

DOLL'S HOUSE: Fanzine Reviews
by Doll Gilliland

RENO NEVADA (A.P.A. Earl & Jan Evers, 1406 Leavenworth St., San Francisco, Cal., 94109.) A one-shot celebrating the marriage of Jan Slavin and Earl Evers, with artwork by Alpajpuri. Earl's "My Last Trip to Reno" is a love letter of sorts, better than the traditional bridal album. Also, there is a scintillating poetry segment, thanks to Jan, Earl, and (who have we here!) Mike McInerney; and extended weirdsome "Notes from a Hollow Log". 23 pp.

ALGOL 16 (Andrew Porter, 55 Pineapple St., Apt. 3J, Brooklyn, NY, 11201. Con-tribs, LoC's, 75¢, 5/83, arranged trades.) Steranko cover, Flinchbaugh bacover, interior illos by Bodé, Delap, Fabian, Gilbert, Porter, etc., and a strange illo'd "Sing A-Long" by Jay Kinney.

The high point of the issue is Greg Benford on writing a book. There's Gian Paolo Cassato reporting on science fiction and fandom in Italy, at least to 1968, the date of this article. TV GUIDE and the cancellation of the Smothers Brothers is Ted White's topic. J.J. Pierce has at the devaluation of the underlying values of science fiction. The book review column by Dick Lupoff is well-done, as usual. Interesting LoColumn. 43 pp. It's a good ish, but there have been better.

LCCUS 70 (Charlie & Dena Brown, 2078 Anthony Ave., Bronx, NY, 10457. \$1.00.) The 2nd annual Art Issue. A frolicsome 31-page collection featuring Alicia Austin, George Barr, Grant Canfield, Derek Carter, James Shull, Jack Gaughan, Jim McLeod, Eddie Jones, Tim Kirk, Vincent DiFate, Mike Gilbert, Helmut Pesch, Steve Stiles, Bill Rotsler, Connie Faddis, Alpajpuri, Jeff Cochran, Howard Green, and Dany Frolich. Also, the LOCUS 1970 Index and distribution...34 pages, all told.

Particularly turned on by Austin, Barr, Gaughan, Canfield (would like his address. Help, somebody.), and Steve Stiles' computer. McLeod gets more impressive every time I see him; have the sneaking suspicion that it's reproduction problems as much as anything, and the Browns did right by him.

THE LEGAL RULES THREE (Jerry Lapidus, 54 Clearview Drive, Pittsford, NY, 14534. 10¢ or two 6¢ stamps.) Jerry does us all a service by presenting the minutes of the Heicon business meeting, followed by the current Worldcon rules, as altered by Heicon. 6 pp.

SFCOMMENTARY 17 (Bruce Gillespie, PO Box 245, Ararat, Victoria 3377, Australia. USAgent: Charlie Brown (See LOCUS, above.). This 40¢ or two ish on subs--18/83; LoC's, trades, reviews, art, articles.) John Bosnan is now in England, and how he got there makes an interesting tale. (I'm still wondering how he got to Dover after being detained in Ostende. Must have swum the channel.)

George Turner has stayed off of SF for nigh onto 12 months, and has just got back on the stuff, drawing from stock furnished by John Bangsund; come comments on Vonnegut's Slaughterhouse 5 and Phil Dick's Ubik (both of which he found enjoyable, with reservations), Joanna Russ' and Chaos Died ("...an attempt, admirable but not ecstatically so"), Ron Goulart's After Things Fell Apart (this is the third review I've seen on this book, all indicating pleasure and enjoyment), Mike Moorcock's The Black Corridor ("contains nothing useful", but Bruce Gillespie really liked this one, as shown in a review later in the ish), Ursula LeGuin's The Left Hand of Darkness ("as of this book, the best sf writer in the world"), Delany's Nova ("It is empty"), Avram Davidson's The Phoenix and the Mirror ("wholly acceptable"), Best SF Stories from New Worlds 5 ("hardly worth it"), and The Year's Best Science Fiction #3, ed. by Aldiss & Harrison ("as good as you could wish for"),

From John and Sandra Miesel another installment of their platypus mythos, wherein is described the Platy dynasty, official residence, the Tingers, etc.-- charming. Bruce looks at the mags. LoC's, reviews, etc. 52 pp. More personable and relaxed than previous ish. Recommended.

SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW #41 (Richard Geis, POBox 3116, Santa Monica, Cal., 90403. 50¢.) Delightful cover and interior illos by Grant Canfield. Numerous other inner illos by Rotsler, Gilbert, Kirk, Lovenstein, Bodé, Barr, ATom, and Kinney.

"We're witnessing one of the most unpleasant revolutions the world of arts has ever undergone: the triumph of container over content." -- says Ted White. Greg Benford feels that, "one of the best things about this new Golden Age of sf. . . is that. . . sf is feeling its way toward a different view of the way man can fit into his universe. . . There is more than one way to look at the world, God knows, and the ways we discover through religion or drugs or simple artistic sensitivity or whatever have their own logic, their own unique rightness."

The history and evolution of sf fandom as seen by Norman Spinrad opens the issue. There also is an interesting LoColumn, and an extended review section including Panshin on Heinlein's latest, I Will Fear No Evil. 53 pp. Recommended.

I DRANK THE WATER AND LIVED (Bob Vardeman, POBox 11352, Albuquerque, NM, 87112.) We follow Bob from Kennedy airport through London and a couple of hotels, Bacharach on the Rhine (with a clock that struck 16 at midnight), Heidelberg (Heicon, Verguzz, the great coaster war), Best, Amsterdam (and Reistafel, and the Sex Museum), and finally back home. It's 14 pages of fun reading with judiciously selected Gilliland illos.

Received recently (and perhaps reviewed anon):

ASPIDISTRA & ENERGUMEN 5 (with a marvellous portfolio by George Barr entitled Limericks Illuminated from Susan & Mike Glicksohn, 267 St. George St., Apt. 807, Toronto 180, Ontario. 25¢ and 50¢, respectively. Both recommended.

SCOTTISHE 57 & HALVERINGS 47 from Ethel Lindsay, Courage House, 6 Langley Ave., Surbiton, Surrey. (USAgent: Andrew Porter, 55 Pineapple St., Apt. 3-J, Brooklyn, NY, 11201. 30¢ and 6/\$1, resp.) The former has art by Art Thomson, book reviews, and occasional columns; the latter is a fanzine reviewzine.

OUTWORLDS SIX from Bill & Joan Bowers, Box 87, Barberton, Ohio, 44203. A fantastic issue. And I can't find the price. Help! Maybe contribs or LoC's. Recommended!

TOMORROW AND...5 from Jerry Lapidus, 54 Clearview Dr., Pittsford, NY, 14534. 50¢, 5/\$2, contribs, LoC's, trade.

BEA-BOHEMA 13 and 14 from Frank Lunney, Box 551, Lehigh Univ., Bethlehem, Pa., 18015. 50¢, contribs.

TRIBES #1 from Dale & Dennis DiNucci, 5620 Darlington Rd., Apt. 4, Pittsburgh, Pa., 15217. 50¢, 5/\$2, contribs, LoC's.

INTERPLANETARY CORN CHIPS #5 from James McLeod & Dale Goble, Jr., 7909 Glen Tree Drive, Citrus Heights, Cal., 95610. Contribs, 50¢.

BOOK REVIEW -- Binary Divine, by Jon Hartridge (Doubleday & Co., 213 pp; \$4.95).

In the peaceful, war-less, individually affluent years of the late 2000's, MIND (Macrocosmological Interdigit Numerical Distributing) computer and its servant VVOICE (Vocal Human Oriented Information and Consultative Equipment) run the wholly automated world. Human ambition in this apathetic utopia is atrophying. Man relies almost exclusively on his personal pocket VVOICE terminal to solve all his problems. Historians are society's elite. ##### But something insidious threatens Man. A young historian is ostracized, threatened and imprisoned when he tries to fit the puzzle pieces together. What he finds and how he finds it make this tale as taut and thrilling as a mystery. Yet it is also a philosophical essay of chilling propensity on the state of Man when he lets imagination and challenge go by the board. ##### Englishman Jon Hartridge has written a lively and readable first science fiction novel. I look forward to the second.

