

Charles Goodwin

ICE TASTING FACE FASTING
TIPS PRINTING LEGS SPLINTING
BOOK REVIEWING COOK SUEING
PUBLICISING SUPRISING
ORGANOSING UNPAISING
IDENTITY SEEKING
SLIME EATING
MUTATING DEBATING
DEATH DEFYING
AWFUL
ANALYSING
PENETRATING
PISS TAKING
STUPEFYING
HACKLE-
BRAISING

YET EVEN AS I REVEAL MY
INNERMOST SECRETS... A NEW
ISSUE OF OUR FAIR CITY IS
PRODUCED!

OH GOD!
ANOTHER
THREAT
TO
CIVILISATION!

IT CAN'T BE!
MANKIND
ISN'T
READY FOR
THIS...

SPEECHLESS

2
ARTWORK



Nigel Robeson -	4,5
Charles Goodwin -	Cover, 18, 29
Alan Butler -	11, 17, 34, 43
Dai Walters -	3
Carl -	7, 13, 25, 47
Martin Marsh -	40, 43, 44, 45, 46
Steve Sneyd -	30
Helen McCarthy -	Back Cover

ALSO THANKS TO
=====

Ursula Le Guin, Chris Priest, Alan Farmer,
Julie Mitchel and Bedford College SF
Society.

CONTENTS
=====

3 -	Smaug Opinions
6 -	News page
7 -	THE ANSWER by Nigel Bannerman
12-	The Tolkien Society
13-	Film Reviews
18-	THE DISPOSSESSED A discussion with Ursula Le Guin
26-	DUNGEONS AND DRAGONS Sword and Sorcery wargaming. By Ian Livingstone
29-	Cartoon by Charles Goodwin and Hugh Herdon
30-	A GAME OF SNAKES AND LADDERS by Steve Sneyd
34-	Book Reviews
43-	The Lettercol

NOW, RIGHT AT HOME, YOU CAN LEARN HOW TO
BECOME A WITCH!

Unlock the secrets of the witches coven. Discover the ancient spells designed to give witches their tremendous powers... and make people obey them, fall in love with them, and bring them money. Learn the time-honored witches way to success in your chosen career and all your unfulfilled dreams and desires. Yes, ANY man or woman can learn how to become a genuine witch, thanks to this totally new kind of home study course. Five easy-to-follow and inexpensive lessons is all it takes.

The author of the course is Dr. Leo Louis Martello, scion of an ancient family of Italian Sicilian witches, Elder of four different Witchcraft Traditions and High Priest of the Old Religion. Author of WITCHCRAFT: OLD RELIGION, Dr. Martello has packed over 25 years of experience as a practicing witch into this extraordinary course. He explains ALL... so clearly that anyone can start practicing real witchcraft from the very first day. There have been books on witchcraft before, but never before have there been at-home lessons on how to become a witch—revealed by a genuine witch himself!

You get all this in the first lesson alone! How to make your own witches altar at home. The tools to use in your magic rites and how to consecrate them. The self-blessing ritual. The power of the Pentagram. A test of your own personal potential as a witch... and much, much more!

In the four lessons to follow, you'll discover how to make your own magic mirror, how to counteract a curse, how to invoke the Horned God, and salute the Mother Goddess, the witch words that give personal power... everything, in fact, that you need to know to become an effective practicing witch with all the powers that this implies. It's so easy when High Priest Martello reveals all his secrets to you!

To receive Lesson 1, mail the coupon today with just \$4.95. Yes, that's all it costs to



be led by the hand, step-by-step, into the great mysteries and powers of witchcraft. If you are not completely satisfied, simply return the first lesson for a full refund.

OCCULT CRAFTS LTD. Dept. KMR
P.O. BOX 72, BRONXVILLE, N.Y. 10708

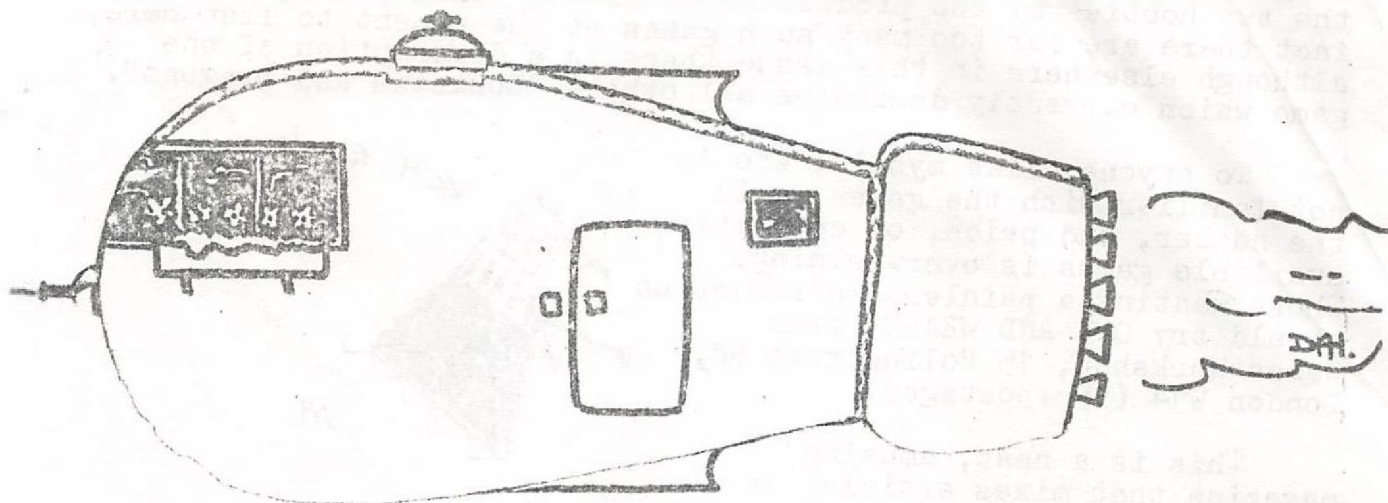
OCCULT CRAFTS LTD.
P.O. BOX 72 Dept. KMR
BRONXVILLE, N.Y. 10708

YES I want to be a genuine witch. Send me Lesson 1 of "YOU Can Become a Witch," for which I enclose \$4.95. If not satisfied, I may return Lesson 1 for a full refund. Otherwise send me the 4 succeeding Lessons in this complete course, automatically at the rate of about one lesson every two weeks, and bill me the same low price for each.

