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THE ESCHATOLOGY OF CORDWAINER SMITH

'Martel was angry. He did not even adjust his blood away from anger.....'

For more than 15 years, the greatest mystery in science fiction was the identity of the man whose career in the genre was believed to have begun with those opening lines from "Scanners Live in Vain."

Most readers never learned, until the untimely death in 1966 of Dr. Paul Myron Anthony Linebarger, one of America's most distinguished authorities on Far Eastern affairs and psychological warfare, that he was the man behind the almost legendary pseudonym of Cordwainer Smith, the creator of some of the most original and inventive science fiction ever written.

Yet in a larger sense, the mystery was only beginning. Even today, Smith remains perhaps the most perplexing and enigmatic writer in the annals of science fiction. Because of his secret identity, his contacts with professionals in the genre were few, and with fans virtually none. Though a voracious reader of science fiction from the age of ten, he developed in almost total isolation from its main currents.

Not since Stanley G. Weinbaum had a science fiction writer shown such startling originality with his first appearance in a genre magazine. Like Weinbaum, he seemed to have "come out of nowhere," and to reflect no detectable influences by previous writers. There, however, the parallels end.

Cordwainer Smith, unlike Weinbaum, was no overnight success. The original publication of "Scanners Live in Vain," in William Crawford's Fantasy Book, was so obscure that even its date, actually 1950, later came to be listed as 1948 -- an error perpetuated even by the Science Fiction Writers of America in "The Science Fiction Hall of Fame."

Few are aware, however, that "Scanners" was actually written in 1945, and that it was submitted to Fantasy Book only after having been rejected by every major magazine in the field. Crawford's publication was as close to a "vanity press" as existed in science fiction -- Dr. Linebarger did not receive a cent for the story.

Nor is it widely known that Dr. Linebarger's first story in the genre was -- not "Scanners," but "War No. 81-Q," published under the pseudonym of Anthony Bearden in 1928, when its author was 15. Or that Dr. Linebarger unsuccessfully submitted stories to Amazing while he was stationed in China during World War II. Or that there are at least three of his unpublished S.F. stories written after the war still extant in manuscript. Or that Dr. Linebarger's wife, Genevieve, helped write some of his later stories in a collaboration as intimate as that of Henry and Catherine Kuttner.

Just as strange as the hitherto largely unpublicized facts of Dr. Linebarger's career in science fiction are his own life and thought and the manner in which they helped shape his fiction. There are his childhood experiences in China, which may have helped him create the concept of the Instrumentality of Mankind as early as 1928 -- not to mention giving him an empathy for strange societies and cultures. The years he spent engaged in psychological warfare were just as crucial. And there is the influence of his religious beliefs -- which became of particular importance 1960, when he wrote "Old North Australia," and which paradoxically both strengthened and weakened his vision in the subsequent stories centering on the revolt of the Underpeople and the Rediscovery of Man.

What sort of a man, then, was Dr. Paul Myron Anthony Linebarger? And what is the real significance of his science fiction, which -- in spite of the reputation it has achieved -- has yet to exert influence on the genre in more than the most superficial manner?

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Mr. Forest of Incandescent Bliss

Paul Myron Anthony Linebarger was born July 11, 1913, and but for his father's desire that he be a natural-born citizen of the United States and therefore eligible for the presidency, the event would have taken place in China instead of Milwaukee.

Lillian Bearden Linebarger, the second wife of Paul Myron Wentworth Linebarger, had been sent back to the States to give birth to their first son, and arrived with 13 days to spare. But Milwaukee was to be little more than a name on a birth certificate to the boy. Apart from vacation interludes in Washington and Long Beach, Calif., he was to spend his childhood in China, Germany, France, Hawaii and Japan -- or in transit between two or more of those places.

The father, a member of a family that, under several spellings (Leyenberger, Lionberger, Lineberger, deLigneberger, vonLeinberg etc.), traced itself back to medieval Alsace and had branches in Switzerland, France and Germany, was political and legal advisor to Sun Yat Sen -- father of the Chinese Republic. He was author of non-fiction works on government and politics, and also later wrote poetry and fiction under the pseudonym of Paul Myron.

He had been born in 1871, the son of a minister, but soon showed a traditional Linebarger penchant for an adventurous life. Sent to Europe at age 16, he studied at Heidelberg for a while, then took his law degree at the University of Madrid in Spain. He fought in the Spanish-American War as a lieutenant in the First Illinois Cavalry -- his first wife died at that time -- and afterwards, his rare knowledge of Spanish law garnered him an appointment in 1900 as one of the first U.S. judges in the Phillipines.

While serving as judge, under circumstances described his son's widow, Mrs. Genevieve Linebarger, as very "romantic," he met Sun, then a struggling revolutionary seeking funds among overseas Chinese in his campaign to overthrow the Manchu dynasty. Sympathetic to the plight of China at that time, Judge Linebarger was converted to Sun's philosophy. He had inherited a small fortune and, in 1907, resigned his judgeship to become Sun's legal advisor without pay. He helped finance the revolution of 1911, even to procuring arms for Sun's forces.

Young Paul Myron Anthony was to become used to living in a world of political intrigue. "I grew up in a household where soldiers of fortune were common visitors, where secret messages were received and dispatched, where men left black satchels full of money in the front hall, much to my mother's consternation," he later recalled.

Judge Linebarger was adopted into the Lin clan, friends of Sun, to serve as the "son" of a boy who died in childhood without having any descendants to worship him. Sun himself gave him the Chinese name "Lin Bah Kuh," or "Forest of 100 Victories" -- a pun on his Western surname. With the Chinese Republic established, the former judge took on the job of defending its interests in the extra-territorial courts of Shanghai. His second marriage took place at that time, in 1912.

When Paul Myron Anthony was born, it was hardly surprising for Sun to become his godfather, and for Yu Yü Jen, China's foremost calligrapher, to choose for him the Chinese name "Lin Bah Loh" -- or "Forest of Incandescent Bliss." The name was a double pun, since "Bah Loh" is the Chinese equivalent of Paul. When, following World War II, the son had his two mainstream novels, "Ria" and "Carola" published, he used a pun on his Chinese name, Felix C. Forrest, as a pseudonym.

Lin Bah Loh did not see much of China during his earliest years, however. Shortly after his birth, Yuan Shih-K'ai, whom Sun had helped install as president of China, decided he would rather be emperor. An attempt to depose him failed, and Sun had to flee to Japan.

Judge Linebarger joined Sun in Japan, and thus some of the earliest memories of Paul Myron Anthony were of the Inland Sea of Japan. He came to regard it as the most beautiful spot on Earth. He used some of his memories of Japan for the background of "Ria" and, in spite of World War II, always maintained a high regard for Japanese culture. He was especially proud of his friendships among the Nisei soldiers, who fought in Europe on the American side during the war, and admired their traditional samurai virtues of fantasy, courage and honor. He ghost-wrote a book on Japan during the war.