-- James R. Newton

PEOPLE, POWER AND PIGS
by Alexis Gilliland

One of the slogans popular with the New Left is "Power to the People!" or "All Power to the People!" It has a fine, rousing sound, and the people (note the lower case) who chant that slogan have made an implicit distinction between People and Pigs which they never spell out.

I am a bureaucrat, working for the Federal Government. If you ask me: Are you a person?, I would tell you: Of course. If you tell me that I am not a person, I will dismiss you as not worth my consideration; I communicate as person to person or not at all.

If you come around and insist that I am not a person, my reaction will depend on how insistant you are. Deny my humanity with enough force, and I will kill you. When you chant, "All Power to the People!", you are including me, whether you like it or not.

Last Thanksgiving I visited my aunt Connie in Harrington, Washington. Harrington, pop. 250, is lily-white. So is Lincoln County, pop. 9,500. Rural America. Connie tells me that the local population is profoundly anti-Negro, albeit they have little contact with Negros.

White southerners are also people.

"All Power to the People!" was never intended for Pigs, of course. So much for the "People" part of the slogan.

Now "Power" is more elusive and subtle, ranging from overt terrorism to money in the bank.

The coercive power residing in the Establishment is carefully hedged in with controls and restraints. For instance: Article I Section 8.3 of the Constitution of the United States says: "No bill of attainder or ex post facto law shall be passed."

An example of a bill of attainder would be Congress passing a law imprisoning Jerry Rubin for life. Or hanging him.

Those who denounce the Constitution as an instrument of Fascist repression are simply ignorant.

Even so, people being what they are, it is possible to approve of the Constitution and remain a revolutionary. "Power to the People" and especially "All Power to the People" envisages the removal of legalistic and ultimately Constitutional restraints. The curbside court-martial and summary execution are examples of the "Power" which the "People" wish to exercise over "Pigs".

However, let us imagine a situation in which the Constitution is merely abridged. In 1968 the People of California voted three to one against open housing; the Supreme Court threw out that decision as unconstitutional.

"Power to the People!" would put it back on the books.

"All Power to the People!" might do even more.

Imagine a national referendum on the question: "Shall we send the Negro back to Africa?"

Given the recent polarization induced by Negro terrorism, sniping, riots and rhetoric, and the fact that ole massa' don' need that cheap unskilled labor no'mo', and the New Left advocates of "All Power to the People!" might be severely discomfited.

It is worthwhile to note that California is something of a trend-setter for the rest of the country. Student riots started there with a confrontation against HUAC in 1963. Anti-pollution measures started there in 1965, and have led the country since. Hippies sprang from Haight-Asbury in San Francisco.

Polarization is more advanced in California than in any other state, and the result is that California is moving solidly to the right in terms of electoral majorities.

The strategy upon which the New Left is operating takes this into account, after a fashion.

Basically, they act to provoke the Establishment, causing a reaction (or, hopefully, an overreaction) which wins adherents to the New Left. Growing stronger, Growing stronger, the New Left is able to accelerate the process (Radicalization, they call it, a bastard buzz-word similar to Vietnamization in linguistic origin). Eventually the Establishment reveals its true Fascistic nature, and collapses from sheer ugliness.

The experience in California indicates a rather marked asymmetry in the polarization process. The act of provocation shifts 10 to 100 voters to the right for every radical the Establishment creates with its reaction. When the Establishment reacts coolly, the effect is far greater. I doubt if the Bank Burning in Santa Barbara made many converts to the left. It gave Agnew the line: "Those who burn banks can bank on being burned!". Agnew raised \$1.7 million in the month after the burning, the record for any fund-raiser in either party. Money is also power; in the long run it will wear down ideology and corrupt what it cannot buy.

The New Left views the Republican resurgence complacently; Right-Center Establishment is that much closer to Fascism. Once the People--a majority, one presumes--become aware that the Establishment is Pigs (Hello there; this is Alexis Gilliland, the Federal Bureaucrat speaking....), then They will Rise in Their Might and Smite Them or It.

In the Name of the People, any crime is sanctioned as long as it is committed against Pigs.

"All Power to the People" is an exhortation to atrocity. An atrocity, after all, is the excessive use of force--"All Power", if you will. And every atrocity in history has been committed by People against Pigs.

