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In Brief --

Double-issue #143/144 didn't get mailed 'til June 1; if everything goes well, this issue (last stencil typed June 2) should be mailed June 4 or June 5. After that, there should be two single-issues and maybe one double-issue before we quit to get ready for our July 1-Aug. 15 odyssey to England. (Bill Hixon, 870 Quince Orchard Blvd., Gaithersburg, MD 20760, will put out a monthly SOTWJ while we're away.)  
Our U.K. address will be: %A.J. Giles, 2 Weydon Hill Close, Farnham, Surrey.  
SOTWJ price will go up to 30¢ ea., 8/\$2 July 1 (the other shoe has dropped....).

SOTWJ is approx. weekly; subs: 25¢ ea. (10p), 9/\$2 (12/£1 or 12/\$2.50 overseas) or multiples thereof ('til Jul.1); all subs incl. any issue(s) of TWJ pubbed during sub (count as 3 or more issues, dep. on length); TWJ also avail. on its own, 4/\$5 (4/£2) ('til July 1). For info on Airmail, 3rd-class subs, ads, Overseas Agents, Trade-Subs, etc., write ed. Address Code: A, Overseas Agent; C, Contributor; H, L, or M, WSFA Honorary, Life, or Regular member, resp. (# = # of WSFA issues left on sub); K, Something of yours is mentioned/reviewed herein; N, You are mentioned herein; R, For Review; S, Sample; T, Trade; W or Y, Subber via 1st- or 3rd-class mail, resp. (# = # of issues left on sub); X, Last issue, unless....

-- DLM

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REVIEW EXTRACTS (from the press) --

SF/Fantasy (out of the archives, once again): Colonel Mint, by Paul West (Dutton; 188 pp.; \$6.95) [Diane Johnson; WASH. POST, 28/5/72]: Astronaut Mint, on his way to the moon, looks out the window and sees...an angel! Back on Earth, "man must cope with the possibility of angels and the political impossibility of letting the world get wind of it." Mint and his companions are quarantined, while the Mission Control scientists attempt to cope with the problem--"a summary which barely suggests the rich, horrifying, funny, and complex procedures in the tour de force of brainwashing and writing that follows. . . The most affirmative thing about this book. . . is his [West's] faith in the novel as an art form, as a dignified production of the human mind, capable of rendering, in its infinite variety, social comment, philosophic statement, comedy, pain, all of which West can do--impressively. . . Here is a novel that means." ## Peregrine Primus, by Avram Davidson (Walker & Co.; 174 pp.; \$5.95) [Jack Burgess; WASH. STAR; 17/3/72]: ". . . Fiction it is--delightful and fey, hilariously funny; indeed one of the most enjoyable pieces of satire in recent years--but science fiction it is not. . . it is must reading for the student of satire and irony, and also a well-researched primer on early Christian heresies. . ." ## Love in the Ruins: The Adventures of a Bad Catholic at a Time Near the End of the World, by Walker Percy (Farrar, Straus & Giroux; 403 pp.; \$7.95) [Paul Theroux; WASH. POST; 16/5/71]: A "novel describing a Utopia gone wrong, narrated by a genial fellow named Thomas More . . . The perceptions are wise, and More himself is a credible man, but the backdrop is pure fabrication, aswamp with stagey confederates and drawling yokels, unfunny hi-jinks and bewildering intrigues in drug-head infested swampland and in a fatuously contrived sex-clinic. This creaking framework of the book . . . curiously flattens the shrewd observations and makes what could have been sensible or screamingly funny ponderous and undistinguished, pretending to a weight it does not have. . ." [Day Thorpe; WASH. STAR; 16/5/71]: ". . . fantasy of the early demise of the automobile . . . [which is] somewhat too long and drawn out. The realism of the story is not needed to flesh out what is the true gold of the book--the wit and irony in the satire of our times." ## The Man in the Moone and Other Lunar Fantasies, ed. by Faith W. Pizor & T. Allan Comp; Introduction by Isaac Asimov (Praeger Publishers; 9 illos. (period engravings); 230 pp.; \$8.95 [currently remaindered in N.Y. @ \$2.95 --ed.]) [Charles Cooke; WASH. STAR; 25/8/71]: ". . . a book that is superbly researched, well-edited, and outstandingly valuable . . .--a book so expertly chosen and commented upon as to practically numb the reviewer's brain." A selection of "moon-connected 17th-, 18th-, and 19th-century writings comprising social satire, political lampoonery, and science-fiction . . . and giving new visibility to old works by authors forgotten today, also to such notables as Cyrano de Bergerac and Edgar Allen Poe."

Mystery/Suspense: [WASH. STAR; 16/5/71; reviewer not named]: I Gave at the Office, by Donald E. Westlake (Simon & Schuster; 223 pp.; \$5.95; Network interviewer Jay Franklin "finds himself the fall guy in what looks like an abortive attempt by the Network to finance an invasion of a Caribbean dictatorship . . . disappointing . . . [but] the author is a very funny writer and his style and some good scenes make it all worthwhile."); Necklace and Calabash, by Robert van Gulik (Scribner's; 144 pp.; \$4.95; Judge Dee adventure; "elegant escape reading . . . One of the best in the series."); To Spite Her Face, by Hildegard Dolson (Lippincott; 225 pp.; \$5.95; Marion Colter's new face leads to her murder; "A most entertaining first mystery . . ."); Three's a Crowd, by Doris Miles Disney (Doubleday; 183 pp.; \$4.50; "quality" mystery of tragedy and murder); The Gravy Train, by Whit Masterson (Dodd, Mead; 219 pp.; \$4.95; "Just a few months ago Whit Masterson published The Death of Me Yet, a spy story with one of the best plots in moons. Now here is another book, completely different, and with a plot so original that Masterson is competing with himself as the master plotter of the day. I personally preferred The Death of Me Yet, but I recommend both books highly.").

Cabu and Sar, by John Robert Russell (Pocket Books) /Reviewer, TRINA KING/ --

John Russell seems to be a cop-out author. In both Cabu and Sar, he seems to prefer to let his characters take the path of least resistance, and those characters who typify man's nature as a curious, questing animal are killed off. Though he uses some fascinating premises for these two novels, such as man's ability to reach the stars with his mind (in Cabu), and how man copes with the aftermath of civilization's destruction (in Sar), rather than allowing his plots to develop to their expected conclusions he abruptly switches his purpose in the last chapter, and finishes his novels with poorly contrived endings.

In Cabu, George Piget, a frail history professor, one night discovers his mind in the body of a new-born infant on the planet Cabu. The next day he rushes to the library of Cool River College in Wisconsin (where he teaches), to prove that Cabu exists. But regardless of whether it is all in his mind or is actually happening, Piget returns again and again to consciousness on Cabu.

The tribe into which he was "born" is undergoing the transition from Old Stone Age to New Stone Age, and is unconcerned about the future as long as its members' bellies are full. But it is attacked by an evolutionary superior tribe, and Piget is determined to help his people survive and become the dominant species on Cabu. With the technical knowledge available to him on Earth, he manages to advance his tribe along the road to civilization--or, at least, civilization as Piget believes it should be.

Since he is still only an infant (though he matures to manhood within one Earth year), he must use his "father"--a tribal elder--to carry out his plans. Needless to say, the father becomes power-hungry, and no longer views his son, Bakun (Piget), with quite so much favor once the power base is firmly established. But Bakun/Piget bides his time, knowing that one day all this will be his. And, of course, it is. Then the other tribe invades the peaceful jungle, and Piget's tribe is forced to fight to save its civilization from the "savages" of the plains, who only a few years before had threatened to exterminate them by virtue of their superiority. All plans for eliminating the trouble and stagnation that had set in under Piget's father's rule must be abandoned because of this war.

Back in Wisconsin, all this "moonlighting" is taking its toll on Piget's earthly body and mind. He confides in another professor, who takes a dim view of this alter-ego and the civilization it has created, though he is fascinated by the idea of a primitive world and the noble savages whom he feels are superior to any civilization man has created. It is through this other professor's eyes that the reader is introduced to Cabu and its unique member George Piget, alias Bakun.