His first glimpse of China came towards the end of 1916, after the death of Yuan, when Sun returned to his country and established a Nationalist government in the South in competition with the warlord-dominated regime in Peking that enjoyed international recognition. In those days, Sun often played with his godson, or sat him on his knee and fed him lichee nuts.

Young Linebarger's education was in large part dictated by the ups and downs of Sun's political fortunes. During civil disorders in 1919-20, for example, he was sent away to Punaho Academy in Honolulu. While there, he lost one eye in an accident, and would have lost both but for the intervention of a ship's captain who "bumped" two of his other passengers to send the boy and his mother to San Francisco where facilities were available for an operation that saved his sight. Upon recovering, he was brought back to China, where he was enrolled in the British Cathedral School in Shanghai in 1920.

Linebarger was to develop a strangely ambivalent attitude toward China as a result of his youthful experiences there. On the one hand, he admired Chinese culture deeply, as evidenced by the prominence in his Washington home of Chinese art objects and his use in his fiction of Chinese prose and verse forms. Yet at the same time he was appalled by the cruelty and disregard for individual life so typical of China, with its overpopulation and feudalistic mores.

This cruel side of China came out very strongly in "Carola," and from his Chinese experience Linebarger became obsessed with the sanctity of human life, disdaining concepts of "honor," whether Oriental or Western, that seemed to be used to give excuses for the pointless sacrifice of life.

During the Korean War, when he was psychological warfare consultant to the U.S. Eighth Army, he had a chance to put this philosophy into practice. Thousands of Chinese troops were being massacred when they tried to surrender because they believed it shameful to be seen without their weapons and would approach American lines with guns held over their heads or carrying grenades and generally looking hostile.

Linebarger met with some Chinese prisoners and got them to come up with a string of words that sounded like "I surrender," but meant things like "Love," "Virtue" and "Humanity." Leaflets were dropped by plane behind enemy lines advising Chinese how to give up by dropping their guns and shouting the "honorable" words. The number of prisoners taken increased dramatically.

"Paul said he thought that was the single most worthwhile thing he did in his life," his widow remembers. Perceptive readers can note a reflection of the same philosophy can be seen in his science fiction: the Instrumentality hardly ever kills its opponents if it can convert them or intimidate them instead.

Linebarger had learned to read at the age of four, but it was in Germany that he first became acquainted with science fiction. Trouble broke out again in China, and he was sent to the Oberrealschule in the Baden-Baden region in 1923. Among his favorite German S.F. works were "Gigantum" and "The Doppelgaenger," by Antonio Eberhardt. Later, during a six-month stay at Long Beach, he devoured the classics of S.F. by Verne, Wells, Doyle, Kipling and Stevenson, and even the Martian science fantasies of Edgar Rice Burroughs. He also loved the fantastic fiction of Haggard and Robert W. Chambers. He was a convert to Amazing from the first issue.

Whenever he was in the United States, Linebarger would stock up on science fiction to take back to China. And, surprisingly, he could obtain a considerable amount of S.F. in China itself. Shanghai was, in those days of foreign domination, one of the most sophisticated, cosmopolitan cities in the world.

Linebarger spent two years in Germany, an experience upon which he later drew for most of the background of "Ria." After that, he was a student in a Catholic school near Monte Carlo for a year or so, then spent a half year in Long Beach before returning to China in 1926. By this time, Sun had died and been succeeded by Chiang Kai-Shek. Chiang was accepting Communist support in those days, and this caused a strain in relations between him and the elder Linebarger, who refused to set foot in the country until the Generalissimo broke with the Communists in 1928. Young Linebarger, however, was nevertheless enrolled in the Kaiser Wilhelms School in Shanghai in 1926.

It may well have been in China that Linebarger first tried his hand at science fiction with "War No. 81-Q." The pseudonym he used -- Anthony Bearden -- was a combination of his third given name and his mother's maiden name. Even his widow does not know where "War No. 81-Q" was published -- he was in China at the time and apparently couldn't get hold of a copy of the magazine himself. But his cousin, Jack O. Bearden, read it and, in a fit of jealousy, responded by turning out an S.F. story of his own, "The Notorious C39," which was published in Amazing five years later.

According to Mrs. Linebarger, "War No. 81-Q" definitely refers to the Instrumentality: "Maybe not the Lords, but the supervisors of mankind had decided that war was senseless. So instead, each side was required to select a combatant, and they fought duels in spaceships." The title obviously refers to one of these "limited wars," and in "On the Storm Planet," published 37 years later, there is a reference to similar spaceship duels. Linebarger, incidentally, later wrote poetry under the Anthony Bearden pseudonym -- "volumes and volumes" of it, his widow states. Some was published in "little" magazines, and even won prizes. And two Anthony Bearden poems are among the relics Rod McBan finds in the Store of Heart's Desire in "Old North Australia."

The genesis of the term "Instrumentality" as used by Linebarger is uncertain. It may have had something to do with his experiences in China with Communism. His Australian friend of later years, Arthur Burns, recalled in the Australian Science Fiction Review in 1966 that Linebarger had been struck by the manner in which Communism appealed to the "sense of vocation" in man, with its "conviction of historical destiny." There may be a connection between this mystique and that of the Lords of the Instrumentality, with their perpetual concern for the "destination" of mankind. The Lords see themselves as instruments, as it were, of human evolution.

Another clue may exist in "Ria," in which the heroine, sifting through her memories in search of her identity, experiences toward the end a sort of quasi-religious vision: "She felt that she stood somewhere in the lower part of her own tremendous skull, and that she listened to the fluent deep roar of a resounding bronze instrument of some kind -- something metallic, something which sounded like the instrumentality of man, not like the unplanned noises of nature and the sea." Linebarger's belief in the order and purpose of human existence, as expressed in "Ria," was part of his Episcopalian religious faith. Yet, until 1960, his fiction contained no explicit religious message.

By the time "War No. 81-Q" appeared, Chiang Kai-Shek's forces had just completed the reunification of China. So in 1930, Linebarger enrolled in the University of Nanking, Chiang's capital. The same year he went to work as his father's private secretary and, though only 17, negotiated a silver loan for China from the United States.

There was a brief generation gap between father and son. Young Linebarger had developed radical leanings during the period when the Nationalists were still collaborating with the Communists. The elder Linebarger had a simple answer: for his son's 18th birthday, he sent him on a trip to Russia. A few days in Leningrad sufficed to cure the son of any sympathies for Communism. In fact, he was next sent to the United States to propagandize on Chiang's behalf against the Reds.