In Nazi Germany People were blonde, nordic Germans. The Pigs were Jews.

In a Fascistic Amerika, who will be Pigs?

 BOOK REVIEW -- An ABC of Science Fiction, ed. Tom Boardman, Jr. (Avon; 223 pp; 75¢).

Twenty-six authors (the only pseudonymous fudging is with B.T.H. Xerxes) are represented in this reissued (copyright 1966) A-to-Z anthology. The editor's avowed purpose is to bring together a little of everything that makes up science fiction. He very nearly succeeds, although a couple of entries wouldn't be worth the effort by themselves. Some are pure fantasy, some are gimmicked shorties, a few are good solid science fiction. All in all, reading this one is an exercise in escapism made available anew.

-- James R. Newton

SWORDPLAY AND SORCERY: Book Reviews
by Albert Gechter

- Lin Carter, The Flame of Iridar; & Kris Neville, Peril of the Starmen (NY: Belmont Books, 1967; 172 pp., #B50-759; 50¢).
 Lin Carter, Thongor Fights the Pirates of Tarakus (NY: Berkley Medallion Books, 1970; 160 pp, #X-1861; 60¢).
 Lin Carter, Tower at the Edge of Time (NY: Belmont Books, 1968; 141 pp, #B50-804; 50¢. Another Edition: NY: Tower Books, 1969; #321; 60¢).

As with The Lost World of Time and the previous books of the Thongor series (reviewed earlier in THE WSFA JOURNAL), author Lin Carter wrote these other three novels while rather heavily under the influence of the great masters of swash-buckling fantastic adventure, Edgar Rice Burroughs, Robert E. Howard, and L. Sprague de Camp; he also seems in these three stories to have been inspired further by Leigh Brackett, Edmond Hamilton, and Poul Anderson, and to be following quite well in their footsteps. If you like to read about mighty swordfighting heroes, supernatural menaces, and unknown powers of wizardry and superscience mixed together, you will probably like these books.

Unfortunately, I can't find anything good to say about Kris Neville's Peril of the Starmen, except that it is mercifully rather short in length; it is about some interstellar invaders who land in their spaceships on Earth in Washington, D.C., with the purpose of destroying our world; the naive, gullible, foolishly trustful inhabitants of Earth gladly accept and welcome these extraterrestrial visitors as honored guests with peaceful and friendly intentions; but Our Hero is suspicious of their real intentions, and...but you get the idea by now. I find it a rather stupid story, quite mediocre; the writing is strictly so-so; the characterizations are nothing special; the plot is routine, thoroughly predictable, and quite "old-hat". I suggest you ignore this one or watch TV reruns of "The Invaders" instead. But I do like the Lin Carter yarns quite well, finding them excellent examples of their kind. (Who says Gechter never "pans" anything in his reviews? I'm "panning" Mr. Neville aren't I?) Now let's concentrate on Carter instead of Neville, please!

Iridar is the Red Planet Mars, as Carter supposes it may have been many ages ago, around ten million years past. It was then a planet of oceans, continents, jungles, winged demons, great cities, a highly-advanced civilization, a dominant white race ruling much of this world along with other races--a planet with great fleets of ships, driven by canvas sails and the oars of galley-slaves, plying the seas--a planet of swordsmen, warriors, beautiful women, powerful magicians, gods and demons--and a lost continent called Polaria, whose people knew great secrets of magic and superscience, but were destroyed for their sins by the angry gods, who sank Polaria beneath the seas. The Flame of Iridar is the beginning of the story of how civilization began again and the Red Planet was reunited under the benevolent rule of an imperial dynasty of great and enlightened kings who brought freedom and justice to Iridar, and afterwards planted a colony on Earth, from which our own people are descended in part. (Carter is implying here and elsewhere in his books a cyclical theory of history and suggesting that all life on all worlds has an ultimate common origin.)