This conflict on the proper nature of man continues throughout the novel, but the author intervenes--and instead of permitting this conflict as exemplified by the two species of man on Cabu to resolve itself, he prefers to offer a solution that will only condemn both types of men to a meaningless existence.

Even if one doesn't like the plot of Cabu, at least it is a well-told tale full of action and adventure, with some bloodshed thrown in for those who prefer their science fiction to be gory.

Sar, on the other hand, strikes me as being a quickie, run off for the greater profit of the author, with little thought to plot or reader sensitivity.

Plotwise, Sar is the name of a serf who escapes from his fief after killing a couple of the lord's men in a vain attempt to rescue the girl he loves--who, needless to say, did not choose to run off with Sar to live in the woods. Alone, he meets and joins a band of outlaws who are condoned by the lord of the manor to keep peace. He masters the art of their weapons, but is again forced to flee when they are destroyed by a rival band of outlaws. Taken captive by some traders, he

(Over)

S.F. PARADE (Continued) --

is sold for a slave in New Rome. Finally, he is rescued by a band of sea raiders who attack the villa in which he lives.

From the leader of the raiders, he learns that they come from an island ruled by a queen. The soldiers and workers are all women, and men are only used for the sea raids and as breeders for the women. Sar learns that the raids have several purposes. In addition to loot, likely females are captured to be brought to the island to be used as workers, and as they prove themselves they are raised to the level of soldiers. Finally, books are exceptionally sought-after by the queen because she has a desire to know the world as it was before the present situation. She is convinced that somewhere in the past Earth was different, and that some great catastrophe occurred to cause the civilizations that now exist. In books, she hopes to find the answer.

This queen and her island of women are the only people on which Russell spends any time. They are the only people with a purpose in life and a desire to change the present for a better future. No other civilization that Sar encounters has any desire to explore its history or to change the future. Sar himself is poorly drawn. He comes across as the tall, strong, clever hero who just drifts from one situation to another without any volition of his own. Though the queen gives her purpose to him--to find books that will reveal man's past by exploring hitherto uncharted parts of the world--he betrays her in the end. For after having found out the secret of the present civilizations, he succumbs to their lure and creates one more sterile, enclosed world instead of using the knowledge he has gained to get man moving again in the direction of "progress".

Russell's pessimism as to man's ability to create a better future and to learn from his past is overwhelming in both these books. I would recommend them only if you don't mind being disappointed by a bad ending.

A Second View [Reviewer, DON D'AMASSA] --

Cabu -- Rarely in the last few years has a first novel appeared that is so awful, so totally lacking in apparent thought, craftsmanship, or even rationale, as Cabu. Piget, a seedy college professor, begins to dream of the world of Cabu whenever he sleeps. In effect, he leads two lives, one as a human, one as a subhuman dawn man on some strange world. Russell fleshes out this dynamic mishmash with tribal politics, pointless episodes in our world, and an uncanny lack of sensitivity for human dialogue. On the other hand, maybe the author himself is one of these primitive dawn men.

Sar -- Another bit of fluff from the immortal author of Cabu. Russell apparently cannot be bothered to make up real titles. Sar is an heroic, straight-jawed hero who revolts against the feudalistic society that exists in America after the cataclysm, or whatever. He rescues fair maidens, protects his honor and dignity, rights wrongs, performs derring do, and makes an utter fool of his creator, Mr. Russell, in the process. Rarely have I seen more unrealistic situations, poor characterization, and downright dumb plotting.

The Day of Their Return, by Poul Anderson (Doubleday) [Reviewer, DAVID WEEMS] --

I have been a confirmed fan of Poul Anderson's, and an avid reader of his Future History series, even since I ran across one of his stories of the Polesotechnic League years ago in ANALOG. I have watched with extreme interest as one story after another has brought out and developed parts of the overall picture that he is painting with these linked stories. Most of these stories, it is true, have not been among his very best; however, all that I have read have been highly competent and very enjoyable.

(Cont. next page)

S.F. PARADE (Continued) --

The Day of Their Return is no exception. Thematically linked to the previous novels, The People of the Wind and The Rebel Worlds, this story is basically the portrayal of the life of a young man in a position of potential power, who has to decide whether or not to lead his people and his planet into a renewal of the rebellion against the Terran Empire that his relative, Hugh McCormac, has abortively led. To do this, he must determine for himself the validity of a prophet called Jaan, who declared himself to be the forerunner of an ancient people out of the planet's past--referred to as The Elders--who will return to aid the believers.

I personally found this to be a very enjoyable book, easy to read, and linked with enough of what I had read earlier to provide a firm foundation for appreciating the entry of several characters from earlier books. I have been given to understand that I would be less appreciative of the picture that Anderson paints of the planet Aeneas had I first read the Darkover novels to which Anderson himself makes reference. (I'd be more appreciative, by some lights.) Alas, I have not, but I will rectify that situation at the first opportunity. From even my limited knowledge, I can see that this is far from being one of Anderson's most original books. That, however, does not lessen the enjoyment that I got from it. On the enjoyment scale, I would give this one a seven; on the brilliancy scale, a five. I am looking forward to still more in this series, and recommend this to anyone who is seeking an enjoyable tale.

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FANTASY CLASSICS #'s 1-4 (Fantasy House, 6045 Vineland Ave., N. Hollywood, CA 91606; \$1.95 each) /Reviewer, MIKE SHOEMAKER/ --

Each publication in this series is 48 pages, measuring 8½" x 11", and is expensively printed on heavy slick paper between even heavier, slick cardboard covers. Each issue features a profuse number of interior illustrations, mostly black-and-white (which seems to be the major selling point for these publications, judging from reviews I have read). Personally, I find that with few exceptions the interiors are dreadful. Most of them are done in a comic-book style that is both artless and unreal.

The covers are another matter. The back half of the wraparound cover on #1, by John Pound, is excellent; but the front half has too much of the Gothic cliché to it. Phil Garis' cover on #2 is very fine, because of its use of light and dark contrasts and the sharp definition of objects. The Gerry Mooney cover on #3 is profoundly ugly in its garishness. John Pound returns in #4 to produce the best cover of the series. It is a truly wonderful painting which reminds me strongly of the best of Wesso's water-color covers in its use of soft dark colors.

The feature novelette for #1 is "The Terror" by Arthur Machen. This was a wise choice to inaugurate the series because "The Terror", besides being one of the great masterpieces of weird fiction, has been rather unavailable. (I should note, however, that Pinnacle Books has included it in a two-volume set of Machen's works that it has just published.) The English countryside during World War I is Machen's setting for a story whose terror is reinforced by the mystery-story technique of slowly unfolding the horror. I suppose that this story is not the literary prototype of the "animals rebelling against man" theme, but it certainly is the best ever done on that theme. Moreover, its religious overtones add to its literary merit without sounding like a sermon. The last two pages are filled out by "The Elixir of Life" by Richard Garnett, a thoroughly minor item that is too short to build any mood.

Contrary to the editor's introduction of it as ". . . the most literate rendering of the man-into-wolf theme in the English language", Clemence Housman's "Werewolf" (in #2) is painfully awkward in its writing, so much so as to be nearly unreadable. Take, for example, the first sentence: "The great farm hall was ablaze with the fire-light and noisy with laughter and talk and many-sounding  
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S.F. PARADE (Continued) --

work." The other feature item in #2 is "The Diamond Lens" by Fitz-James O'Brien, the justly famous story which pioneered the microscopic-world idea that was later so crudely exploited by Cummings' "The Girl in the Golden Atom". The rest of this issue is filled out with stories which must have been considered minor hackwork fillers even when they first appeared. You will marvel over the fact that they have been reprinted.

The series continues on its downhill course with #3, which is almost entirely devoted to an old pulp adventure, "The Obsidian Ape" by Robert Neal Leath. This is a lost-race story after the fashion of Haggard and Burroughs, but it is so crudely written and plotted as to be infinitely inferior to the work of these two masters. There is also in #3 one of Lord Dunsany's superb, clever little fables, "The True History of the Hare and the Tortoise".