Linebarger finished college at George Washington University and in 1933 earned his A.B. degree in political science there. Meanwhile, he continued writing. In 1931, he produced the first draft of "The Fife of Bodhidharma," which he would rewrite in 1955. The next year, he had a commentary in one of his father's books, "The Gospel of Chung Shan." He translated some Chinese stories, and he began keeping notebooks of ideas for stories -- mostly Chinese, but also science fiction. "Every time he got an idea, he jotted it down," according to his widow; "It would gel eventually, and he'd write the story very quickly."

Linebarger did post-graduate work at American University and the University of Chicago, but it was at Johns Hopkins University that he obtained his Ph.D. in 1936 at the tender age of 23. He then married his first wife, Margaret Snow. Her father, Chester Snow, was later part of the Manhattan project at Los Alamos. Dr. Linebarger dedicated both his Felix C. Forrest novels to her, and she bore him two daughters, Marcia Christine and Johanna Lesley. But in 1949, their marriage broke up and ended in divorce. It was the year after that Dr. Linebarger remarried (but more on that later).

Dr. Linebarger had planned to do post-doctoral work in Germany. But when he visited Berlin in 1936, he was so revolted by the Hitler regime that he immediately left the country, and never returned there until many years after World War II. Instead, he took a job as instructor in government at Harvard University. This marked the end of his job as his father's private secretary -- but by no means that of his role as spokesman for the Nationalist Chinese cause.

At 23, Dr. Linebarger had already seen more of the world than do most men in a lifetime. He spoke Chinese, German, French and Spanish, and could read Russian and Portuguese. His varied experiences had, as Burns pointed out, given him a "sharp perception of racial and cultural differences," and "furthered his capacities for coming to know all kinds of men and women and to enter sympathetically into the hearts and minds of subject races."

In 1937, Dr. Linebarger became an instructor in political science at Duke University; within a year, he was assistant professor. Also in 1937, he published the first book of his own, "The Political Doctrines of Sun Yat Sen." This was followed by "Government in Republican China" in 1938 and "The China of Chiang Kai-Shek" in 1941. He also wrote the introduction to "Ocean Men," a 1937 play by his father that was supposed to be an allegory on Sun Yat Sen's revolution and was published privately. The elder Linebarger, who spent much of his time in France in semi-retirement, died there in 1939.

Dr. Linebarger continued to read science fiction during this period. His major discovery during the 1930's was the philosophical S.F. of Olaf Stapledon whom, according to his widow, he admired very much. That he was familiar with Stapledon is extremely significant, as there are striking parallels between the general conceptions in "Last and First Men," "The Star Maker" and "Sirius" and those in the epic of the Instrumentality.

A number of manuscripts from this period are extant. Among them are such items as "General T'ang in Valley Dang" (1937), "The Pure Discourse" (1938), "Alauda Dalma" (1939) and "Noon in Adrianople" (1941). They range from tales about life in China to anecdotes about modern times. One of the former, "The Slayer in the Tomb" (1937), is quite significant in relation to Dr. Linebarger's later science fiction. Set in the period of the Han dynasty, it uses the same "legendary" style as that of the later Instrumentality stories such as "The Ballad of Lost C'Mell" and "The Dead Lady of Clown Town."

With the outbreak of World War II, Dr. Linebarger was commissioned a second lieutenant in the U.S. Army. As a Far East specialist, he was involved in the formation of the Office of War Information and of the Operation Planning and Intelligence Board. He also helped organize the Army's first psychological warfare section. He was then sent to China, being assigned to the headquarters of the China-India-Burma theatre. He was in charge of psychological warfare, and of coordinating activities of the Anglo-American and Chinese armed forces. By the end of the war, he had risen to the rank of major and won a bronze star.

While in China, he wrote his two Felix C. Forrest novels, "Ria" and "Carola," which were mailed home to his wife in installments. The dedication of the first book -- "To my three first readers -- at Sanhoupa, Los Alamos and the Tuyokai" -- contains references to his wife, his father-in-law and his censor, in that order.

The two books are extraordinary, to say the least. Both of them are introspective psychological novels -- written from a female point of view. Ria is a teenage American girl who was raised in Japan and, during a stay in Germany in the 1920's, has a strange impact upon the lives of a number of people there (the novel also expresses, for the first time, Dr. Linebarger's preoccupation with cats. Sardanapal is a strange feline whose owner jokingly explains is the reincarnation of a Martian scientist). Carola is a middle-class American girl who revolts against her bourgeois upbringing to marry a Chinese Communist, whom she accompanies back to China to help further the Great Revolution. In China, however, her life becomes a nightmare, and she eventually uses ruthless means to escape back to the United States. Both novels take the subjective form of remembrances of things past, with the heroines calling up their memories and trying to perceive the order in their own lives. In style and approach, both novels are totally unlike science fiction by the same author.

Nevertheless, he was also writing science fiction while in China and submitted several stories to Amazing ("He didn't feel Astounding was his medium," his widow recalls.). This was during the early Ray Palmer period at Amazing -- "Between T. O'Connor Sloane and the Deros," as Fred Pohl puts it. Palmer had a policy of not bothering to look at manuscripts unless he knew the author. Dr. Linebarger's stories from this period are apparently lost, either by Palmer or himself.

In 1945, with the war over, the now Maj. Linebarger was given a desk job at the Pentagon. He had plenty of time on his hands then and, Mrs. Linebarger remembers, "there was an idea he'd had for quite a while." He decided to turn it into a story during his idle hours. The result was "Scanners Live in Vain."

The sophistication of the story was incredible then, and it seems even more incredible today in retrospect. With the first paragraph, Dr. Linebarger established not only the basic idea of the story, but its emotional impact on the protagonist, Martel, and his relationships with the "Others." The theme of the synergy between mind and mechanism had never been so well exploited before, but the complete development of the background is just as startling: Dr. Linebarger created, not just a society, but a culture, with its own ethics, customs, idioms -- even its own mythos. Clearly, his empathic experience with many and varied human cultures had given him a unique talent to project new ones.

Yet when Dr. Linebarger offered "Scanners" to the magazines, he ran into a brick wall. Nobody wanted the story. While it was making the rounds, he tried another: "Himself in Anachron." This was a strange amalgam of VanVogtian pseudo-science and Christian theology. There is a time traveler who travels "outside of time" and experiences a series of religious visions while "juggling along from probability to probability." Some of the incidents anticipate James Blish's "Common Time." The story was never submitted for publication.