I enclose \$4.95 for Lesson 1. Refundable if not satisfied.

Name _____
Address _____
City _____
State _____ Zip _____

SMAUG OPPINIONS



Progress to report this issue as far as the society goes is mixed. The main thing, of course, is that another issue of the magazine has found its way into your hands. This is courtesy of ULU who provided us with a grant to keep it going. This issue is late for a number of reasons, mainly the bottleneck of actually getting the material through the typewriter. Maybe I should have put in a small ad "zine editor seeks fast young lady with compatible typeface".

The society is now more organised, on paper that is, as a ULU society. We were recognised at the end of last term. Next year this should mean a full society grant and thus the ability to organise some events. The society AGM will be on June 16'th (Wednesday) in room 3B of the University of London Union at 7-30. The main business will be to elect a committee and plan activities for next year to get the society functioning properly. Any volunteers will be made very welcome, please come along if you can.

The main success story of this year has been the formation of a group at Bedford College, reported below.

"The first meeting of the society got off to a tremendous start. No less than eleven people turned up, including an ambassador from Zargo IV (who later became lunch for a Regents Park pigeon). All of the members were lucky enough to receive their personalised copies of OUR FAIR CITY, excepting the organisers."

Oh well we can't always get things right (though I'll admit that just once would be nice).

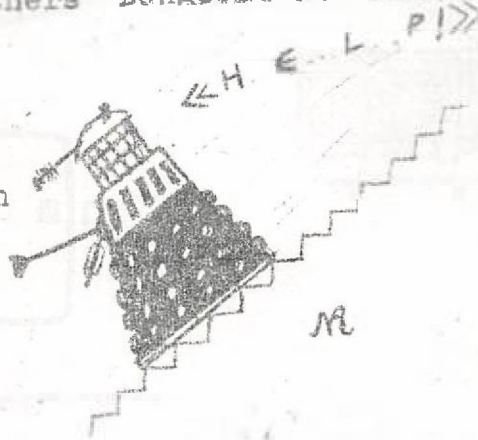
But enough of the mundane affairs of the big city. Step with me into this passing phone box where we may remove our earthly disguises and go forth to boldly cruise the universe in search of things science fictional.

What are these three strange planets orbiting on the borders of known space? Let us pick one on the throw of a dice and investigate.

Of course, with a throw of six it had to be. The planet of games fans. There seems to be some strange link between appreciation of SF

and fascination for the more esoteric games. I was amazed to discover recently that H.G. Wells wrote one of the first sets of naval wargaming rules. Today there is an expanding interest in combining the two hobbies by the production of SF and Fantasy wargames. In fact there are far too many such games at the moment to list here, although elsewhere in this issue there is a description of the game which currently dominates all others "Dungeons and Dragons".

To anyone, like myself, who is not familiar with the games world the number, and price, of currently available games is overwhelming. Those wanting a painless introduction should try OWL AND WEASEL from Games Workshop, 15 Bolingbroke Rd, London W14 (15p+postage).



This is a neat, amusing magazine that mixes articles on Chess and Go with those on Monopoly and magical combat. Games Workshop isn't a vast concern but consists of two games nuts (Ian Livingstone and Steve Jackson) who publish their magazine and import American games in their spare time (imagine a flat with games crammed every cupboard, drawer and shelf then put a typewriter in the middle and you've got the idea). Their magazine doesn't just consist of one-way communication but includes a lot of feedback from readers so you get a good idea of what it's like to play the games mentioned. Best of all the zine is developing a light, chatty style which makes it fun to read whatever the subject. Perhaps one tip they could get from SF fanzines is to encourage more response in the form of artwork (bearing in mind the dread curse of the solidified Snopake which will fall upon them if they pinch any of our artists).

On planet II we find a curious environment where the whole atmosphere of the planet is supplied by one spacecraft. Here be "Trekkies", or Star Trek fans as they are called to their faces. It may seem strange to separate Star Trek from SF in general but in fact the ST fans have their own organisations and magazines. Of course some ST fans are also ~~quite~~ *highly* intelligent involved with the rest of SF. However, something of a rift has grown up between the two groups because of the association of Star Trek with younger girls who seem to have more interest in Spock than SF, and because both the SF and Star Trek groups have an amazing tendency toward arrogance, coupled with an unwillingness to understand what the others are trying to do.

If you want to know about Star Trek fandom then the best magazine around is ALNITAH (from Mrs Ann Looker, "The Forge", 41 Main St, Weston Turville, Aylesbury, Bucks). The content of this magazine is mainly fiction, with different authors basing their stories around the Star Trek characters. Freed from the eagle-eye of the American networks I find their stories generally better than the TV ones. The idea of so many different writers using the same characters is an interesting one and the end result seems good. My criticisms are basically of

« TAKE ME TO
YOUR LEADER!! »



M

« IF I RULED
THE WORLD »



weaknesses in the Star Trek series itself, which are carried over into the stories. As a military unit it strikes me that the Enterprise would be no match for the Isle of Wight ferry. The milk of human nastiness seems sadly lacking from the stories (except for Spock who, once freed from censorship, seems to have developed a taste for hitting women) and this prevents the ALMITHA writers from making

their characters as complex as they should be, given the skill they demonstrate.

The series' haziness about the operation of the Enterprise also shows up from time to time; in one story the Enterprise does a 90 degree turn to avoid an asteroid (thank God it was a no u-turns area).

This is really just quibbling but the central problem for this zine is its price, which they must reduce somehow. The last issue (68 pages) was 75p. This makes it about 30% more expensive than fanzines shipped from the United States, and about the same price as a paperback book. At these prices no-one but the Star Trek fanatic will be tempted.