In #4 the series takes a turn for the better by the publication of "Ancient Sorceries" by Algernon Blackwood, the best of Blackwood's series of stories about John Silence, a psychic detective. In this one, however, John Silence does not play an active role--which is probably for the best since it moves the story out of the clichéd pulp-hero category back into the realm of artful horror stories of mood--a realm more aptly suited to Blackwood. Blackwood's ability to create an atmosphere of supernatural horror without inducing disbelief in the reader is at its height in this story. From his description of the decrepit French town to his use of cats (certain to make cat-lovers uneasy), Blackwood builds his atmosphere by piling up little details, each presented at just the right moment.

Are any of these publications worth getting? Not at \$1.95! If the art were top-notch, this series might be worthwhile; but the art is mostly amateurish, and the good pieces of fiction are all readily available elsewhere.

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The Glory Game, by Keith Laumer (Popular Library) [Reviewer, DON D'AMMASSA] --

There was a time when I thought Keith Laumer could not write a bad book. No longer. The Glory Game is so bad, it rivals the works of Robert Welch and John Stormer. It isn't so much that I disagree with the politics of this interstellar version of the war in Vietnam--although I do--but that Laumer cheats. Even the staunchest liberal can enjoy William Buckley, because Buckley usually grants his opposition some humanity. Laumer sets up the alien Hukks as a paper tiger, completely without redeeming characteristics. Those who oppose war are "bleeding hearts", the equivalent of the U.S. anti-war movement. Laumer's hero is a red-blooded he-man, never faltering in his duty despite its effects on his career, never doubting his absolute correctness in every matter, perfectly willing to disobey the directives of his government for the "right". If Laumer had presented the conservative view of Vietnam fairly and with the honest intention of showing its preferability to the "mistaken" liberal view, he might have written a fine novel. By making the Hukks, the Softliners, and even the Hardliners such exaggerated, distorted parodies of their counterparts in our world, he committed an intellectual dishonesty that he may never outlive. His casual decision that survival of the fittest justifies human domination and absorption of alien races lends great credence to Sturgeon's contention that many of Laumer's aliens are just "little green niggers". It is very sad to see a first-class writer allow his stories to become propaganda vehicles. Particularly so when he even distorts his imagery. For example, there is an obvious equivalent of the Gulf of Tonkin incident, but Laumer conveniently overlooks the fact that, in our world, the government has finally admitted that the U.S. ships involved never were fired on in the first place. But they are in The Glory Game, because the Hukks must be shown to be evil.

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S.F. PARADE (Continued) --

The Probability Man, by Brian Ball (DAW Books) /Reviewer, DON D'AMMASSA/

Brian Ball returns to the universe of the Frames, and deals specifically with their nature in his first book for DAW. The Frames are gigantic reconstructions of Earth's early societies, peopled with bored humans who allow a primitive personality to be implanted over their own. Spingarn is a Frame Director, who has programmed himself into every known Frame, thus making the universe's entire society dependent somehow on his existence. Ball never makes this point very clear--a weakness that pervades this entire series. Spingarn has also somehow reactivated the supposedly dormant Frames on the planet Talisker, where the technique was first developed. Additionally, he has introduced random cell growth into that planet's culture, and humans transported there undergo radical physical changes. The highest official in the Frames hierarchy goes to Talisker to discover what is going on, and is transformed into a horrible snakelike creature. He returns, captures Spingarn--who has now lost his original personality and memory completely--and sends him to Talisker to straighten things out. Much of the setting and concept of this novel is excellent, but Ball leaves too much unexplained. The robot Horace can intercede at some times, but not at others, and there is no detectible pattern. Spingarn and his companions are rescued by more deus ex machinas than it would be profitable to list. Eventually he encounters yet another extra-universal alien, destroys a bevy of non-corporal monsters who feed on human brains, and escapes, only to be forced to return to Talisker once more. Ball may yet do more with this series, which is well conceived, but poorly executed.

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Rendezvous with Rama, by Arthur C. Clarke (Harcourt Brace Jovanovich) /Reviewer, DAVID WEEMS/ --

I have been wondering for some time whether or not the quality of Clarke's work might not fall off as it has with some other noted science fiction authors lately. This book is a magnificent answer: it most definitely has not!

The subject of this novel is a familiar one to just about all science fiction readers: the first contact with the culture of an alien race. In this case it takes the shape of an enormous artifact hurtling into the solar system from deep space, which turns out to be a cylindrical, completely enclosed world. A very competent space crew is diverted to investigate, and they find at first what appears to be a dead ship of enormous magnitude, with no visible means of propulsion. Its deadness is not total, though. As it nears the sun, and warms up, it begins to come alive. The book rolls on from this point in magnificent fashion, heading into territory that begins to look very familiar at numerous points, only to have Clarke take a tangent that previous authors missed. The ending sections take a beautiful twist off the course of previous "first contact" books, and as if that were not enough, Clarke saves the biggest twister in the whole book for the last sentence. Do not, however, read the ending first. Read it all the way through the way you're supposed to, and stay alert. He leaves clues lying carefully disguised all through the book.

Of all the potential Hugo nominees for this coming worldcon that I have had the opportunity to read so far, this one is currently tops on my list. I am not sure that Clarke has written anything that is any better than this, and his merely good work is better than about ninety percent of what is written in the name of science fiction. On both scales, brilliancy and enjoyability, I rate this one a solid nine. Put it on your "must reading" list.

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Quickies:

Epicenter, by Basil Jackson (Berkley Books) /Reviewer, DON D'AMMASSA/ -- Basil Jackson, a writer of considerable talent, had probably not read Lester del Rey's  
 (Over)

S.F. PARADE (Continued) --

Nerves when he wrote this novel of an accident at a nuclear laboratory that results in the virtual destruction of Toronto (luckily after Torcon 2). Jackson centers the action in the stricken areas rather than within the plant itself. Although Jackson is doubtless more up to date, and is every bit del Rey's equal in writing ability, Epicenter just doesn't have the flair that the earlier novel did.

The Ginger Star, by Leigh Brackett (Ballantine Books) [Reviewer, DON D'AMMASSA] -- In one of his more perceptive moments, Lester del Rey described Leigh Brackett as a blend of Edgar Rice Burroughs with A. Merritt; the comparison is extremely apt. Brackett combines the story-telling ability of Burroughs with the lyrical prose of Merritt, and writes science fiction stories that exude an aura of fantasy. In almost every case where this hybridization of the two fields succeeds, the book in question was written by Leigh Brackett. Eric John Stark appears here in a new incarnation, wandering about on the planet Skaith rather than Sinharat. The settings are colorful, the plot fast-moving, the characters well-drawn, and the writing itself impeccable. My only qualm is that Stark rarely escapes through his own effort, but generally because he is rescued by one force or another, usually for their own purposes.

Planet Probability, by Brian Ball (DAW Books) [Reviewer, DON D'AMMASSA] -- This is a direct sequel to Ball's earlier DAW Book, The Probability Man. Mankind spends all of its time re-enacting ancient battles in the Frames, erected on each and every planet in the galaxy. But on Talisker, an alien from another universe is experimenting with human beings, and has altered the Frames for its own purposes. Two humans are sent to Talisker to discover the fate of Spingarn, the Probability Man, who was sent to straighten things out. They are accompanied by Horace the robot. On Talisker, they find that the alien is causing humans to devolve into dinosaurs, sabre tooth tigers, cave men, ape men, and even trilobites. If you can swallow that, the story is moderately entertaining and immensely colorful. Spingarn is ultimately rescued and the alien thwarted. The high point of the book, however, is the Kelly Freas cover.

Swordships of Scorpio, by Alan Burt Akers (DAW Books) [Reviewer, DAVID STEVER] -- Once again, the representative of Kregenese ZPG cuts his way through the population of the planet, heading for his beloved Delia of the Blue Mountains. In this volume we never meet Delia, but we do meet a new race of Kregenese, the Lizard people. Dray Prescott, as is par for the course, takes two steps backward for every one he takes forward, and so the series plods onward. If only we could find out what the damned Star Lords are dragging him about for! Philip José Farmer, in much the same situation in his Riverworld series, at least let us meet the people who are making everyone dance; Scorpio is unrelenting swords and gore. Skip this, the fourth, and pick up the fifth, if you must, with its map of Kregen.