In 1947, Dr. Linebarger became professor of Asiatic Politics at Johns Hopkins University's School of Advanced International Studies in Washington, and that same year, "Ria" was published. The next year, it was "Carola." But when the publisher, Duell, Sloan and Pearce, used his Chinese name on the title page, people found out that "Felix C. Forrest" was Dr. Linebarger, and he was too self-conscious to write again under that pseudonym. Instead, in 1949, he published "Atomsk," an espionage thriller with a Russian setting and a James Bondish hero, as Carmichael Smith. The dedication alone, in Russian ("To the Russian people, who are great and will one day be free), was enough to inspire hostile reviews in the Soviet Press. Dr. Linebarger's "Psychological Warfare," the classic in its field, was first published in 1948.

Still nothing on "Scanners." When Dr. Linebarger heard in 1949 that H.L. Gold was starting Galaxy, he sent the story to Gold. But Gold also couldn't use the story -- though he doesn't remember rejecting it. "As sort of a last hope," his widow explains, Dr. Linebarger submitted the story to William Crawford at Fantasy Book, where it finally found a home. The blurb was appreciative, if not insightful:

"This story deals with science fiction's oldest subject -- space travel. Yet the author's treatment of the subject is so completely different that it makes 'SCANNERS' one of the most outstanding stories to appear in any magazine!"

Thus did "Scanners Live in Vain" appear -- and nearly in vain it was, too. As Pohl said, the story "dropped out of sight." And Dr. Linebarger was in no position to follow up on it with further stories in any case. He didn't seem in the mood for fiction writing -- a fourth mainstream novel languished in first draft because he wasn't satisfied with it. He married his second wife, Genevieve Collins, who was one of his students at Johns Hopkins, on Mar. 20, 1950. And before the year was out, he had been summoned overseas -- first to advise the British in their campaign against the Communists in Malaya, then (as Colonel in the U.S. Army Reserve) as a consultant to U.S. forces in Korea. As far as science fiction was concerned, he was "hors de combat."

(End of Part One. Part Two will appear in the winter issue of Renaissance. Copyright (c) 1970 by John J. Pierce. I wish to express my appreciation for the invaluable assistance of Mrs. Genevieve Linebarger in the preparation of this article, and also to Messrs. Frederik Pohl, Sam Moskowitz and James H. Bready.)

DEEPER THAN THE DARKNESS

by Greg Benford
Ace 14215 * 60¢

Now and then one reads an Ace special, and wonders what Terry Carr could possibly have seen in it. Less frequently, one reads a book from Ace that wasn't made a special -- and wonders how Carr could have overlooked it.

Greg Benford's "Deeper than the Darkness" is one of the infrequent latter cases. An excellent first novel, it may well fulfill the blurb's prediction that it will be a strong contender for next year's awards. Certainly Benford, who made his debut in 1965, is a writer to watch.

Benford's style is competent, but anonymous. Yet his novel has a strange and unique flavor. This may lie in the fact that it is a perfect synthesis of several varieties of science fiction that are most often associated with different periods, but which here are integrated as if they had always belonged together.

The initial situation -- an invasion of an interstellar empire of the future by a mysterious and deadly alien race called the Quarn -- is one reminiscent of a 1928 Edmond Hamilton thriller. Yet this is not any simple BEM menace. The Quarn come armed, not with death rays, nor even with simple "mind control" telepathy, but with a frighteningly advanced technique of psychological warfare that makes today's methods seem like child's play.

It soon becomes apparent that Benford's main theme is a psychosocial one. His future human society is one in which an Oriental style of collectivism has triumphed over the Western individualism of our own time. This setting becomes the basis for an exploration of the continuing conflict between individualism and collectivism in the evolution of society, and the impact of social organization on mankind's ability to meet new challenges in the universe.

For all its stress on psychosociology, the novel's technological background is as rigorous as that of any of Heinlein's or Asimov's best. It should be -- Benford has a Ph.D in theoretical physics and is doing research in nuclear fusion, Ace informs us.

The plot, involving protagonist Ling Sanjen's gradual discovery of how the Quarn are defeating mankind by turning human society's own structure against itself, is dazzling. More than once, what seems to be a final revelation is turned on its head and becomes the basis for new mystery and conflict.

The last revelation of the nature and motives of the Quarn may be the only real flaw in the book -- not because it is such a bad idea in itself, but because it resembles one that has been used too often previously by other authors. Benford could probably have written around it without sacrificing his basic theme. Then again, perhaps the element is essential to his final statement about the destiny of man. Each reader will have to decide for himself.

Benford's blend of adventure, technological and sociological S.F. is also an almost textbook example of Eschatological Romanticism in its concern with the direction of human evolution. Like Rex Gordon, who has dealt with similar themes, his writing suffers from a certain dryness, and could be enhanced by greater emotional coloring. This, however, in no way detracts from the fact that Benford, in "Deeper than the Darkness," has established himself as a serious writer of science fiction who may well become one of the genre's greats.

-- j.j.p.

A WIZARD OF EARTHSEA

by Ursula K. LeGuin
Ace 90075 * 75¢

Every bit of praise you have been reading for this novel is fully deserved. Mrs. LeGuin, who has made her mark as one of the greatest -- perhaps the greatest -- science fiction writer to emerge during the late 1960's -- here proves herself equally adept at epic fantasy.

The only strange thing is why it had to take the general reader two years to find this out. The book was published two years ago by an obscure firm nobody ever heard of called Parnassus Press. And that was under the label of a juvenile, although the novel is really more nature

than 90 percent of the "adult" novels in its field. It even surpasses several of the classics reprinted in Ballantine's Adult Fantasy line.

"A Wizard of Earthsea" is an epic fantasy with an allegorical theme. This is not the same as an allegorical fantasy, in which plot and character have no reality except as symbols. Mrs LeGuin's novel is effective on the symbolic level only because it is first, dramatically and emotionally, compelling as a story.

By this time, the novel has been reviewed enough times elsewhere that most readers are familiar with the basic plot, even if they have yet to read it. Suffice it to say that Mrs. LeGuin's world of Earthsea, and her tale of the headstrong young wizard Ged who, because of his youthful folly, must seek a reckoning with his own Death, are so vivid and enchanting that the allegory, obvious as it is, never seems forced or out of place.

"A Wizard of Earthsea" is altogether as fascinating a parable on the maturing of the individual as Mrs. LeGuin's science fiction is an epic treatment on the maturing of mankind. No more need be said than: Buy it. Read it.

-- j.j.p.

THE LAST HURRAH OF THE GOLDEN HORDE

by Norman Spinrad
Doubleday * \$4.50

Igor Stravinsky, on hearing a new composition by Francis Poulenc, is said to have exclaimed, "My God! He's not an eclectic -- he's a kleptomaniac!"