Our third and last group of fellow lunatics are the comics fans. One day while talking about SF I was approached by a member of this fraternity who had overheard part of our conversation. Strange I thought, he shows no signs of the brain damage I thought was associated with this interest. Therefore to be kind, I condescendingly accepted a copy of his magazine which he pressed upon me, noting with some surprise that the quality of reproduction was far better than most SF zines. However on reading it I discovered that the quality extended to the contents. Also, the zine was far from a diatribe in favour of all comics but instead harshly criticised those comics which are merley badly produced money makers.

The make up consists of comics, film and SF news and had several items about films that I hadn't come across in the SF news magazines. The news contained such gems as the information that the MARVEL company have been slipping a lot of unannounced humour into their super-hero strips. Backgrounds in some recent panels have shown; rival companies characters as passers by, Dan Dare's old spacecraft Anastasia, and a crowd scene featuring the Daily Express' grandma Giles.

The layout is superb, with many examples of comics covers and even some photographs. It also contains an excellent interview with Jim Warren. If you didn't know who he is either, don't worry, you will after reading the interview. In future it looks as though there will be more interchange between SF and comics with a version of THE PRISONER being produced and Jack Kirby (who even I recognise as 'King') drawing a comic of 2001.

« AMMONIA...
AMMONIA... »



(COMIC MEDIA NEWS is from Richard Burton, 22 Woodhaw, Egham, Surrey. TW20 9AP, 82p for 4 issues)

NEWS PAGE

====

LONDON DIARY

=====

5'th June - Star-Trek mini-con at Richmond Community centre. 10am-10pm. Convention fee £1. Details from Mrs Anne Looker, "The Forge", 41 Main St, Weston Turville, Aylesbury, Bucks.

18'th June- Society AGM, ULU Building room 3B at 7-30.

19'th June- London SPECTRUM group meeting, lecture on "Artificial Intelligence", 17 Anson Rd, N7 ORB. Speaker at this meeting should be Dr Chris Evans but this is so far unconfirmed.

SF ON THE SCREEN

== == == =====

The Paramount remake of KING KONG is scheduled for release next Christmas.

An American company is trying to sell the networks a new TV series based on Anne McCaffrey's THE SHIP WHO SANG.

20'th Century Fox is to film DAMNATION ALLEY by Roger Zelazny.

MGM is to begin working on their film of LORD OF THE RINGS this year.

A film version of DAN DARE is planned with live actors as well as an animated series for television.

American International have scheduled their film of AT THE EARTH'S CORE for release this summer.

Special effects on the film of DUNE will be done by Dan O'Bannon who worked on the highly acclaimed low budget picture DARK STAR. Rumours are also circulating to the effect that Chris Foss is designing the machinery and Salvador Dali will play the Emperor (maybe they ought to swap).

Sources - LOCUS, COMIC MEDIA NEWS.

NEBULA AWARDS

=====

Novel - THE FOREVER WAR by Joe Haldeman.

(2'nd) THE MOTE IN GODS EYE by Niven and Pournelle

(3'rd) DHALGREN by Samuel.R.Delany

Novella - HOME IS THE HANGMAN by Roger Zelazny (Analog)

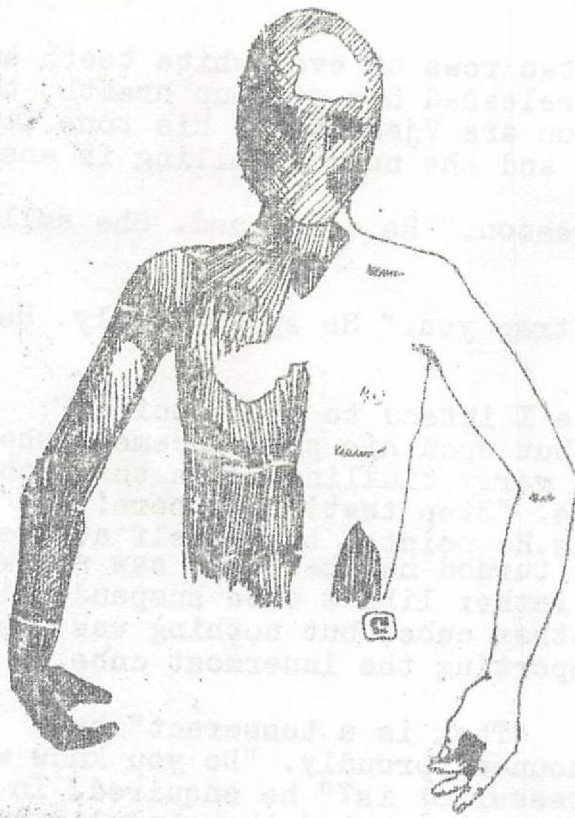
Novelette - SAN DIEGO LIGHTFOOT SUE by Tom REAMY (F&SF)

Short story -- CATCH THAT ZEPPELIN by Fritz Leiber

Dramatic Writing - YOUNG FRANKENSTEIN (which also got the Hugo)

2'nd A BOY AND HIS DOG

3'rd DARK STAR



THE ANSWER

by Nigel Bannerman

The candles lighting the cellar flickered in the draught making grotesque shadows leap about the ceiling. At one end of the cellar, amid piles of books, the professor stood reading steadily, completely absorbed in his task. He paid no attention to the candles set before him, at the points of the pentagram inscribed upon the stone floor.

Suddenly, his decision made, he placed the ancient volume face downwards on top of one of the piles of similar books, and then reached over and picked up an even older sheet of vellum. His back straightened and he raised his head. He read from the parchment with a high pitched sing-song tone. The words were mostly unintelligible, seeming a curious mixture of ancient tongues, but he completed his outpourings with clear concise English

"..... and so, I commend thee, Vjeshitza, APPEAR."

His whole body tensed as he pronounced these words and inside the pentagram a wisp of luminous green vapour appeared. It writhed and twisted, but grew every second until the candles on the far side were no longer visible. Slowly the vapour faded, to reveal, inside the pentagram, a petite but well-developed woman.