More particularly and especially, this book is the saga of the great warrior hero, Prince Chandar of Orm; of his magic Axe of Orm, a talisman of power with undreamed-of potential for good or for evil; and of his devoted follower, the redbearded giant Bram. Chandar's father King Guthrum of Orm was slain by the evil conqueror, King Niamnon of Shiangkor, a tyrant and usurper, and his family and friends massacred. Escaping, Chandar and Bram were outlawed and fled to the Hundred Isles, where they became leaders of the Corsairs and Pirates who still held out against the invaders. But Niamnon, aided by the magic of Sarkond the

Enchanter, captured Chandar and Bram, and it is at this point that the story begins. Sarkond has a magical flying ship, but he needs the help of Chandar to cross the Great Ice Wall, enter the Land of Magic, and arrive at Iophar, the City of the Flame, where he hopes to learn the secret knowledge of bygone Polaria and gain possession of the Axe and the two other Arch-Talismans of Power, the magic crystal Jewel of Darkness, and the Sword of Psamathis. So he sets Chandar and Bram free, double-crossing Niamnon, and flies away with them on a great quest. Their journey also involves the redheaded slave-girl Mnadis and the beautiful blonde priestess-queen Llys of Iophar and a great blue man-ape called Ugor. After many adventures, the forces of evil are defeated, Chandar marries Llys, and they have two sons to succeed them, Prince Aomar and Prince Thar. In the course of this story, Chandar loses and regains the Axe and gets the crystal Jewel of Darkness into his own possession, but the mighty Sword of Psamathis remains lost and missing. Carter hints that Aomar and Thar went in quest of it years afterward, Thar found it, and still other adventures ensued--which may eventually be told in a sequel, if he ever writes it for us.

Thongor Fights the Pirates of Tarakus is the sequel and continuation to Thongor at the End of Time (Paperback Library, 1968; 158 pp., #53-780, 60¢) (reviewed here previously), and it also contains a "tie-in" with The Lost World of Time (also reviewed here previously) and The Flame of Iridar, which we have just discussed. As I said before, Carter appears to be saying that history repeats itself on various worlds and in various dimensions, and that similar human personalities arise many times, and similar events occur over and over again, down through the ages, as gods, devils, and men struggle to assert themselves and achieve their appointed destinies. Around 500,000 B.C., on Earth, on the Lost Continent of Lemuria, lived Thongor, who greatly resembled Chandar and Sargon who lived on other planets in still earlier times. And he too had a son, named Tharth, nicknamed Thar, who had some remarkable adventures of his own. But Thongor was not yet ready to die or retire, and his own saga is now continued.

Thongor of Valkarth, a mighty barbarian warrior, reigns as Sarkon of Patanga, capital city of the Golden Empire of the Sun, greatest realm in Lemuria, ruling wisely and well. But Kashtar the Red Wolf, Prince of Tarakus, a greedy, power-mad pirate chieftain, plans to conquer and rule Patanga and its allies and all Lemuria by a surprise offensive, aided by the Gray Death, a mysterious plague involving fits of murderous madness invoked by the evil magician Belshatha. To accomplish his purpose, Kashtar kidnaps and holds hostage Thongor's friend and vassal, Karm Karvus, Prince of Tsargol, and the beautiful Princess Yian of Cadorna, daughter of a neutral king. Warned in time by Barim Redbeard, a friendly pirate captain from Tarakus, Thongor sails with Barim back toward Tarakus to rescue Karm Karvus. Thongor is disguised as a pirate, and accompanied by the dashing young guardsman Charn Thovis, similarly disguised. Gorgeous adventures replete with gallant deeds of derring-do follow in fast succession, as Thongor encounters a sea-serpent, vampire bats, dinosaurs, and assorted prehistoric monsters, unearthly demons, hostile tribes, and so on, along with the lost weapons of forgotten science and evil gray magic.

Carter has promised to write someday a novel that he calls Tharth, Son of Thongor, but meanwhile he is preparing a series of similar novels about the Lost Continent of Atlantis, set in a somewhat later but still prehistoric era, around 75,000 to 40,000 B.C. approximately. (These lost continents and the civilizations that arose from them are supposed to have culminated in the Hyborean Age around 10,000 B.C., and to have been obliterated by successive cataclysms and the coming of the great glaciers from the north in 9,600 B.C. (The date of 8,600 B.C. given earlier was a misprint. Sorry for the typographical error.) The history of the later civilizations that came afterward, such as ancient Egypt, India, Babylonia, Sumeria, Greece, and Rome, is said to have been influenced by the heroic traditions of Atlantis, Lemuria, Mu, Hyperborea, and other such fabulous lands of remotest antiquity.)