Poulenc, to his credit, made far better use of his borrowings than Norman Spinrad has in these short stories, vintage 1963 to 1969. With one exception, they make him appear a Hack of All Trades.

Doubleday informs us that Spinrad is the "first writer to break into the big-time mainstream of science fiction since Bradbury and Clarke." What that statement means is hard to fathom. The description of the stories themselves as "ranging from the conventional to the 'new wave'" makes sense, however -- as far as it goes.

Spinrad began his career with a number of "old wave" tales that revealed two fatal weaknesses: lack of ideas and lack of style. First there was "The Last of the Romany," a silly piece of pseudo-Bradburian sentimentality about gypsies going (maybe) into space. Then there was "Outward Bound," a wretched bit of space opera about a struggle over Overdrive! filled with the exclamation points that most S.F. writers stopped using 30 years ago.

"The Equalizer" was an obvious pipeline story for Analog on the oft-used theme of the Ultimate Weapon dilemma. Meanwhile, for Amazing, Spinrad turned out "A Child of Mind," a slushy variant on the idea used so poignantly by Philip Jose Farmer in "The Lovers," and "The Ersatz Ego," a rather obvious rehashing of the brainwashing theme. "The Rules of the Road" was an alien contact story for Galaxy that shows neither conviction nor originality. "Technicality," another Analog effort, had a cute idea, at least, locked in a pseudo-hard-boiled style Spinrad had just discovered.

With "Subjectivity," Spinrad stumbled onto the popular notion that Drugs Will Do Anything -- in this case, make space travel possible when nothing else will and turn dreams into reality. He continued to mine the theme in "The Carcinoma Angels" wherein a man takes drugs to enter his own body and cure his cancer, and "Neutral Ground," that makes a hallucinogen a passport to other worlds in which aliens are encountered for the first time.

Clark Ashton Smith might recognize "A Night on Elf Hill," the Spinrad effort at "weird" science fiction. Spinrad's discovery of the New Wave-Thing about 1967 is represented in the social realism of "Dead End," a bird-brained sociological story, in a collection of idiotic aphorisms called "The Entropic Gang Bang Caper," and a Jerry Cornelius episode that is the title story. There's even a pastiche of Barthelme in "It's a Bird, It's a Plane."

Oddly enough, there's one good story: "Deathwatch," with a new twist on the immortality theme. Must be an accident.

-- j.j.p.

A THUNDER OF STARS

by Dan Morgan and John Kippax
Ballantine 01922*9 * 75¢

TILTANGLE

by R.W. Mackelworth
Ballantine 01940*7 * 75¢

Second Foundationers are often thought of as liking anything "Old Wave," no matter how bad it is. This is a canard; Sturgeon's Law is as applicable to the "Old Wave" as anything else, often with a vengeance.

Take these two British novels, for example.

"A Thunder of Stars," by Dan Morgan and John Kippax, is supposed to be, apparently, a "modern" space opera. It is not. It is simply a mainstream military service novel disguised as S.F.

The hero is up for promotion to starship commander, we learn, and his mistress (by coincidence) is in line to be his second-in-command. But the promotion is threatened when he creates a scandal by blowing up a pirated, runaway colony ship to keep it from crashing into Earth.

Naturally, there's a big trial, and a lawyer for the shipping line digs up a Dark Chapter from our hero's past to bolster the case against him and the Space Corps. Meanwhile, there's a bit of infidelity on the part of the mistress, just to let you know the authors are aware of Sex.

Well, the Dark Chapter turns out to involve some nasty BEM's, a reactionary cliché right out of the 1930's. Aside from that and a few other surface trimmings, it could just as well be "The Caine Mutiny." At that, the novel is hastily written, with major events skipped over.

Then we have R.W. Mackelworth's "Tiltangle," a disaster tale set towards the close of a new Ice Age. But aside from the basic situation, the reader waits in vain to learn what is going on.

There's this bunch of people living at the White Mountain. They stole this refuge from whoever it was intended for, it seems. Every now and then, they send out a party on motorized sleds to a Supply Base to pick up more food. They are harassed by barbarians called the Bris.

The Bris are evidently British. But the people the bases were taken from are never identified. Neither is the locale. Characters note names on maps, and the identity of the Dispossessed -- but not to the reader. Mysterious forces used against the refugees are never explained.

A couple on a mission to Supply Base notice the Ice Age is ending and head for the Warn. Then all hell breaks loose. The Dispossessed attacked by spaceship. The refugees flee the mountain. The Supply Base is blown up. And that's the end -- the reader is just left dangling.

Morgan and Kippax seem to think that all one needs to do to write a science fiction novel is to take a standard mainstream plot and throw in S.F. props and terminology. Mackelworth apparently believes that the deliberate use of confusion will somehow convey profundity.

Two kinds of bad writing. Not New Wave-Thing bad -- just bad.

-- j.j.p.

THE PRISONER #3

A DAY IN THE LIFE
by Hank Stine
Ace 67902 * 60¢

Hardly anyone can still be unaware that Patrick McGoochan's television series, "The Prisoner," has become the most talked-about show in history, with the possible exception of Orson Welles' panic-producing radio interpretation of "The War of the Worlds" in 1938.

The reaction hasn't been limited to talk, either. There have been critical essays from various points of view -- nearly all favorable. The intellectual establishment seems to admire the series for its echoes of Kafka, while some of the Objectivists are claiming it to be inspired by Ayn Rand. (Actually, McGoochan has stated that the message, expressed in the final episode, has to do with man's real enemy being his "bestial self" -- a sort of psychoanalytical view.)

Like other TV series, "The Prisoner" has inspired novelizations, but unlike the other such adaptations, they are taken seriously. The

first was by Thomas Disch, the second by David McDaniel and the third is by Hank Stine -- who was apparently tapped for the assignment after reviewing his predecessors' efforts for Amazing.

Stine gained some notoriety in 1968 with "Season of the Witch," an S.F. sex novel for Essex House that he is reportedly now revising for republication by a "straight" book concern. That may explain why he evidently didn't have much time to spare for the Ace novelization, which can't amount to 35,000 words.

Now there have been innumerable novels about the individual vs. society. What made "The Prisoner" fresh was that the program used the theme for the first time in a format designed for television. Much of the impact of McGoochan's treatment depended on visual effects and the the generally surrealistic character of the Village. It didn't matter, really, "where" the Village was or "who" had set it up. In fact, none of the background was supposed to make any sense, literally. It was all part of the symbolism of allegorical fantasy.

Dreams are largely visual, and viewed passively. But a book is primarily verbal, and requires active involvement on the part of the reader. So an allegorical fantasy that is effective on television may look ridiculous in print. Either the dream-like elements of the show have to be scrapped, or they must be rationalized somehow. And Stine, it appears, could not decide which to do. Instead, he has copped out.