She was only about five feet tall, he estimated, but her proud bearing made her seem much taller. Pirouetting, she revealed a long mane of honey-blond hair which fell to her coccyx. Her skin was the brown of freshly varnished wood, while her nipples, standing erect, were the colour of deepest mahogany. Her breasts were full and rounded but not so as to overbalance her trim waist and taut buttocks. Her pubic hair was fair also, and shone dully, flecked through with moisture. Her legs were perfect, leading down to a pair of the tiniest feet he had ever beheld. From her shoulder blades sprang a pair of fiery wings which filled the cellar with their blaze.

She smiled at him revealing two rows of even white teeth and lifted one eyebrow in enquiry. He released his pent-up breath, took another shallower one, and said "You are Vjeshitza." His tone implied a statement rather than a question and she nodded smiling in answer.

"I have summoned you for a reason." He continued. She smiled again, and licked her lips.

"I have brought you here to trap you." He spoke firmly. Her smile faded.

"You are only a test, because I intend to trap Lucifer himself." He spat the words out, but upon his pronouncement she threw her head back and laughed, a merry tinkling laugh that echoed and re-echoed from the cellar walls. "Stop that! Look here!" he commanded, his voice still venomous. He pointed to a shelf at the side of the cellar. Obediently she turned her head and saw a row of peculiar objects. Each one looked rather like a cube suspended inside another cube, but nothing was visibly supporting the innermost cube.

"That is a tesseract" he announced proudly. "Do you know what a tesseract is?" he enquired. In answer she pouted thoughtfully and shook her head.

"A tesseract is a four-dimensional cube and thus does not belong in this universe, therefore it has an affinity for demonic beings because demons do not belong here either. However a natural energy imbalance allows you to survive here whereas I had to create the imbalance required for these tesseracts. At the moment you are protected by the pentagram from its power but if the circle is broken you would be dragged into a tesseract by an incredibly powerful force."

In answer she smiled again. "You don't believe me?" he asked.

"Be that as it may Master, no mortal can compel Lucifer's attendance and hence, even if your device works it can never entrap the mighty one."

"What you say is true. However, if I first trap Andranalech, Astaroth and Baal, the grand chancellor, the grand treasurer and the General-in-Chief of Hell, and then request Satan's appearance, I think that he will come."

She seemed to consider his words for some minutes before she replied. "That may be. That may well be." she mused. "However what happens if another mortal enters this place and disturbs you at a vital moment."

"You know as well as I" he retorted angrily "that if an immortal being is present in the room then external time, relative to the room, ceases to exist. No one can enter."



"An' that leave but one thing- to try yon device. This I look forward to" she said, licking her lips.

"Then so be it" he pronounced proudly. He reached behind him and dragged an old iron sword from behind the books standing there. He strained to lift the sword clear of the floor, and then swung it in the air over the pentagram and broke the circle.

Vjeshitza had leaned forward in anticipation of her feast, but a look of horror flickered over her features, as with a rush of displaced air, she reappeared, shrunken, inside the nearest of the five tesseracts. Nodding thoughtfully to himself, the professor re-lit the candles extinguished moments earlier.

He repeated his previous litany, this time however concluding with the name Astaroth. When the green vapour had cleared a tall, thin, nude figure became visible. Clutched in his left hand was a writhing viper. Without hesitation the professor cut the circle again with the sword. Astaroth resisted the pull for a fraction of a second before he was dragged into the second tesseract. The professor breathed a small sigh of relief, wiped the sweat from his high forehead (the cellar seemed curiously warm) and continued.

When the professor summoned Baal, however, the mist inside the pentagram cleared to reveal nothing. Puzzled, he took a cautious step towards the pentagram and lifted his glasses to peer short sightedly at it. Then he turned and leafed rapidly through the book he had discarded earlier. Suddenly he stopped and re-read a paragraph. Baal had been summoned to the pentagram- and he had arrived -in the guise of invisibility.

Reaching into his jacket pocket he removed a small bottle which he unstoppered, and shook a miniscule amount into the pentagram. There was a sizzle, an angry below, and Baal appeared. The monstrosity which faced the professor now was a conglomeration of a cat's, a toad's and a crowned man's head, set atop a thick powerful torso which ended in an array of spider's legs. The centre head, that of the crowned man spoke. "The holy water was unnecessary. I was present" Baal seemed petulant.

"But I wished to see you." replied the professor imperiously. "You have a reputation for deceiving those who summon you, a deserved reputation it would seem."

"It is my experience that most humans summon us because they expect to be tricked" Baal retorted, and a squeal of shrill laughter issued from the cat's head. The professor paled as the full impact of Baal's words became apparent to him. He once again lifted the sword and cut the air above the tesseract.

Baal stood motionless for perhaps a second, and then, with a loud pop of intrushing air, he too reappeared inside a vacant tesseract. The professor's hands were shaking when he read the third name on the list, that of the Grand Chancellor of Hell and president of the High council of Devils, Andranelech.

Andranelech appeared almost intantly in the form of a mule with a human body and a peacock's tail. The professor was startled at the bizzare form. Andranelech gave a whinnying laugh and brayed "This form is useful for most purposes, mortal. Now, let us attend to business."

"We have no business to transact ." the professor stated calmly.

"But an agreement must be reached before I can be released." Adranelech seemed confused.

"Not if you are to be retained" replied the professor sententiously. He smiled at his own humour, and swung the sword again. Adranelech struggled violently for a few seconds, and then he too joined his fellows in the row of tesseracts, of which only one was left vacant.

The flush of excitement left the professor's face and his hands stopped shaking. Feeling calmer, he replaced the parchment he had been clutching since his ordeal had begun, and called out in a loud clear voice.

"I ask upon Satan, known also as Samael, Lucifer, and Mastema, as well as other divers names. I ask that the Angel of Light, the Angel of the Morning Star, the most beautiful one appear here." The professor glanced toward the pentagram, and finding it still untenanted continued: "I ask again for the Adversary, the most powerful of Angels, who once sat before Heaven's Throne, to appear."