Tomorrow Plus X, by Wilson Tucker (Avon Books) [Reviewer, DAVID STEVER] -- With new editions of the Long, Loud Silence and The Time Masters about in the land, I decided to find some of Bob Tucker's other old titles which haven't been revised and brought up to date. TPX is a sequel to TTM, but it can stand alone as a fine book. A radical-right organization has been gaining support in America for a few years, and suddenly, leaders of the group begin to be killed in massive and powerful explosions in the Central States. A bomb squad policeman, unable to come up with anything (other than that the explosions were really powerful implosions), is forced to resign, and he then links minds (literally) with Gilbert Nash, a mysterious stranger, to help find the answer. Everyone thinks it might be a time machine, but no one has built one yet--and there's no getting to the bottom until an unexploded bomb is found in a field, and a chain reaction of events picks up the policeman and shows him a strange and terrifying sight--the future as it is to be. Recommended, both for reading, and for reissuing by Bob Tucker.



## THE MYSTERY NOOK

SPECIAL REVIEW: "New Mystery Magazine Disappoints", by MIKE BLAKE -- A review of CHARLIE CHAN MYSTERY MAGAZINE, published by Leo Margulies. Volume I, Number 2: The Silent Corpse, by Robert Hart Davis.

To be a fan of Charlie Chan, one must decide which Charlie Chan he is a fan of. The original Charlie Chan, hero of six murder mysteries written between 1925 and 1932 by Earl Derr Biggers, is in many respects a more complex and less sympathetic character than the one played by various actors (none of them Oriental) in approximately 40 motion pictures. He works alone, without any Number One Sons, pratfalling stereotyped black chauffers, or tough but dense police lieutenants. And he is a silently sorrowful witness to the rape of the pristine Honolulu he loves by selfish business interests, as well as the "Americanization" of the ancient Chinese customs he has taught his children in the conformity of the public school system. These things can never be seen in the always-smiling, always-polite Charlie Chan of the movies, which is why I have a preference for the novels, dated as they might be.

So it was with some anticipation that I awaited the publication of CHARLIE CHAN MYSTERY MAGAZINE when it was announced. I hoped the publisher would be able to find a writer who knew and respected the integrity of the character. The first issue was a victim of spotty distribution, and was unavailable in my area. Finally, however, I was able to locate a copy of the second issue when it was released.

I don't think I can adequately describe my disappointment.

Mr. Margulies has decided, unfortunately, to have the lead novel each issue featuring the title character written by "Robert Hart Davis", whom you may remember as the author of the stories that appeared in The Man from U.N.C.L.E. magazine Margulies published in the latter half of the sixties. Well, his writing has not improved in the hiatus. After reading The Silent Corpse, I have come to the conclusion that Mr. Davis is one of the most inept writers ever to attempt a murder mystery.

Take, for instance, the setting of the story: Charlie Chan is the guest of a wealthy Honolulu family at their mansion located on an isolated point on the Hawaiian coast. Suddenly all contact with the outside world is cut off by a hurricane, and someone starts making attempts on the life of Chan and members of the well-to-do Burdon family. How many times have you read this plot in mysteries? Dozens of times, right? Well, this time it certainly is handled differently, since in order to make this story possible Davis has somehow managed to magically transfer the Hawaiian Islands thousands of miles from their proper location in the Pacific to the Caribbean Sea. This is implicitly stated when the author makes it clear that "Chan had lived through his share of early autumnal hurricanes. They were a part of the Island way of life." Since the Caribbean is the only place in the world where hurricanes form, it is obvious that this is where the Hawaiian Islands must now be located. When this catastrophic topographical phenomenon occurred is not known. There is a meteorologically identical type of storm like the hurricane that happens in the Pacific in early autumn, but it is called a typhoon. Typhoons, however, are limited to the far western Pacific. As hurricanes are fomented in the Caribbean, so typhoons begin in the China Sea, in both cases moving into the adjacent oceans only if conditions are right. As far as I am able to determine, no typhoon has ever reached an island farther east than Japan. For a typhoon to survive the several thousand miles separating Hawaii from Japan seems as likely as a hurricane suddenly hitting the west coast of England. It took me two minutes with an encyclopedia to discover these facts. Would that the author of the story had spent that much time on research!

As if glaring factual errors weren't bad enough, Davis has done a thorough demolition job on the character of Charlie Chan. However, one can expect nothing but the worst after seeing the reknowned Chinese detective referred to on page

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THE MYSTERY NOOK (Continued) --

nine as a "native Hawaiian". The author's idea of characterization is to have his hero lapse "into the pidgin English that had once been his trademark". Any reader of the original novels knows that while Charlie Chan may have had a highly individualistic manner of using words, he did not have an accent (of any proportions), and never used anything that could be described as "pidgin English". Earl Derr Biggers never had his creation utter an abomination like "Cholly so solly". I winced painfully when I read that bit of dialogue. Other than these momentary lapses (of taste on the part of the author), the character is absolutely colorless. In speech, thought, and action he might as well be Mike Shayne or the Men from U.N.C.L.E.

After having failed in both setting and characterization, one might hope the author's saving grace was in his plotting. However, this is the area in which Davis has some of his most serious problems. If you can accept a sixty-year-old spinster surviving the aforementioned hurricane, after being shoved out the window, by crouching behind a decorative column on the porch roof, you might not have too much trouble believing the rest of the plot. But a family that has made millions in financial speculation being stupid enough to build a shooting range in their basement with an entrance on the target end of the gallery is too much for my suspension of disbelief. As for deducing the identity of the killer, there will be no challenge for even the densest of readers, since the murderer's alibi is thinner than tissue paper, and has to be the most implausible I've come across in my mystery-reading career.

I can only wonder who has been writing to Leo Margulies when he says reader response has been "most gratifying". As one reader, my response is that I am not gratified by what he is doing to Charlie Chan. He deserves better than the hackwork in this reincarnation of the hero pulp magazine.

Even Lester Dent did it better.

Quickie Book Reviews:

Assignment Amazon Queen, by Edward S. Aarons (Gold Medal) /Reviewer, DON D'AMMASSA/ -- This is the 37th Sam Durell spy thriller to appear, and Aarons is starting to repeat himself. There's an international conspiracy to blackmail the world's governments because someone knows how to extinguish all life on Earth and they're afraid he'll do it. Sam Durell and a typically luscious lady wander around in the Brazilian jungles uncovering and foiling the plot. This is a routine book with routine thrills, but once you've read one Durell book, you've read enough. Thirty-seven of them is a bit much.

Every Little Crook and Nanny, by Evan Hunter (Doubleday; '72) /Reviewer, SHEILA D'AMMASSA/ -- Carmine Ganucci is known to his neighbors as a retired soft drink salesman. He is really a power in the highest circles of organized crime. So when his son is kidnapped while Carmine and his wife are in Italy, there is a great deal of panic and confusion as his employees try to raise the ransom money and get the kid back before his father gets home. Since not all the employees are entirely honest, and since there are other deals of varying legality going on at the same time, the plot is somewhat confused (to say nothing of the reader) by double-crosses, missed connections, and extra bundles of money. The result is hilarious. Hunter also writes the 87th Precinct books under the name of Ed McBain.

Epitaph for a Lobbyist, by R.B. Dominic (Doubleday, '74) /Reviewer, SHEILA D'AMMASSA/ -- Do you remember Dita Beard? She was the ITT lobbyist who wrote a memo to her bosses which implied chicanery in high places; when the memo was leaked to the press, she disappeared for several days, then reappeared in a Denver hospital. Dominic has taken this basic situation, and turned it into a murder story. The plot is okay, but the characters are mostly uninteresting, and the book lacks atmosphere; the sense of power and glamour we've come to expect from writers like Drury and Knebel isn't here. A competent book, but rather dull.