For 95 per cent of the way, "A Day in the Life" pretends to be a rationalization of the Village. We are given to understand that it really is run by the British Secret Service, and that Number 6 really is John Drake, sent there because he refused to tell why he resigned. There are all sorts of topical references to marijuana, Beatle music, J. Edgar Hoover and the like. Village bureaucrats parrot the standard apologies for totalitarianism. Eventually, Drake gets a chance to escape, and polish off the Secret Service chiefs who set up the Village. But (surprise!), in the last chapter, it suddenly develops that he was hypnotized or something back on page 87. The whole second half of the the book is a hallucination. The Village could be a plot by the Deros for all Number 6 -- or the reader -- knows.

The novelization ends on the note that Number 6 will prevail in the long run because he has a noble soul (at least, there's a quote from Nietzsche's "Beyond Good and Evil" to that effect). The truth is, Stine's Number 6 shows no more visible signs of nobility than Gilbert Gosseyn, and does little of consequence (there is nothing to compare with the insight of the television episode in which Number 6 learns to turn the Village's rules against it and have Number 2 denounced as "unmutual," for example.).

As a television series, "The Prisoner" had some merit. Stine's novelization, for all its posturing, is but a poor relation to any of the real classics already written on the theme.

-- j.j.p.

THE YEAR OF THE QUIET SUN

by Wilson Tucker
Ace 94200 * 75¢

How does Wilson Tucker get away with it? Sheer legerdemain, so it seems. In "The Year of the Quiet Sun," he has produced yet another apocalyptic novel that makes no sense, yet is highly readable.

This particular apocalypse involves the United States destroyed by a racial civil war between 1980 and 2000. The protagonist, a scholar named Brian Chaney, is drafted into a government time travel project of 1978 that seems to exist for the one, sole and only purpose of giving Chaney and the supporting characters an advance glimpse of the End.

At the end of the novel, it turns out that Chaney is black. You have to accept the notion that, all through the rest of the book full of fierce racial conflict, nobody has ever called him "n[redacted]," and he has never called anyone "honky" or "pig." If you can accept that, and also accept the idea that racial conflict is more likely to usher in the next Dark Age than all-out atomic war, pollution or the population explosion, you'll love this book. Even if you can't, you may like it.

Tucker's narrative ability seems to overcome the lack of logic in "The Year of the Quiet Sun," as it did in "The Long Loud Silence." For an apocalyptic novel, it's rather entertaining, and A.E. VanVogt may be right about it being a Hugo contender.

-- j.j.p.

I. MR. PANSHIN OBJECTS

Alexei Panshin has charged, in letters to Renaissance, that we have completely distorted and misrepresented his views and that he has "nothing but contempt" for us.

In particular, he denies seeking to make science fiction into a "vehicle" or "vocabulary" for allegorical fantasy, as we concluded in "The Taxonomy of Speculative Fiction" in our last issue, and he denies also any intention of "denigrating" science fiction writers like Ursula LeGuin, condemning science fiction as being "as limited as pornography," and holding up certain "mainstream" writers such as John Barth, W.S. Burroughs, Donald Barthelme and others as examples for S.F. to follow.

Mr. Panshin states that he does not consider his preference for R.A. Lafferty's "Fourth Mansions" over Mrs. LeGuin's "The Left Hand of Darkness" to be a preference for allegorical fantasy, as he does not share our view that "Fourth Mansions" is an allegorical fantasy. And, he explains, when he states that Barth, Burroughs and Barthelme, whom we see as allegorical fantasy writers, are moving towards science fiction, he does not mean that he considers the two genres to be the same or to imply that he prefers the "type" of science fiction they happen to be writing.

The comparison of science fiction to "pornography," Mr. Panshin points out, specified the Gernsbackian variety. Of course, we see the comparison of anything to pornography insulting, but the insult seemed greater in our eyes because Hugo Gernsback's definition of the genre was intended to include literate works like H.G. Wells "The First Men in the Moon" and "When the Sleeper Wakes," not merely Gernsback's own "Ralph 124C41+" or the pulp fiction that Mr. Panshin objects to.

Mr. Panshin's dissatisfaction with "The Left Hand of Darkness," he informs us, in no way constitutes denigration -- in fact, he states, he voted for two of Mrs. LeGuin's stories on his Nebula ballot, and ranked a third as second best in its category. (His latest statement, in the October Fantastic, calls her Nebula-winning novel, "no better than an argument in favor of the books" she may write in the future -- which struck us as damning with faint praise. And Mr. Panshin has an annoying habit of making snide-sounding, patronizing remarks about writers he insists to us he admires -- such as "supertoad" in relation to Roger Zelazny. Then there's his running feud with Larry Niven....)

As for what Mr. Panshin is for, we can rely only on statements he has made in Fantastic and in letters about his notion of "creative fantasy." This is a form he has defined in general as "extending" the borders of science fiction by getting away from the "limitations" of "science," "melodrama," "pulp" style and short story length, sounding new "notes" and using new "voices," etc. He states that his arguments are derived from the last chapters of Arnold Toynbee's "Reconsiderations," the last chapter of J.B. Priestly's "Literature and Western Man," Lewis Mumford's "The Myth of the Machine," Walter Kaufmann's "Religion and Philosophy," "The Faith of a Heretic," and "Tragedy and Philosophy," and Joseph Campbell's "The Masks of God."

His favorite science fiction writers he gives as Alfred Bester, Philip K. Dick, Robert A. Heinlein, Theodore Sturgeon, Kurt Vonnegut, and Roger Zelazny -- with the qualification that the Vonnegut novel he most admires is "Player Piano," not the later allegorical fantasy. Of "creative fantasy," his October Fantastic article gives such examples as Edgar Pangborn's "West of the Sun," Zelazny's "The Dream Master," Walter Miller's "A Canticle for Leibowitz," Robert Graves' "Watch the Northwind Rise," Hermann Hesse's "The Glass Bead Game," Karel Capek's "War with the Newts," Aldous Huxley's "Brave New World," C.S. Lewis' "Perelandra," Yevgeny Zamyatin's "We," J.R.R. Tolkien's "The Lord of the Rings," George Stewart's "Earth Abides," Gore Vidal's "Messiah," and others.

Whatever Mr. Panshin's theories may be, and whence derived, we find it difficult to interpret his list as anything more than various novels he happens to admire, arbitrarily culled from several branches of speculative fiction, and arbitrarily lumped together as a new genre of "creative fantasy." However, Mr. Panshin is no doubt sincere in his belief that he has discovered a new form of writing. Let our readers make of this what they will.