The gods of Creation, representing the forces of good, light, and progress, and the evil demons of Chaos, representing the forces of darkness, malice, and disaster, are engaged in an eternal titanic conflict, down through the ages, while we mortal humans are merely the instruments by which these opposing powers have chosen to fight each other, here on this plane of existence, in the world that we know. So believed the ancient sages of Lemuria. And this theory of theirs is further exemplified by events occurring in the distant future, as told in Tower at the Edge of Time.

However, Tower at the Edge of Time turns out to be a rather odd yarn indeed. It is a peculiar mixture of sword-and-sorcery, plus superscience, plus shoot-'em-up space-opera, plus time-travel, plus metaphysical philosophizing. It is, withal, a rattling good yarn, told with verve and swing, and it really does move right along. Man has journeyed to other planets and other stars and colonized the universe, but the galactic empire has broken down, and civilization and technology have gone into decline, causing magic to appear in competition with half-forgotten science in a new era of barbaric worlds. This is the environment of a future rogue-hero, Thane of the Two Swords, from the jungle planet of Zha. A redheaded, muscular, half-naked figure, in loin-cloth, boots, and cape, with leather harness, and armed with two scimitars and a laser pistol, this swashbuckling space-pirate and wandering free-lance adventurer journeys across the galaxy to the outer limits of time itself for love and for loot, rescuing the beautiful and curvaceous slave-girl Illara but losing the greatest treasure of all the ages and all the planets. His adversaries in this quest are a group of greedy interstellar scoundrels, Prince Chan, and the space-brigand Shastar, and the dwarf-magician Druu, with their ruthless, bloody-handed henchmen.

Thane turns out to have super psychic powers besides his obvious physical prowess, and he needs all these advantages to contend singlehandedly with this sort of opposition. At the end, these treasure-hunters discover the ultimate fate of mankind and the universe, as they make contact with super-beings from beyond the void, with spectacular results. (If this yarn had come out years ago, possibly in the 1940's or '50's, perhaps in PLANET STORIES or in THRILLING WONDER STORIES, the readers would have raved about it for years and years, and Carter would have instantly been right up there with Brackett and Anderson in their esteem.) Well, it is still darned good reading and excellent entertainment.

Meanwhile Lin Carter is busy working on still other sword-and-sorcery adventures, some futuristic space-operas, and some "hard-science" yarns, besides helping to edit the Ballantine Adult Fantasy Series. So there is much more to look forward to from him, now and in the future, and some of it will be discussed by me in these columns, along with the work of other authors.

 BOOK REVIEW -- Tower of Glass, by Robert Silverberg (Chas. Scribner's Sons; 247 pp; \$5.95).

In one of the best stories Mr. Silverberg has written recently, this taut tale blends biology, astrophysics, religion and social injustice into a timely message for today's readers. ##### Simeon Krug, 23rd-century creator of androids, wants to contact the originators of undecipherable signals reaching Earth from the stars. He devotes his all to constructing a mammoth transmitter tower of glass. He builds well, yet weakness exists. Not in the tower's building materials, but in the stresses caused by the belief of the artificially human androids that equality is the right of all sentient creatures regardless of origin. ##### The tower falls. The androids embark on a road which will eventually lead to acceptance. Krug ascends into the heavens in a life-suspension freezer aboard an android-built space ship bound for the star-source of the signals. The allegory is plain. ##### Tower of Glass appeared as a three-part serial in the April, May and June issues of GALAXY. It was readable then; it is in this Scribner hardback edition.

-- James R. Newton

THE INKWORKS: Comics Column
by Kim Weston

OUR LOVE STORY #5, June, 1970 (Marvel Comics) -- In interviews, Jim Steranko has said that he doesn't really consider himself a comic artist, but rather a storyteller, and the comics medium is where he has been telling stories. "My Heart Broke in Hollywood" is the most recent example of his work, and like almost all but his earliest efforts, it is an excellent example of good storytelling. The story is not great, but it is well-told. Art is in a somewhat simplified mod, pop, impressionist style, and coloring--presumably also by Steranko--is partly impressionist with an air of fantasy. Breakdown of the story into a comic strip is somewhat simpler than usual for Steranko, and, as a whole, the story is a beautiful example of what can be done with Romance Comic storytelling. A pity there wasn't a better story to tell. Script is by Stan Lee. ##### The same comic also contains the first romance story about Negroes that I have seen since an old 1954 or 1955 issue of NEGRO ROMANCE comics. Not bad. Story: Stan Lee; art by Gene Colan and Johnny Romita.