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## THE FOREIGN SCENE

THE BRITISH FANTASY SOCIETY (B.F.S.) --

We looked through the huge pile of material we received when we joined this excellent organization at the beginning of 1974, but no place did we find a concise and complete statement of the Society's goals. Suffice it to say that they are the Fantasy-oriented equivalent of the British S.F. Assoc. (B.S.F.A.), only (at the moment, at least) much more active (if B.S.F.A. still exists, i.e.....).

Dues are £1.00 (\$3 U.S.), payable to B.F.S. Secretary: Sandra Sutton, 194 Station Rd., King's Heath, Birmingham B14 7TE, England. Recently-Elected officers are: President, Keith Walker (2 Daisy Bank, Quernmore, Lancaster, U.K.); Vice-President, David Sutton (same as Secretary's); Secretary/Treasurer, Sandra Sutton (address above); Publicity Officer, John Martin (101 Eskdale, Tanhouse 5, Skelmersdale, Lancs., U.K.); Committee Members, Brian Mooney (23 Kinross Rd., Leamington Spa, Warwicks, U.K.) & Steve Jones (33 Wren House, Tachbrook Estate, London SW1V 3QD, U.K.).

Among the activities, services, and publications of the Society are the following: Book Library (run by David Riley, 4 Lodge St., Accrington, Lancs. BB5 6EQ, U.K.; a lending library for members, who are supposed to get a list of books in library when they join (we didn't....)); Fanzine Library (run by Rosemary Pardoe, 24 Othello Close, Hartford, Huntingdon PE18 7SU, U.K.; a lending library, with a regular newsletter (which we'll review below)); a monthly Bulletin (currently in between editors, so we can't list the current ed. here); a journal, DARK HORIZONS (ed. Darroll Pardoe, same address as Rosemary, above); Whirlpool ("the Amateur Writer's Critical Circle", run by Keith Walker (address above); amateur authors' stories are circulated, round-robin fashion, for commentary/criticism); The August Derleth Fantasy Award (the Society's "own special award given annually to a novel, short story, cinematic production and comic first published or released in the year"; handled by Dave Sellars (80 Herne Hill, London SE24, U.K.); see SOTWJ #45 for list of most recent awards).

Publications received since joining:

THE BRITISH FANTASY SOCIETY BULLETIN -- #30 (Nov. '73; ed. David Sutton, address above; monthly; mimeo; 8 1/4" x 11 3/4"): 5 pp. / 1974 Election of Officers Nomination Form; Editorial; LoC from Steve Jones; 1974 August Derleth Fantasy Award Interim Listing (of eligible items); section on 1974 Election nominations; list of new members (hope they'll eventually publish a complete membership roster); report on BFS Fantasy Fayre; Book News; classified ads (free to members). ## #31 (Dec. '73): 10 pp.; Editorial; Society Business (re elections, publications, etc.); list of SF/Fantasy Bookdealers & Shops; misc. news; New Books section; LoC's; ads; new members; miscellany (is the Fantasy Fayre 'zine out yet?). ## #32 (Jan. '74): 7 pp. / 1974 Election of Officers Voting Form; Editorial; news (see where F.F. is out--was supposed to be encl. with #32, but ours wasn't....); Society business (re elections, etc.); more Bookdealers; LoC's; New Books & Films; Tynescon '74 announcement. ## #33 (Feb. '74): 6 pp.; Editorial; Society business; LoC; ads; ADFA eligibility list; Fantasy News. ## #34 (Mar. '74): 4 pp. / B.F.S. Statement of Income & Expenditure for year ended 28/2/74 (membership year runs Mar.-Feb.), B.F.S. Questionnaire; Editorial notes; Election results; LoC's; ads; another bookdealer; Fantasy News. #### A very useful/information publication; hope new ed. keeps up the good work....

THE BRITISH FANTASY SOCIETY FANZINE LIBRARY NEWSLETTER -- #7 (R.Pardoe, address above; mimeo & 8 1/4" x 11 3/4" (offset & 6" x 8 1/4" from #8 on)): 3 pp.; Library Rules; new list of Library contents. ## #8 (Jan. '74): 4 pp.; Editorial; additions to Library; Fanzine Reviews. ## #9 (Apr. '74): 4 pp.; Additions to Library; Fanzine Reviews; Editor's notes. #### Fanzine reviews are well done. (Quarterly)

DARK HORIZONS -- #7 (Dec. '73; quarterly; D.Pardoe (address above); offset; 6 1/2" x 8"): 28 pp. / covers (fc by Jim Pitts; bc by Steve Jones); Editorial by David Sutton; "Derleth as I Knew Him" (Pt. I), by Ramsey Campbell; short story by Glen Symonds; Film Review by Adrian Cole; Book Reviews by Thelma Collins, Brian Mooney, Ian Covell, Adrian Cole, David Sutton; Record Review by David Sutton; Lettercolumn;

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THE FOREIGN SCENE (Continued) --

Comics column by Ramsey Campbell; short story by David Lloyd. ## #8 (Apr. '74; 6" x 8 $\frac{1}{4}$ ") : 24 pp., incl. cover (from Dieterlin's Architectura); "Derleth as I Knew Him" (Pt. II), by Ramsey Campbell; "The Cosmic in Fiction", by Dave Sutton; short story by Gordon Larkin; Book Reviews, by Philip Payne; Record Review, by Gordon Larkin; Film Review, by Dave Sutton; Comics Column, by Ramsey Campbell. #### Excellent publication; if you got nothing else for your B.F.S. membership but DARK HORIZONS, it would still be worth it; but.... (Any back-issues avail.?)

THE SCIENCE FICTION FOUNDATION --

Brief outline of Foundation's function (from THE ADMINISTRATOR'S INTERIM REPORT AND INFORMATION BULLETIN, Jan. '73: 10 pp.; offset; ed. by Peter Nicholls; Introduction to Foundation; Report on Activities of 1972; Important Administrative Decisions of 1972; section on General Administration of the Foundation; 8 $\frac{1}{2}$ " x 11 3/4"):

"The Science Fiction Foundation is an organization of a kind unique in the United Kingdom, and, we believe, the entire world. We exist under the sheltering umbrella of a tertiary educational establishment, the North East London Polytechnic, and the Administrator . . . is a faculty member of the Polytechnic. . . .

"The Foundation is officially attached to the Department of Applied Philosophy at the Barking Precinct of the Polytechnic; its affairs are directed by a Management Committee of Twelve, of whom five have no other connection with the Polytechnic. These include four distinguished science fiction writers, Messrs. James Blish, John Brunner, Kenneth Bulmer and Christopher Priest. The fifth is our Executive Vice-President, Mr. George Hay, also an occasional writer of science fiction, but perhaps better known as an anthologist and broadcaster on science fiction and environmental topics.

"Our Patron is Mr. Arthur C. Clarke, who is resident in Ceylon, and therefore unable to take part in the day-to-day running of the Foundation; he lends us his moral support as the senior and most famous of all living English science fiction writers. The President of the Foundation is Dr. George Brosan, the Director of the Polytechnic. The remaining six members are academics from the Departments of Applied Philosophy, Chemistry and Architecture, the Polytechnic Librarian and the Polytechnic Director of Communications.

"The purposes of the Science Fiction Foundation can be summarised as: (1) To promote science fiction as a hitherto undervalued branch of literature, a literature that amply rewards the attention of anybody who cares about the future. (2) To provide research facilities for anybody wishing to study science fiction, and to disseminate information about the field. (3) To investigate the usefulness of science fiction in education."

The Foundation was founded in Oct. '70. It supplies guest lecturers, participates in radio broadcasts, sponsors travelling Book Exhibitions, and a SF film festival, now owns the B.S.F.A. book and magazine collection, is gathering a fanzine collection, has acquired the Flat Earth papers, publishes a journal (see below), etc.