2. THE HUGO WINNERS

The news from Heidelberg about the winners of this year's Hugo awards in the fiction categories should be quite gratifying to Second Foundationers.

For those who haven't been alert, they were Ursula LeGuin's "The Left Hand of Darkness" in the novel category, Fritz Leiber's "Ship of Shadows" in the novella category and Samuel Delany's "Time Considered as a Helix of Semi-Precious Stones" in the short-story category. We are especially pleased by the first, but the others as well are good science fiction and (which may surprise some of our critics) quite compatible with our standards of Eschatological Romanticism.

The protest vote in favor of the Apollo XI coverage in the Hugo drama category was, we feel, justified in view of the fact that the movie-TV show entries lacked artistic stature, but we are rather disappointed that Speculation failed to win the fanzine award. Overall, however, the results were the best we've seen in years.

A few more developments like this, and we can declare the "Holy War" won and return to other pursuits.

-- j.j.p.

3. PATIENCE!

There has recently been a surge in requests for the manifesto, "Science Fiction and the Romantic Tradition" (Different, Oct., 1968), largely as a result of publicity by Chris R. Tame of England in a publication known as the Libertarian Connection.

Unfortunately, copies of this manifesto are nearly all gone -- only 200 copies were printed in 1968, and there has been a constant drain since that time. However, we have it in mind to prepare a new, revised and updated version of the essay when time permits. Perhaps, to avoid confusion, the new version will be given a different title, but it will be meant to serve the same function as the original.

~~Renaissance~~ takes up considerable time in itself, so we cannot promise when the revised manifesto will be available -- probably in the early part of next year, however. Please bear with us!

-- j.j.p.

4. A SUPPORTING VIEW

WHY THE NEW WAVE; OR, THE
ROOTS OF A PHENOMENON
by Michael T. Shoemaker

I have not seen anyone speculate as to what caused the New Wave to come about. Why should the New Wave movement take place now, instead of 15 years ago or 15 years in the future? I think this is an important question and that its answer will give us valuable insight concerning the movement.

Every art has undergone revolution at some stage of its development. It seems to be intrinsic in the nature of creativity that this is so. Let us briefly review a few art forms to show what I mean.

Painting: I'm no art expert, but it is obvious that painting has had many style changes. What I'm concerned with noting here is the surrealist school.

Music: Music has evolved from Baroque to Classical to Romantic to Modern (French school, 1910) to Ultramodern (computer music, etc.).

Pop Music: We have had the Rock revolution in the last decade, as against the music of the "older generation." Note that this new thing is called psychedelic music.

Writing: The main thing I want to note here is the emergence of Existentialism.

As Pierce has said, New Wave is more than a matter of style. It is the thematic content that determines whether or not a story is New Wave, although the New Wave does have a distinctive style which its proponents label "new and experimental." There is nothing new about it. It employs allegory, surrealism, symbolism, etc. -- things that have been around longer than science fiction as a genre. All of this I find very objectionable in S.F. unless it's handled properly (and

COMMENTARY -- continued

usually it isn't). I see its use in New Wave as mental laziness on the part of the author. The author uses it as a pretentious substitute for a story. He cloaks his writing in "deep allegory and symbolism," and pretends that he is relating some significant message in his "story." Close inspection, however, reveals that he is frequently making "big intimations about nothing."

Thematically speaking, the New Wave is the merging of the mainstream Existentialism with S.F., based upon a loss of values, a disbelief in any ideals and rejection of all but evil, disaster, despair, etc.

On an elementary level, a possible explanation for the existence of the New Wave is that it stems from a feeling of inferiority and inadequacy on the part of its proponents. For years, science fiction has been looked down upon by the general public. Now, in an attempt to gain respectability, New Wave authors are rejecting old identities and emulating the mainstream. At the same time, perhaps they believe they actually are transmitting an important message of social criticism.

On a higher level of understanding, the New Wave is a revolution in revolutionary times. It is the logical product of current cultural attitudes, attitudes that have been building for the last ten years. These are times of unrest. We are breeding, in part, a "hippie" culture which rejects "the establishment" and old ideals. Traditionalist S.F. is part of "the establishment," and therefore the revolution against "the establishment" is trying to topple it too. This is the "turned on" generation. It revels in psychedelic trips, surrealism, the "inner consciousness," "mind-expanding" drugs, astrology, the occult and pseudo-intellectualism. Is it then a surprise that the New Wave appeals to these people?

Before closing, I want to dispose of a stock argument used very frequently in defense of the New Wave -- one that Pierce didn't mention in his article in the fall issue ((1969)): "New Wave, Old Wave, I don't care as long as it's a good story. Don't categorize, don't judge a book by its cover, rate it on its own merits." I know as well as the next guy the dangers of confusing levels of abstraction and of group prejudice, but nevertheless there are such things as group characteristics. The New Wave has group characteristics that do not appeal to me; therefore I am opposed to it. The fact to recognize is that while you can't judge specifically (unless you are talking in terms of probability) on the basis of group characteristics, you certainly can generalize on the basis of group characteristics. -- m.t.s.

COMMENTS BY THE EDITOR: Mr. Shoemaker's argument parallels to a great degree that of "The Phylogenesis of the New Wave-Thing" in the spring Renaissance -- only, he had not read that article, and arrived at his conclusions independently. Reproducibility is supposed to be a main criterion for establishing scientific truth..... Of course, it's gotten to the point where the "existentialist" culture is old hat even as the New Wave adopts it -- the latest fad in France is Claude Levi-Strauss' "structuralism," which is apparently based on the idea that whatever is right, except when the leaders of the movement decide otherwise. The "structuralists" have dubbed Alain Robbe-Grillet and Samuel Beckett their literary heroes -- but this may not last long, as Levi-Strauss himself has decided written language is an evil invention that is of use only in enslaving people. -- j.j.p.

* * * * *

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* * * * *

Word has reached us that Harlan Ellison has suffered an accident near Los Angeles. He was taking a walk to Catalina Island, and was hit by a motor boat.

In discussing the Hugo nominations in the summer Renaissance, we wondered why the sexual background of Ursula LeGuin's "The Left Hand of Darkness" was contradicted by that of "Winter's King," even though both the novel and the short story were set on Gethen.

A card from Mrs. LeGuin supplies the answer:

"'Winter's King' was written 6 months before I began Left Hand. Didn't know Gethen well enough yet to realize the natives were androgynous. Didn't have a chance to change the story once Orbit had it -- not Damon Knight's fault, but my own."