With this a small funnel of black vapour appeared at the centre of the smallest circle inscribed within the pentagram. The funnel spun, grew larger, blacker and thicker until it resembled a miniature tornado which filled this inner circle. Then, the vapour coalescing instantly, a great black goat formed, sporting a gigantic erection. Satan had arrived as his alter-ego Leonard, master of the sabbats.

Maniacal laughter issued from between the goat's lips. "So this is the mortal who has enslaved my chief lieutenants. I'm afraid that he will find Lucifer a vastly different prospect." The goat snickered. "I am far more powerful than ALL of my lieutenants, mortal. I was nearly strong enough to wrest the throne from Adonai, hated be his name." The goat spat - a long jet of black spittle. "Come, foolish one. Cut this device and learn, to your cost what it means to meet Satan in person."

"Not even you, Satan, can defend yourself from these intra-dimensional forces." The professor was proud of his achievement.

"You jest mortal. Who was it who had dominion over this sphere aeons ago, before he was ever cast down. It was I, Lucifer, Angel of the Morning Star." The goat gestured and a brilliant point of light appeared above him.

The professor was momentarily blinded. Then, his eyes firmly shut, he took the one step necessary towards the outermost circle, and with frenzied strength swung the sword. At the apex of the swing his eyes blinked open, a look of utter hatred passed over his features, and he let the sword fly into the circle, straight at Satan. The sword blazed into incandescence against the goat's belly, but it was ignored. The goat was rapidly changing form, initially into a beautiful angel, and then through a bewildering variety of shapes, all the while being dragged inexorably towards the final tesseract.

Suddenly a low sonorous voice rang out through the cellar.

"It is written that the adversary shall be chained at last, but the time is not yet come."

With the final word a thunderous peal echoed throughout the cellar, and in an instant all the assorted demons and devils had vanished, together with all of the tesseracts - save one, the smallest.

"But for you my son a reward is due for attempting such a momentous feat."

A look of intense adoration passed over the professor's face and he fell to his knees with his hands clasped before him as the voice continued.

"I have looked into your heart, and have seen that your dearest wish is to be raised to the exalted ranks of the angels."

"Yes.Oh! Yes!" the professor murmured.

"SO BE IT." the voice thundered.

A beam of pure white light shone down upon the professor and in an instant his earthly trappings had been stripped away. He was bedecked in a long flowing white robe. Clutched tightly in his left hand was a golden harp, sprouting from his shoulder blades were a pair of flawless white feathered wings, and suspended a few inches above his head was a burnished golden halo.

He stood stock-still for perhaps a second, and then, with a rush of air the final tesseract claimed its victim.

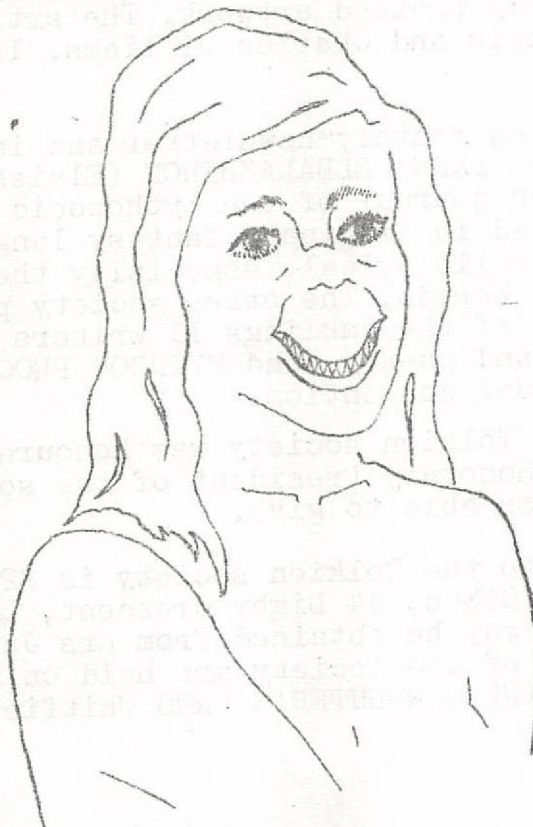
"Foolish mortal. A devil is but a fallen angel." The presence faded leaving the professor banging futilely against the sides of the inner cube.

"Why? Why?" he screamed.

"Pride...." the answer wafted back, supplimented a few seconds later by Satan's harsh cackle "..... and too much power for even him to handle."

THE

END



THE TOLKIEN SOCIETY
=== =====

The Tolkien Society in Britain was formed in 1969 for the purpose of providing a focal point for those many people interested in the works of Professor J.R.R. Tolkien, and most especially in THE HOBBIT and his epic trilogy THE LORD OF THE RINGS.

Initially a small localised group it soon became a national society wherein meetings between members became increasingly difficult. To overcome this a small mimeed newsheet was initiated called BELLADONA'S BROADSHEET, wherein communication with the now scattered membership became possible.

Such was the interest with which the members responded, contributing their own material by way of artwork, articles, poetry, in addition to the usual news and letters that a larger journal was found to be necessary. This journal, MALLORN, is still the highspot of the society, wherein the works of Tolkien are discussed, with the members submitting articles on such matters as Middle-earth heraldry, genealogy, language, Tolkien and his critics, plus subjects allied to the work of Tolkien in the wider field of heroic fantasy literature. Poetry and book reviews form an integral part of this profusely illustrated magazine.

The society is now increasing rapidly, with members in Australia, Canada, The USA, Belgium and Eire. In addition to MALLORN, a six weekly bulletin keeps members in regular touch with one another, as well as supplying up-to-date news of society events, committee meetings, etc, along with short book-reviews, poetry and short articles.