FOUNDATION: The Review of Science Fiction (Quarterly; ed. Peter Nicholls; offset; 5 3/4" x 8 1/4"; 4/£2 U.K.; \$6/yr. U.S. & Canada (surface); \$10/yr. U.S. & Canada (airmail); elsewhere, £2.30/yr. (surface); 50p ea.; from: The Science Fiction Foundation, North East London Polytechnic, Longbridge Rd., Essex RM8 2AS, England) -- #5 (Jan. '74): 120 pp. / covers; Editorial; "Science Fiction and the Mainstream" (Pt. II: The Great Tradition of Proto Science Fiction", by Peter Nicholls; "The Profession of Science Fiction" (VI: Entertainment, Instruction, or Both?), by Poul Anderson; "Rite de Passage: A Reading of Rogue Moon", by David Ketterer; "SF Idea Capsules for Art Students", by Ian Watson; "For the Record: What the Science Fiction Foundation is All About", by George Hay; Book Reviews by Philip Strick, Peter Nicholls, David I. Masson, Tom Shippey, Brian M. Stableford, Christopher Priest, Josephine Saxton, Tony Sudbery, George Hay, John Brunner, Malcolm Edwards, Brian W. Aldiss; listing of Books Received; ads. ## Sort of a non-fiction prozine, with all sorts of goodies (incl. some excellent reviews). Highly recommended. (Any back-issues?)

Operational Procedures  
Supervised by  
Richard Delap

Only four magazines this month, with the average quality not high enough to cause much excitement among fans. There are, however, some notable odds and ends. ANALOG features a Robert Heinlein "guest editorial" (a transcript of a speech delivered at Annapolis in 1973) that is as controversial, and as slanted, as one would expect--but is well worth reading. F&SF has a fine book review column by Harlan Ellison (whose talents as SF critic are notable for their directness, and seem to improve as Ellison finds less and less reason to be charitable to writers who don't deserve much charity--which is not to say I always agree with him, which I certainly do not, but that I am finding his opinions more and more valuable).

The newer writers who began their careers in the late '60's and early '70's are just now beginning to work up a real head of steam, and the editors are giving their work more prominence as the old pros turn out less and less work for the magazines. A new golden age? Wow, you don't suppose....

FANTASTIC -- January:

Short Novel:

The Earth of Nenkunal -- Howard L. Myers.

There is the suggestion that the land of Nenkunal lies somewhere in the distant past of Earth, a time when the world was familiar with the laws of magic. At the time of the story, however, magic is dying out as the world is influenced by the mysterious "They Who Own All" from the stars and their oppressive army of god-warriors. The background is intriguing, but against it Myers is sadly content to fashion an ordinary swords-and-sorcery tale about three people who set out on a quest that represents the last magical flourishes of a changing world. The main character, Basdon the Bloodshot, hasn't much to distinguish him from a dozen other swordsmen; but his companions, the young girl Eanna and, especially, the old magician Jonker, continually show flashes of character that make the reader wish they weren't so hampered by the routine twists of a lacklustre plot. With all its underlying potential, the story is never more than run-of-the-mill... such a shame.

Novelette:

...And Another World Above -- Ted White.

The first of a proposed new series, this story begins the adventures of Long Hand, a boy hovering on the brink of manhood in a dusty, deserty world of nomadic tribes. Following three black-clad strangers to an isolated mesa, Long Hand finds himself transported by means of the strangers' magic (science?) to a different world, one of green grass, crowds of people, and laws, both natural and social, completely new to him. There are a few nice touches here and there--the old woman, Mother Wittles, and the awesome "other world" which hovers beyond the sky--but they are fatally diminished by plot inconsistencies, a contrived romantic interlude which serves as a poor conclusion, and by White's usual clumsy writing that flows like molasses on an uphill slope. Pedestrian stuff.

Short Stories:

Alien -- David R. Bunch.

The "jolly-pumpkin-face-man-not-around" tries his best to reach out and touch the people about him with his willingness to help, to share and thereby lighten the burdens of life. But the fast-paced, greedy, polluted world rejects him and hounds him into defeat. Despite the humor and some fine writing, Bunch's story is never able to overcome the simplistic moralizing tone which gives it a flat and patronizing voice. Fair.

She-Bear -- Janet Fox.

The witch-girl, Arcana, returns in another tale of magic and mayhem, but this time Fox has opted for a definite swords-and-sorcery vein of story-telling, and

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DISSECTING THE HEART OF THE MATTER (Continued) --

the result is grist for a very common mill. There are the usual sword battles (the fact that we have a heroine rather than a hero makes no difference at all) and a climactic but rather hasty fight with a giant troll, plus a touch of ho-hum romance--in short, stock-in-trade fiction indistinguishable from hundreds of similar stories. Mediocre.

The Interview -- J.J. Russ.

Russ takes the psychological horrors of the corporation pecking order as the base for a social-comment that comes about twenty years too late to be noted for originality. The protagonist's interview will decide whether he will achieve a promotion or be cast aside as human "trash", but the ruling corporation which seems to control everyone's fate is here a symbol that through years of overuse has lost its power to terrorize (read your newspapers lately?). White calls it "Kafkaesque" I call it Kafka in a Gray Flannel Suit, and the suit is looking very worn around the cuffs. Fair.

Network -- Barry N. Malzberg.

Two young men from the "Institute" drive into Network, a decimated area filled with death and decay, an area the tourists visit for thrills and the Institute men visit for educational purposes (or so they say). There are ugly things in Network, and the two men find themselves smack in the middle of this ugliness. The point Malzberg makes is that the men are fascinated and drawn deep into the foulness by their own stupidity and uncontrolled lust for excitement, a point made doubly vicious by the concluding irony, sharp and nasty as a scorpion sting. Well done.

Heartburn in Heaven -- Susan Doenim.

This story consists of a series of notes written by a man who awakens in a tunnel of stainless steel panels. His tunnel connects with other similar tunnels where other people reside, all of them tied inextricably to one duty--polish the steel and be rewarded with a daily ration of food. What is this place--heaven, hell, neither? Doenim's symbolism is vague, if symbolism it is. She obviously doesn't expect to be taken literally, since she leaves logic loopholes big enough to shove an elephant through. Make of it what you will. As for me, I find it unsatisfying and much too leaden.

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ANALOG -- January:

## Serial:

The Sins of the Fathers (conclusion) -- Stanley Schmidt.

## Novelette:

The Horus Errand -- William E. Cochrane.

Once again it's that ANALOG staple, telepathy, here welded to the police-procedure story for a sometimes interesting but ultimately long-winded and slow-moving mystery. Wynn Stanford is an Officer/Telepath assigned to the "reincarnation of Mr. Hertigen-Ames, an old man on his deathbed who has made legal arrangement for mind-transfer to a baby scheduled for birth as he dies. Stanford is on hand to keep the reincarnate from going mad with the shock of reviving in a new-formed and largely uncontrollable body. The mother delivers late, however, and the race is on to find and retrieve Hertigen-Ames' wandering mind, which must lodge in a new brain or be lost for good. Cochrane's characters have presence, and help pull the reader through some overlong stretches of repetitious actions and dialogue. But in the end the story underplays both its background color and the basic suspense ploy too much, with the resulting pace far too slow to keep the reader from skimming passage in a desperate attempt to improve on the author's work himself. The editor should have done some cutting on this one; it would have helped.

## Short Stories:

The Astounding Dr. Amizov -- R.F. DeBaun.

Here's a good-hearted (if rather cautious) and mildly amusing spoof that takes nothing, including itself, seriously enough to be in any way offensive--except perhaps to a small Asimov cognesceti who might perhaps rail at its simplemindedness. The famed author of the "Crustacean Trilogy" turns out to be a group of clones, who

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DISSECTING THE HEART OF THE MATTER (Continued) --

together manage to keep up the prolific public image, and in the end prove that making it big means getting shafted in like return. Okay of kind.

The Hole Man -- Larry Niven.

An expedition to Mars makes a fantastic discovery--an alien base filled with still-running machinery and a variety of artifacts. One man dedicates himself to proving that the whole system is a control mechanism built around a "quantum black hole", and his efforts to prove his theory end with a case of murder--or it is murder? This is one of Niven's quiet and dryly humorous little dramas, the kind of writing that goes flat in his novels but works reasonably well at short length.