Both we and Charlie Brown of Locus had suspected that "Islandia" had influenced "Left Hand," and another piece of correspondence from Mrs. LeGuin confirms this:

"Influenced by Austin Tappan Wright, yes -- yes indeed, and you are only the second person to notice it that I know of. I read Islandia at fourteen, understood about 2/5 of it, but have never recovered. Subsequent rereadings have only enforced its effect. But Fletcher Pratt, no, I only read him -- The Blue Star -- a year ago, and have not succeeded in getting a copy of the Well of the Unicorn yet. ((We had suspected an influence on "Left Hand" by the latter Pratt novel.)) Substitute Izak Dinesen and you will be nearer the fact, I think."

Mrs. LeGuin, as she had already made it clear elsewhere, wants nothing to do with the "Old Wave"- "New Wave" controversy, preferring to be part of the Standing or Permanent Wave. Oddly enough, however, she is one of the few pros not turned off by our neologistic term of Eschatological Romanticism -- thinks it's "perfect iambic pentameter."

Alex Krislov of Shaker Heights, Ohio, who is basically New Wave in his tastes but friendly to us nevertheless, wonders how we could have possibly missed the fact that "the theme of 'A Boy and His Dog' is an examination of love versus sex."

Maybe. But really, would Ellison's protagonist made the decision to feed the girl to his dog if she had been a member of his subculture instead of the Evil Middle Class? The message still seems to be that the action is justified for class reasons. Love vs. sex? Well, in any normal situation, the question of love for a dog vs. sex wouldn't come up, so there isn't much applicability. Or, if you take it as comradeship vs. sex in general....well, it's still a special case, of interest at best for its "shock" value rather than for universal relevance.

Mr. Krislov also mentions, "The best science fiction novel written this year was Nabokov's Ada, a book most fans probably didn't bother to even attempt to read," and that he is unhappy that it didn't get a Hugo nomination instead of the (evidently) less deserving novels that did. Funny; we picked up the paperback a while back, but hadn't read it yet -- but will do so.

Though he disagrees with us about 90 per cent of the time, Mr. Krislov somehow concludes that "you are not the fool that Harlan makes you out to be, nor the madman that Geis pretends you are, nor the immature little bigot that loads of New Wave followers think you to be," but rather, "an intelligent man with an 'outgroup' philosophy." Gosh, we don't get compliments like that from our supporters most of the time!

John H. Costello, a sympathizer from Peabody, Mass., wants us to know that many Objectivists like himself do not at all endorse Justin St. John's support of the New Wave by Objectivist rhetoric. In fact, he has sent us a letter analyzing an anti-Second Foundation tirade by Mr. St. John in the March Amazing point by point.

Mr. Costello's letter is lengthy, and would mean little to most of our readers unless run side-by-side with Mr. St. John's. But in any case, he agrees with other Second Founders that the "New Wave" is basically nihilistic and the "Old Wave" basically romantic and positivistic.

"Mr. St. John is misapplying Objectivism," he states. "I must conclude that he has managed to borrow a great many catch-phrases from Rand's works, but he has succeeded in applying them to a movement that is diametrically opposed to everything Objectivism stands for."

We ourselves declared a truce with Mr. St. John at the Lunacon, and are content to leave him alone. But it is nice to know that there some thoughtful Randites who do not share his New Wavish views.

James H. Schmitz informs us that we erred grievously in stating (in "The Taxonomy of Speculative Fiction") that his science fiction ("The Demon Breed," etc.) and science fantasy ("The Witches of Karres") are set in the same universe.

"The Demon Breed isn't set in the same universe as the Witches of Karres. It's one of the Hub stories which, with a few exceptions, are grouped within half a dozen years of 3500 A.D. in an improbable but fictionally perhaps not impossible future. There's no connection I'm aware of between them and anything else I've written.

"Karres is a one-shot deal, set on a fantasy time-line, and based on magic. Period might be 100,000 A.D."

Mr. Schmitz goes on to theorize that the "use of psi in current Hub stories is probably what led you to your assumption." Actually, it wasn't that -- just a false memory of the Hub or part of the background of the Hub being mentioned in "The Witches of Karres."

Sorry about that!

Greg Benford, while disdaining "jawbreakers like 'eschatological romanticism,' which convey little," was pleased by the article about the taxonomy of speculative fiction, which he calls a "clear, thoughtful analysis" that stands in "marked contrast" to the theories Alexei Panshin has been expressing in Fantastic. In fact, Mr. Benford had it in mind to write a "counter-article" for Fantastic himself opposing Mr. Panshin's, and thought our piece made that unnecessary. We have, however, advised him to go ahead anyway -- Fantastic has a far larger circulation, after all. (Pace Mr. Panshin!)

Cy Chauvin of Roseville, Mich., who has mixed tastes, writes he was disappointed that Robert Silverberg's "Up the Line" was nominated for a Hugo instead of his "much superior" 1969 novel, "To Live Again." "While it isn't better than 'The Left Hand of Darkness,' it certainly outclasses 'Up the Line.' It has an interesting background based on the idea of a 'persona' (a mind/soul recording.....I am sure that you would enjoy the book."

He feels we are too harsh on Ellison's "A Boy and His Dog;" "A story should be judged from a literary standpoint, not from the 'message' it contains. What if the message was turned around, and the only thing to be was a member of the Middle Class? Would that make the story any better?"

No. It would just be a different kind of crud. The trouble is, Mr. Ellison is in the business of writing "message" fiction, in which everything else is subordinated to the message ("Street fiction for days of blood," he calls it). It's not a question of "Love me, love my dog," so much as, "Love me, love my message." Most of those who are enthralled by Mr. Ellison's stories seem to love them for the messages, and as long as that is so, how can we be faulted for reacting negatively for the same reason?

Mr. Chauvin liked the "Taxonomy" article ("I agree with just about all you say!") and is irritated by Mr. Panshin's views -- "especially his condemning 'the science fiction short story as an irrelevancy that deserves to disappear.'" He disagreed with us on the prozine Hugo nominations -- Fantasy and Science Fiction deserved its award, he writes; "Next year, however, I think there will be little quibbling: Amazing undoubtedly will get it. Ted White has improved it a lot, and what's more, it's still getting better....I look forward eagerly to the conclusion of the (serial) now running (Bob Shaw's "A Million Tomorrows")."

Could be!

((This feature is sort of an experiment. Renaissance hasn't had room for a regular lettercolumn because of its relatively small size, dictated by the fact that the 'zine is entirely subsidized by the editor. But we do get a great number of interesting letters, with a lot of comments, criticisms and suggestions that deserve space. Just on the spur of the moment, we are trying out this format as a kind of compromise, taking extracts from various letters in the manner other fanzines use for "We Also Heard From...." departments. Obviously, some writers will be miffed that we chose one comment in preference to some other that was more dear to their hearts. But we hope that no one will be seriously offended -- this is merely an effort to make the best of a bad situation created by economic factors.))

-- j.j.p.

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