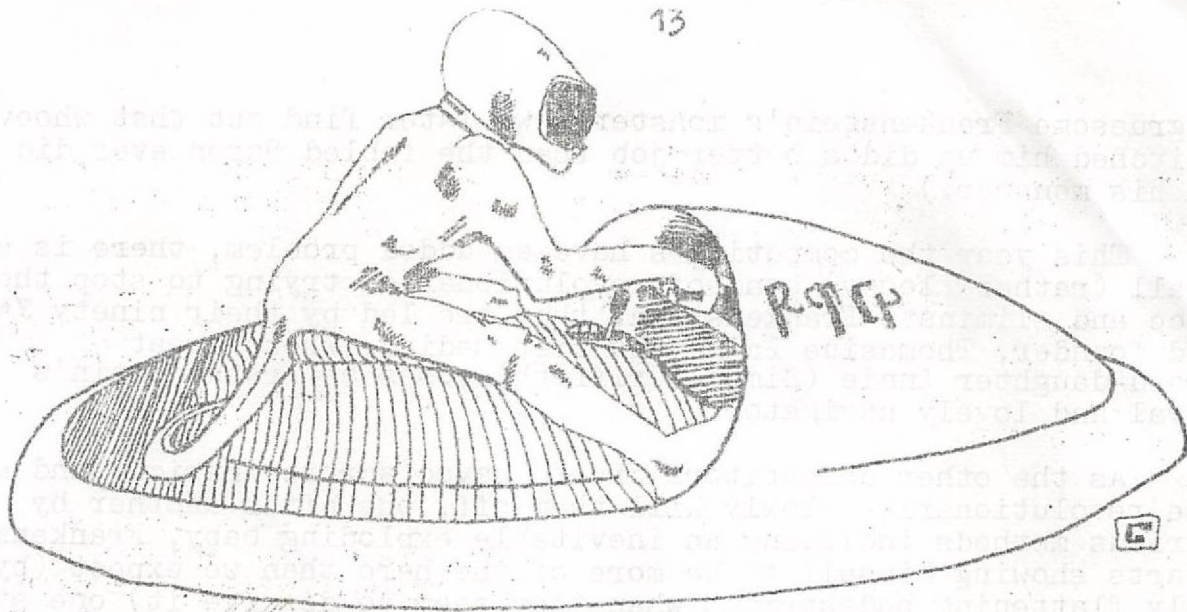
The society is in close contact with other allied societies both here and in the USA, enabling members to be notified of all relevant information. In conjunction with this contact, a library has been formed, which when complete will allow members to borrow, free of charge, books and magazines of a relevant and interesting nature.

The MYTHOPOEIC SOCIETY in the USA, with which the Tolkien Society has contact, publishes a number of periodicals dealing with Tolkien, Fantasy in general and related subjects such as the linguistics of Middle-earth. MYTHLORE is a literary journal, featuring articles, reviews, editorials and highly praised artwork. The articles deal mainly with Tolkien, C.S. Lewis and Charles Williams. It incorporates the TOLKIEN JOURNAL.

MYTHPRINT is the societies monthly newsletter and is similar to that of the British society. PARMA ELDALAMBERON (Elvish for the book of the Elven tongues) is the journal of the Mythopoeic Linguistic Fellowship, and is interested in imaginary fantasy languages and all matters linguistic and philological, especially the divers tongues of Middle-earth and the Low Worlds. The other society publications are MYTHRIL, the production of the Inklings II writers workshop featuring original fiction and poetry, and MYTHCON PROCEEDINGS, a report of the societies annual convention.

In June 1972 the British Tolkien society was honoured by Professor Tolkien agreeing to become Honorary President of the society and offering any help that he was able to give.

Membership subscription to the Tolkien society is £2-50, payable to the treasurer, Mrs Janet Gibbs, 44 Digby Crescent, London N4. Full details of the society may be obtained from Mrs Janet Gibbs at the above address. Meetings of the society are held on the first Saturday of every month at THE CARPENTER'S ARMS Whitfield St, at 7.30.



FILM REVIEWS

DEATH RACE 2000 reviewed by Mike Moir

Directed By - Paul Bartel
 Producer - Roger Corman
 Photography - Tak Fujimoto
 Script - Robert Thom
 + Charles Griffith
 Story - I.B. Melchoir

Staring - David Carradine
 Simone Griffeth
 Sylvester Stallone
 Mary Woronov
 Roberta Collins

When you are about to sit through your seventh film of the day at a film festival, and the first six were all very well made but depressing and the seventh is described as an exploitation film from the Corman 'factory' then it has to be a good film for you to even stay awake, let alone enjoy it.

DEATH RACE made me very glad I had already seen **ROLLERBALL**, for it made me realise, even more, how good Death Race is. OK it may be an exploitation film, but it is a very good one.

The year is 2000, the place is the United Provinces of America. As usual in such films the world has suffered many more wars and crises, in particular the great depression of 1979. The population has developed mass apathy and has little interest in anything, except the ANNUAL TRANSCONTINENTAL DEATH RACE. In this years race there are five two-person teams who, in crossing the continent in the shortest possible time, must also kill as many pedestrians as possible (gaining more points for toddlers and old age pensioners).

The competitors are Calamity Jane Kelley (Mary Woronov) in her stud bull car, Matilda 'the Nun' Morris (Roberta Collins) in her racer 'the buzz bomb' (with a navigator called, would you believe, Herman the German), Nero 'the hero' Lonigan (Martin Kove) in the Lion, vicious sometime race winner Machine Gun Joe Viterbo (loved by thousands, hated by millions) (Sylvester Stallone) manning his notorious 'Peacemaker', and finally the President's favourite and supposed hero of the film the masked man FRANKENSTEIN (David Carradine) driving his fabled monster. He has survived two previous wins and three near fatal crashes, where he lost various limbs, replaced to make him

awesome Frankenstein's monster (we later find out that whoever stitched him up did a better job than the fabled Baron ever did on his monster.)

This year the competitors have an added problem, there is a small (rather loony) band of revolutionaries trying to stop the race and eliminate Frankenstein, they are led by their ninety year old founder, Thomasine Paine (Harriet Medin), whose great grand-daughter Annie (Simone Griffeth) poses as Frankenstein's loyal and lovely navigator.