G.I. COMBAT #142, June-July, 1970 (National Comics) -- "The Last Survivors", art by Russ Heath, story by Robert Kanigher, could have been a great story. On the night of June 18, 1917, a German and an American patrol set out into no-man's-land to take the enemy by surprise and capture prisoners for questioning. They run into each other, fight, a flare goes off, and all are wiped out by a shell from who-knows-which side--all except for the two patrol leaders, who jump into a shell hole. They fight until they realize that they have arrived at a stalemate, then call a truce. Trapped in the hole by continuing shelling, they talk of life, families, the insanity of war that must make them enemies. The shelling stops. The men shake hands as friends and part knowing that they may kill one another next time, if ever, they meet. Then a stray shell kills them both and the narrator makes a brief summary and comment. Good idea--should make a good story--but it fails, because of poor storytelling (or perhaps just lack of storytelling). There seems to be no plan to the story; it moves along spasmodically, with no direction. There are captioned panels where just a picture would have been more effective. The dialogue leaves something to be desired. The German's dialogue is at least internally consistent, but the American says things in one panel in one idiom and in another in the next; he sounds like two different people.

Bill Spicer in his GRAPHIC STORY MAGAZINE divides the creative effort that goes into a graphic story--a comics story--into three parts: the script (the story in words), the breakdown (which tells the story in layouts--panel arrangement and content, selection and distribution of text, etc.), and the finished art which follows the breakdown and which is what you see printed. ##### Breakdowns are usually done by the writer or artist. The artist may read over a script and draw it as he sees fit. Or the writer's script may be very detailed and he may give the artist detailed instructions as to just where everything goes and what happens in each panel. Sometimes the writer will actually do breakdowns himself, and the artist will do finished drawings over them. Or sometimes an editor or some other person will take a script and break it down. ##### Any of these methods can be, and all have been, used very successfully. Why none of them were in this story I don't know. Robert Kanigher can write good stories; Russ Heath, as usual, did a fine job on the finished art. Another story in the issue, "Checkpoint--Death", also by Kanigher & Heath, comes across much more effectively as a comics story even though its script is less inspired. But apparently nobody attempted to break down this script into a comics story. And surprisingly, Joe Kubert, the editor and a very fine comics man, let the story pass. ##### In comparing "The Last Survivor" with the Steranko romance story (or even with "Checkpoint--Death"), one sees the importance of a good breakdown. In one a poor breakdown turns a good script into a disappointingly bad comics story; in the other, an excellent breakdown turns a mediocre script into a comics masterpiece.

The issue also contains a story by Sam Glanzman (story and art). His script this time is not one of his best, but he manages to do a fine job on the story.

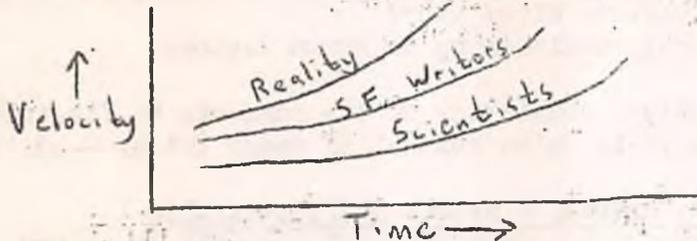
EN PASSANT: More Letters

Perry A. Chapdelaine (continuation from TWJ-74/1 of letter of 25 Dec 1970).

. . . I've gotten to page 36 of SFR#40 and Walter Breen:

I'm not speaking for everyone, Walter, which should be obvious. But within my experience of living through a little more than two twenty-year periods, extrapolations have tended to become under-predicted rather than otherwise, and also badly predicted. (What! Destroy the Hollywood monopoly with TV. Hell, man, all they'll do is buy up, and control it before it gets off the ground.)