Science:

Space Probe from Epsilon Bobtis? -- Duncan Lunan.

Feature /Guest Editorial/:

Channel Markers -- Robert A. Heinlein.

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FANTASY AND SCIENCE FICTION -- January:

Novelettes:

The Witch and the Well -- Phyllis Eisenstein.

The third episode of the series about Alaric, a young wandering minstrel with the secret power of teleportation, brings Alaric to a small and superstitious village where his songs are welcome but his curiosity and humanitarian leanings get him into hot water. When he attempts to rescue the "witch" boarded up in the village's dry well, he is accused of witchcraft himself and doomed to die. As with the previous stories, Eisenstein writes with an appealing romantic touch that overcomes the episodic nature of what is obviously going to be a novel. Novels presented as individual stories are often clumsy when broken up in this manner, and it is to the author's credit that she keeps redundancy to a minimum. Entertaining.

The Centauri Device -- M. John Harrison.

"John Truck was a loser, and losers survive on luck." The bitter irony of that statement very neatly capsulizes the intense crossbreeding of humor and pathos in this story of Captain Truck's adventures. Truck's pleasures are simple ones, as befits a "loser", and the tragedies he is forced to endure when political factions--an absurdist but viably representative extension of the Israeli-Arab conflict 500 years into the future--seek to use him, are no less tragic for the subtle humor Harrison weaves around them. Truck is the only man who can unlock the secret of the mysterious Centauri device, a superweapon left behind after the Centaurans committed race suicide, and his reluctance to help either political side starts a chain of brutalities and murder. It all sounds very grim in synopsis, but in fact, even despite a rather too preachy climax, it is often humorous and always high-spirited, a sort of popcorn Samuel Delany. Very well done.

The Beautiful One -- Keith Roberts.

In this sequel to "The God House" (New Worlds Quarterly #1), Roberts continues the saga of a barbaric future where people live in tribal groups loosely bound by worship of the regional god. Mata, the headstrong and unpleasant heroine of the first tale, returns here as "the Reborn", once again ruling her people with determination but longing inside for her lost love, the great Corn Lord. The primary requirement of the God seems only to be that he have a satisfactorily large sexual endowment, and the molding of a young shepherd to fit the God role becomes melodramatic license once more stretched too thin to be very convincing. As much as I admire the setting of these stories, I very much dislike the contrived plotting and stylistic extravagance that repeatedly crowd out the better aspects. Roberts will, I suppose, eventually produce a novel from these works; it won't, however, be one I will want to read.

Short Stories:

The Sled -- Paul Darcy Boles.

A middle-aged man, somewhat bored by his houseful of party guests and disheartened by the endless miasma of adult attitudes and problems, finds an old-fashioned sled on his back porch and cannot resist a chance to ride over the

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DISSECTING THE HEART OF THE MATTER (Continued) --

new-fallen snow. The ride turns into a nostalgia-trip of childhood scenes and senses, a ride Boles explains with a vague SF slant that never holds the importance or care devoted to the nostalgia. Purists may scoff, but I think Boles was never after much more than a mood piece, and in this he has succeeded well enough. Okay of kind.

A Board in the Other Direction -- Ruth Berman.

Iskander is one day suddenly removed from the home for the aged where he is whiling away his senile final years. He was once a great Chess champion and now, with the help of dangerous but mentally rejuvenating drugs, he is conscripted to play a game of four-dimensional Chess with an alien--a game on which the fate of our world rests. The familiar ploy of this story is given interest by Berman's brisk but subtle characterizations, and a graceful writing style that shows that this good writer is getting better all the time. Nice.

The Tigers of Hysteria Feed Only on Themselves -- Michael Bishop.

An old man, his stepson just returned from the Asian war, and a youthful Asian boy whom the stepson plans to adopt play out a strange game of watch-and-wait on an isolated southern farm. The Asian's tale of a werebeast is an oddly crude symbolism that Bishop uses as a takeoff for a mysterious series of murders in the area. While the plot surface is obvious, Bishop's underlying motive remains obscure. The characters are interesting, but by the end the character who most matters is reduced to a cipherous position of broad implications and no focus. What the story needs is suspense, and of that it is in very short supply.

The Initiation of Akasa -- Michael G. Coney.

The final episode in Coney's Finistelle trilogy recounts some very minor events in the adventures of Lackland, the stranded time-traveler who becomes a god to the little green natives of the village of Poli. The "initiation" of the title is a rite of passage ceremony for a young man who finds that making a friend of one from an enemy tribe is what saves his life. Lackland's actions are unimportant here, while the story makes a stab at tragedy (and misses) and is sorely lacking the slapstick humor that was apparent in earlier episodes. Fair.

Science:

The Eclipse and I -- Isaac Asimov.

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GALAXY -- January:

Serial:

Inverted World (part two) -- Christopher Priest.

Novella:

The Only War We've Got -- Joe Haldeman.

Confederation agent Otto McGavin is introduced as a tortured wreck of a human being, a condition thrust upon him for the role he must play in a political espionage drama on the planet Selva. His own personality is subordinated by a Personality Overlay of Ramos Guajana, a Selvan killer who figures predominately in the brutal and primitive clan politics of Selva. His job is to infiltrate the Selvan hierarchy in order to subvert the probability of a Selvan war with a neighboring planet. Haldeman's protagonists are more interesting than his villains, but they have constantly to battle with a plot which for all its superficial 23rd-Century overlay is blood-and-guts adrenalin-pumping pulp. The story picks up some steam near the end when Otto begins to feel some emotional rapport with his female companion and the entire cast is rounded up handily for a shoot-'em-up climax; but the small touches of cleverness are never quite enough to make up for the determined shallowness of the story's basic structure. Fair.

Novelette:

The Girl with a Symphony in Her Fingers -- Michael G. Coney.

Coney goes to a lot of concentrated effort to build a convincing background for this story, and things get a bit crowded before it plays out. First there is a social system with laws that group people into "Freemen" and "State Prisoners",

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DISSECTING THE HEART OF THE MATTER (Continued) --

the latter of whom are bonded into slavery to the former in punishment for criminal acts. Secondly there are the strange little animals called slithes, whose skins change color in an intricate chemical response to the emotions of whoever wears them. Last of all is the vaguely uncomfortable triangular relationship between three people whose interactions are molded by the social system and symbolically reflected in the luxury of the expensive slithes. Coney seems to be trying very hard to make this one work, but he is still plagued by a seeming inability to make his characters more than mouthpieces to hold together a plot that slides gradually into silliness. Fair.

Short Stories:Survival Course -- Neal Barrett, Jr.

Able Martin, napping in an escape capsule when the starship on which he's traveling is destroyed in midflight, is the only survivor of the catastrophe. But he's still in trouble, for the ship's computer (which survives in the capsule, Barrett unconvincingly explains in an analogy to "cellular identity") gauges his survival probability too low to continue life support. The question: will Martin be able to outwit computer logic and survive? Well, obviously, the options are limited, and Barrett doesn't have much luck at diverting the reader from those set limits. Routine.

Answer Came There None -- James White.

Peter and Jan, an aging married couple from Earth, have had several rejuvenation treatments to continue their job of searching the universe for life. All they've found, however, are remnants of long-dead civilizations. The situation is now grim--Earth is declining into a "philosophical acceptance of static realities", and their own marriage is a series of "lifeless, hopeless and petty arguments". The saddest part of all this is that the simple but still-valid drama of the plot is totally ravaged by White's clumsy lecturesome dialogue. As one of his own characters states, it is "one indication of approaching senility". This story isn't approaching. It's already there.

Calendars -- Fred Saberhagen.

Mr. Pandareus announces to his wife of a hundred years that he's decided it's time for him to die, having seen the best life has to offer, and self-assured that he deserves at last a "well-earned rest". But life's rat-race goes on, and extricating oneself from the intricate time-schedules of a world of eleven billion people can be difficult. Though not really a bad story, Saberhagen's tale very nearly confuses sentiment for satire and lacks a sharp edge to its cutting side. Fair.