As the other competitors create havoc across America, and as the revolutionaries slowly kill them off, one after another by various methods including an inevitable exploding baby, Frankenstein starts showing himself to be more of the hero than we expect (by only flattening pedestrians when they seem to deserve it) one starts to wonder which side he is on (as if we do not already know).

The whole film is built around a series of television programs reporting on the race, compered by three brilliant caricatures of present day American commentators: The young male who gets over excited, the female who is a personal friend of anyone who is 'anyone', and the middle aged male who seems bored by the whole thing.

Though there is not much blood and guts on the screen (and the censor only removed one squashed head of any significance) it is still a very violent film though it is also very 'anti violence'. Most of the time it is a very funny film (after this a hand grenade will never be the same). The acting on the whole was of quite a high standard (helped mostly by the fact that everyone seemed to greatly enjoy their parts).

This is the director's (Paul Bartel) first entry into SF and his only other films have been 'Naughty Nurses' and 'Private Parts'. He has done a very good job especially considering the small budget Deathrace had, half that of Rollerball. They only had one of each of the cars, which incidentally were volkswagens built up to look like something out of the Whacky races or The Cars That Ate Paris, they could not go over 45 mph though they were meant to be doing 200 mph in some scenes. Even so only rarely is it noticeable that the film has been speeded up.

One thing is for sure, this 'Whacky Races meets Rollerball' should be seen.

THE ULTIMATE WARRIOR reviewed by Mike Moir

=== =====

Director - Robert Clouse
 Producer - Fred Weintraub
 and Paul Meller

starring - Yul Brynner
 Max Von Sydow
 William Smith

The year is 2012, the place is America, instead of having suffered many wars and depressions, it has suffered the drying up of fuel resources and a devastating plague. The world has been greatly depopulated, America is now just a collection of small street communes, fighting each other for the small amount of food left in the long plundered shops, the only people who survive are the strong (why is it film makers have such an optimistic view of the next 25 - 30 years).

Probably the best part of the film is the start which shows you almost everything you need to know about the film, set up in the minimum time.

The film concerns two neighbouring communes, the 'nasty' one led by 'Carrot' (William Smith), who's main preoccupation is killing people, and the 'nice' one led by the 'Baron' (Max 'Jesus Christ of 64' Von Sydow). His main preoccupation is giving Cal (his 'common law' son-in-law) the time and space to grow hybrid seeds which are plague resistant. To this end he hires Carson (Yul 'Westworld meets the magnificent seven' Bryner) who is a 'super' fighter (deliberately too good to be true ?)

Unfortunately Cal is killed by Carrot's men and the Baron is forced to send his pregnant daughter, with Carson, out of the city with the seeds. They travel via the derelict underground tunnels and the main part of the film is their journey through the tunnels, being chased by Carrot and his men, finally showing why Carson is the 'Ultimate Warrior'.

This film had no giant budget and no 'great' actors, a few years ago it would have probably been called a B picture but that does not stop it from being a good film. All the actors do a good job, and apart from the occasions when the film lapses into 'ENTER THE DRAGON' style (one of the producer's previous films) they produce a workmanlike film.

THE ULTIMATE WARRIOR is worth watching, if only for the clever ending which suddenly becomes obvious 90 seconds before it happens. This is one of the most suitably named films I have seen.

A BOY AND HIS DOG

reviewed by Martin Easterbrook

Directed by - L.Q. Jones

staring - Don Johnson

Screenplay - L.Q. Jones

Tim McIntyre (voice)

Photography - John Arthur Morrill

Susanne Benton

story - Harlan Ellison

When are you going to grow up Charly Brown

A BOY AND HIS DOG is a film taken from the short story of the same name by Harlan Ellison. Here, for once, a story has been faithfully transferred to the large screen without the intervention of a Hollywood screenwriter who 'knows exactly where the original author went wrong' and is sure that the story can be turned into box office takings if it is just 'simplified' a little here and there.

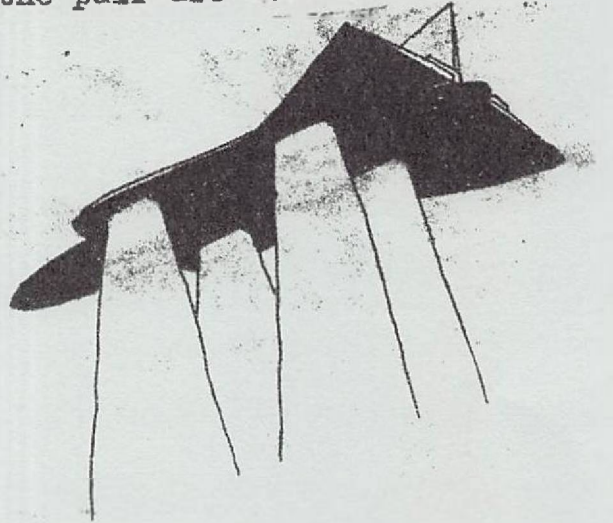
The story is essentially stated in the title, it is a description of the emotional relationship between a boy (Vic) and his dog (Blood). This is a relationship which we already know well. The best known such pair is of course Charlie Brown and his dog Snoopy, who inspired the creation of their British equivalents Wellington and his philosophical companion Boot. In these two strip cartoon series the idea of the companionship between a boy, who finds it difficult to get on with other children, and his faithful, if critical, dog has been pretty thoroughly examined over the years.

So how do Vic and Blood differ from their more well-known counterparts? Firstly Vic is an adolescent, not the clean cut all American type, but a violent tough who you might encounter among

the worst of today's teenage gangs. He is like this because he has to be, his world is one which exists after the devastation of the last two nuclear wars, he has to be violent in order to stay alive. Blood's personality remains very similar to Snoopy or Boot but he is not the idle dreamer that they are, he has abilities which are vital to the pair in their hostile world.

