of her mother's book, ISHI IN TWO WORLDS, has had on her, since its theme (detailing the life of the last 'wild' Indian in North America as he tries to adjust to the 'white' culture) seems to re-occur in her latest fiction (THE FARTHEST SHORE and THE LEFT HAND OF DARKNESS). There are said to be several themes upon which a novel can be built; among them are man-against-nature and man-against-himself. If this is true, then these are the two major themes of this novel. Shevek against Urras, against the system his ancestors fought against, and eventually ran away from; Shevek against himself, against the built in prejudices that his society has conditioned him into. Those are the two conflicting forces within the book, that Shevek is seeking a solution too. Instead he admits failure and returns to Anarres, not even knowing whether he will be welcomed with open arms or killed outright as a subversive influence, without these two major forces achieving a confrontation, and the conclusion that would surely result from the conflict elicited by their collision. Shevek tells outsiders to come to Anarres and study them - but how can that cause any change when everyone is so involved with themselves that they care little for outsiders; he gives the worlds the gift of instantaneous communication, but what good is instantaneous communication if nobody is willing to communicate?

Le Guin delivers high style, excellent characterization, and many thought provoking questions, but the book's lack of a conclusion doesn't deliver any answers to the reader. It leaves a bitter aftertaste like cold lemonade on a hot and sweaty day.....

1, WEAPON by Charles W. Runyon, Doubleday 1974 \$5.95

About the only word I can think of to describe this novel is pathetic. The author manages to contradict himself on the first page of the narrative, and the novel goes down the tubes from there. The writing and plotting are of the level one might expect from a 20 year old bad comic book; the characterization is ludicrous. Avoid at all costs... (even a 1¢ sale)