Waves -- Jack B. Kerr.

The United Nations, having developed a series of supercomputers to link both great and small countries into one all-helpful network, apparently didn't give much thought to man's proven ability to combine selfish stupidity and a talent for outwitting even the best fail-safe system. And so, the world--as might be expected--strangles in its own sophisticated noose of technology. Kerr is merely repeating what has so often been said before, but he's not saying it with any wit or style that would distinguish him from the many others. Mediocre.

Meditation:Passages -- Joanna Russ.

Although not really a story, Russ has created here a very short piece on the way the human mind works out (or into) a fantasy, presented as an exchange of viewpoints with a window dummy during the Christmas season. It's a very strange item, a sort of adult perspective on childhood fantasy, but quite engaging and remarkably subtle.

\* \* \* \* \*

((The Jan.-Mar Quarterly Prozone Index still remains hung up by the fact that we've not received any GALAXY issues since Feb., and three queries on the status of our sub/long-term sub rates remain unanswered. ## A letter of complaint to VERTEX re their pasting of address labels directly on the front cover elicited a response to the effect that this policy will continue, as envelopes are too expensive.... --ed.))

ARGENTINA --

TINKUNAKU (TINK) (Mae Strelkov, CC 55, Jesus Maria, Cordoba, Argentina) -- A personalzine with a difference! These fascinating little magazines are virtually indescribable--Mae does things with hecto that we wouldn't have thought possible; she captures a poetic imagery in the delicately muted colors of her sweeping landscapes that evokes in us a feeling of timeless grandeur which verges on the metaphysical.... We have on hand 13 issues (she's also a prolific writer and publisher) which we've received in the past few months. We won't try to cover them individually, but will do what we can to describe their general makeup. ## The earlier issues were entirely in hecto, with Mae's wonderful artwork, interesting articles and tidbits of information on various aspects of misc. languages (with especial reference to Chinese; Mae is especially interested and knowledgeable in old languages and symbols, and her material will appear from time to time in TWJ (ref. her article in TWJ #82)), letters, commentary and responses to letters by Mae, misc. short articles, and the like. ## In January, 1974, a new, mimeographed TINKUN supplement, TONGZINE (TONG) was born, consisting of hecto covers plus LoC's and Mae's comments on same. While interesting, these lack the colorful character of the TINK's. (They do enable Mae to obtain a larger print run, but we miss the interior illos and Mae's hand-written commentaries and short articles, plus the language material; we hope that TINK will continue to appear in addition to the now more frequent TONG's.) ## TINK and TONG are available for LoC's and other material printed therein, and for trades; there are no subs. (We look forward to meeting Mae at DISCON II; the Mae Strelkov Fund was a success, so U.S. fans will finally be able to meet in person someone who, to judge from her letters and other writings, is a most interesting personality.)

CANADA --

THE JOURNAL (Paul Kowtiuk, Box 1286, Essex, Ontario NOR 1E0, Canada; monthly; offset (on newspaper); 11 $\frac{1}{4}$ " x 17"; 12/\$2 Canada & U.S.; elsewhere, 12/\$7 (we assume these are sent via airmail)) -- #7 (Mar '74): 20 pp. (backcover by Stephen Riley); misc. news re comics and comics fandom; lettercolumn; editorial; report on the NY ST Con (all photos); Rich Corben Interview (Pt. III); classified ads; numerous full- and part-page ads (mostly re comics). ## #8 (Apr. '74): 12 pp. (backcover by Leialoha); News; "NCB Hotline", by Stan Blair (an anti-mail fraud activity); editorial; lettercolumn; classified ads; misc. ads. ## #2 (May '74): 16 pp. (backcover by Lancaster); News; "NCB Hotline"; classified ads; Dave Lillard on misc. SF-related TV events; misc. ads. ##### The comics ad/newszine; recommended as such to anyone with an interest in the comics field.

UNITED KINGDOM --

CHECKPOINT (Darroll Pardoe, 24 Othello Close, Hartford, Huntingdon PE18 7SU, U.K.; offset; 8 1/4" x 5 7/8"; 10/50p; no schedule given) -- #47 (19/4/74): 4 pp.; report on Tynecon 74 (Doc Weir Award went to Malcolm Edwards for his work with VECTOR; BSFA's British SF Award went to Arthur C. Clarke for Rendezvous with Rama, with a special award to Brian Aldiss for Billion Year Spree; the British Fantasy Society's August Derleth Award went to: CONAN (comics), Legend of Hell House (films), Mike Moorcock's "Jade Man's Eyes" (short story), and Poul Anderson's Hrolf Kraki Saga (novel); winner's of Gollancz/SUNDAY TIMES SF Competition were published in SOTWJ #145; the Ken McIntyre Award was not presented this year); U.K. will bid for 1979 Worldcon; short fanzine reviews; convention calendar. ## #48 (6/5/74): 4 pp.; misc. news (Peter Weston wins TAFF, among other items); short fanzine reviews; an item of interest to someone who recently asked about London SF meetings in addition to those at the "Globe": there's another group which meets every Fri. night at the "Cock" at Euston Tower Parade. ## Invaluable for keeping up to date with UK SF events. (Note that Darroll replaced former editor Peter Roberts; for the record, unreviewed issues of P.R.-edited CHECKPOINT's on hand are: #41 (14/10/73; 6 pp. / ROMPA & Tynecon 2 flyers / Eric Bentcliffe's 2-pg. MI IV:3, / 2-pp. book reviews); #42 (27/10/73; 10 pp. / '74 TAFF Ballot); #43 (21/11/73; 8 pp. / Tynecon '74 flyer & 2-pg. MI IV:4); #44 (30/12/73; 6 pp. / 2-pg. MI IV:5 / 2-pp. book rev.).

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III. SUBJECT INDEX.

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/Reviewer's name is in brackets/

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Adams, Richard: Watership Down (Macmillan) /Don D'Ammassa/ 144:14  
 Akers, Alan Burt: Prince of Scorpio (DAW Books) /Don D'Ammassa/ 142:3  
 Ball, Brian: Sundog (Avon Books) /Don D'Ammassa/ 142:3  
 Biemiller, Carl L.: Follow the Whales (Doubleday) /Jim Goldfrank/ 142:4  
 Biggle, Lloyd, Jr.: Monument (Doubleday/SFBC) /Don D'Ammassa/ 144:14  
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 Chant, Joy: Red Moon and Black Mountain (Ballantine) /David Stever/ 141:4  
 Graham, Victoria: The Witchstone (Pyramid) /Jim Goldfrank/ 141:3-4  
 Heinlein, Robert A.: Time Enough for Love (Putnam/Berkley) /D'Ammassa/ 139:4  
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                                   Time Enough for Love (Putnam/Berkley) /D. Weems/ 144:14  
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 Hughes, Rodney: The Dragon Keepers (Popular Library) /Don D'Ammassa/ 141:3  
 Miles, Keith: Dragon's Tooth (Popular Library) /Don D'Ammassa/ 141:3  
 Prager, J. Simon: The Newman Factor (Dell) /Don D'Ammassa/ 142:3  
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Armstrong, Charlotte: Seven Seats to the Moon (Fawcett) /D.D'Ammassa/ 142:5  
 Boucher, Anthony: Case of the Seven Sneezes (Dell) /Don D'Ammassa/ 141:4

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 O'Donnell, Peter: Modesty Blaise (Fawcett) / David Stever 142:5  
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 Stevenson, Florence: The Curse of the Concullens (Signet) / M. Blake 141:4

## 2. Review Extracts (from the press) (bv Author).

## a. SF/Fantasy.

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 Bulgakov, Mikhail: Diaboliad and Other Stories (Indiana Univ. Press) / Paul Theroux 143:2  
 Frayn, Michael: A Very Private Life (Viking Press) / Joyce Warren 143:2  
 Hawkes, John: Lunar Landscapes (New Directions) / Webster Scott 143:2  
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 Garve, Andrew: The Lester Affair (Harper & Row) / Betty James 139:2  
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## 3. Books Received (by Publisher).

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