There was an article in ASTOUNDING a generation or so ago (see how easy that slips out) where someone researched the predictive ability of SF writers and scientists, matching their predictions against reality for such characteristics as, say, velocity of travel. As I recall the article, the curves looked something like this:



I feel rather strongly now that scientists are ahead of the run-of-the-mill, hard-science SF writer who tries to make reasonable extrapolations just a little way ahead. I just finished a third story in a series which ANALOG may or may not buy, which is a grand illustration of the principle. Where most SF writers would work hard to understand and join together space and time as per Einstein, certain leading physicists are separating the two again, pointing out that time is the vehicle within which the dynamics of space take place.

My story uses more scientific ideas than fiction, and I'll swear it is wilder than a conservative SF writer would normally project from present-day science, just a few years ahead.

Then, you've put your finger on the other thing. Extrapolations do become obsolete before the story gets to the editor. Just one case in point: In about twenty years there ought to be a tunnel beneath the San Francisco Bay, I once said to myself, and so wrote in a story.

Too many of us confuse technology with science. A good, hard-science SF writer, going along with scientists, would probably extrapolate the common use of fusion power in about 40 to 50 years. A wild projection would be 20. Wanta' bet it'll be before 20?

Technological and scientific progress tends to be exponential.

Have you, for example, considered the fact that as soon as we can freely move around space with our rockets and zip guns, there will already be the technology, from our laboratory devices, to propel ions and photons in such a way that a sustained thrust will permit us to approach a fraction of light speed?

Potential increase in velocity capability like that is a quantum jump over orbital speeds, just as orbital speeds were quantum jumps over jet speeds. A 20-year prediction for this velocity capability may surely be wrong, yet how many want to bet on less than 20 years? How many more?

Don Thompson next: Thanks. I almost agree with the monetary aspects, only most writers get about 2% of the pie, so there have just got to be other reasons they write. (Now if we could only find them....)

My story was awful, we all agree--even me, must I continue adding?--but now that we've got that behind us, has anyone other than Chip Delany ever given thought to the human factors aspect of writing?

John Campbell says there are reasons why stories are told the way they are, whether the man is a bard or what-have-you. That, to me, implies human factors which are identifiable and measurable, and if so, where are the human factors engineers out there who can perform the service? (Freudians not eligible.)

Every time someone kicks me in the groin about one of my stories, I pretend I'm Chip Delany and thank the man, or woman.

And I try to hollar loud--OK!--I'm learnin'! I'm learnin'!

But beneath it all I wonder--must beginners learn to write just the way everyone else does because there are human factors about storytelling, or is what we call human factors simply cultural conditioning?

Suppose, for example, that everybody wrote stories in the same way that I did when "Someday You'll Be Rich!" was written, where my flaws formed a kind of cultural standard that everyone followed. Certainly we'd have just about as many reasons, excuses, explanations, rationalizations, and so on for why things should be done that way.

Now along comes some poor Kate Wilhelm who writes a real jim dandy, but is not in the structural framework that everyone is used to. Kate, you know, is today considered a pretty good writer, nicht wahr?

OK. Which is it? Cultural conditioning or human factors?

((The remainder of Perry's letter, consisting of his comments to Virginia Kidd, will be printed in TWJ #76 or 76-1; we've run out of space thish. --ed.))

Bruce R. Gillespie, POBox 245, Ararat, Victoria 3377, Australia

((Don't know if we've printed the following yet, so will do so now. --ed.))

. . . I will reprint the entire run of John Foyster's brilliant magazine EXPLODING MADONNA (later renamed THE JOURNAL OF OMPHALISTIC EPISTEMOLOGY) in SF COMMENTARY 19, which will officially appear in January 1971. This issue, which will run about 150 pages, contains much of the best work of John Foyster, Franz Rottensteiner, Stanislaw Lem, Samuel Delany, George Turner, James Blish and others. It will only go to subscribers, regular correspondents, and regular traders. It is not available to hangers-on or to irregular traders, and as it's costing me a hell of a lot of money, it remains my tribute to John Foyster, and available for friends. . . . There will be no airmail copies, unless you want to send \$3 for this one issue.

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