This is brought home right from the first scene where a disembodied voice, which we later find is Blood's, gives Vic precise locations and distances between him and the members of a 'roverpack' gang he is trying to hide from. Blood is a dog of the future, with intelligence boosted to human level, and with the ability to communicate with Vic telepathically. Blood also has one other talent that makes him invaluable to Vic, a great skill in hunting women. The 'boy' Vic is an adolescent remember! Sex is one of his prime interests. Sex in this after-the-bomb world is simply a matter of rape. In this gutted world people live perpetually on the edge of starvation, finding food by grubbing in the dust for unused tin cans, permanent relationships are sacrificed in the hunt for food.

Between Blood's senses and Vic's gun the pair are able to keep themselves supplied with food and sex, and sometimes make enough extra for a ticket to the movies. The movies are the last remnant of technology; a few films salvaged from the ashes. A mixture including silent film comedy and porno-flicks are shown by the gang that found them in exchange for any spare food the customers can find. They are the last luxury in the world and people are willing to barter life giving food for them. At one trip to the movies Blood detects a disguised female. They track her, but they are surprised by another 'roverpack' of youths and dogs who want her themselves. After a vicious fight they find themselves cornered with her for the night.



Vic is amazed, but delighted, to find that his 'victim' is more attractive and healthier than he expected, and more intent on raping him than resisting (even under these conditions the knowledgeable 'chat' about world history which he uses to impress her is passed on by Blood, as are a few caustic comments on their incessant love making as the injured dog is trying to sleep).

In the morning Vic finds that the girl (Quilla June) has gone. He follows her to the entrance into an underground bomb shelter, and using the key she has left him, he deserts Blood and goes below. She is, of course, the bait in a trap. In the shelters he finds an absolute dictatorship, modelled on a Mid-West American small town, complete with square dancing and blue farm overalls. Vic is one of the toughest, most vicious survivors on the surface and, since a life away from sunlight has made their own males sterile, the shelter dwellers have decided that he will father the next generation for them. Vic is only too happy to help, until he discovers that this will be accomplished by artificial insemination. Luckily for him Quilla June has intended using her

'captivated' killer to replace the shelter governing council. The attempt is unsuccessful but they manage to escape.

Thus we find Vic now back on the surface with the chance to put adolescence behind him and begin a new life with Quilla June. But what of the happy times he had with Blood? Indeed, does he have any responsibility to the faithful dog who, despite his increased intelligence has waited starving at the shelter door for his friend? He is faced with the question we started with "When are you going to grow up?". Those of you who have read the story, or who may have seen the film, will know what choice he makes. For those who have done neither, let me just say that everyone I know who saw the film agrees that he made the right one.

I found this film treatment much more sympathetic than Ellison's original story. Vic is still a thug, a killer and a rapist but we are influenced by the fact that Blood, the ideal dog, is loyal to him realising that he is basically a child and that his crimes are really the responsibility of the lack-of-society. It is, of course, impossible to dislike Blood. He's the ideal dog.





THE DISPOSSESSED

A discussion of the book between Chris Priest, Alan Farmer and Ursula Le Guin herself.

The interview below was as savagely attacked by the electronic gremlins as the Aldiss interview in the last issue. However Ursula Le Guin and Chris Priest have both very kindly taken the time to correct my rough draft.

I want to include the whole of the discussion but time does not permit that in this issue. So instead of cutting it some of the later discussion will be printed in the next issue.

I feel compelled to add one further note about the preparation of this transcript. I share a flat with several other students and together our text books cover English, History, Physics and Biology. While trying to check that I had got the references to much of the background material to THE DISPOSSESSED mentioned here I had to refer to all of these.

Despite attempts to 'reconstruct' Alan Farmer's talk on the DISPOSSESSED from his notes there were still some sections which were unsalvageable. These turn out to be the sections most frequently referred to in the following discussion. So it goes.

10

Priest: ((Talking about Ursula Le Guin)) She is in a field or a genre of literature where everyone seems overindulgent with prizes. I think the stories and books for which Ursula has been given and Hugos are amongst the few books and stories which deserve those awards, even this summer when she got the Hugo ((defeating Chris Priest's INVERTED WORLD)). I find her a very uncompromising writer and I think this is something one should admire her for, there are no easy options in her book. It has a great strength and it is something that is pointing the way that I think science fiction has got to go, if it's going to go anywhere. Which is, while being inherently science fictional, that the books are also comparable with the mainstream of literature. In the DISPOSSESSED we have probably the most science fictional of Ursula's novels and yet a book that will stand up as a general novel, as in fact Gollancz published it.

Alan ((to Alan Farmer)) I take it you have prepared something for us, would you like to read it to us?

Farmer: Let me say first, before I say anything very critical, that I have the kind of personality that once I've read a book I sit down and make notes of everything that was wrong with it. So let me say first that I found it enjoyable ((Pause)) Bloody Hell, I can't find my notes!

Well here are the main points that I remember.

It should be pointed out that this is not a tale of the future nor a tale of aliens. It is, and can only be treated as an allegory of our own world, an extension of our own story, with clarity and conclusions enhanced by the extrapolation to a seemingly different culture. This is Earth extrapolated and simplified, and the lessons are not too difficult to draw. Surely it is only in SF that these points could have been made like this. Setting the story elsewhere, elsewhen, yet with a basis of realistic people/motives/history which ensures a credibility that could not be maintained if this story had been set in a near future Earth or some such 'mainstream' device.

The reason it is not a tale of aliens is simply that the people in the book, for all their unusual ideas are human - their personalities, their speech are really just extrapolated human. Can we ever really claim to have invented a truly alien culture. Surely by its very nature that is unknown to, and unknowable by, us. Also this is not a tale of the future because the planet Urras is really just an extrapolated Earth - not extrapolated into the future, as far as the civilisation envisaged goes - but rather sideways, more simple and exaggerated.

The physics is not some superscience of tomorrow, but is instead of now. The pieces of science that mean anything are standard modern physics - sometimes even a little old fashioned - and the rest? Well what are we to make of phrases like "It will not transmit messages of course: simultaneity is identity"? I prefer to think of the science as a fairly plausible framework on which to hang Shevek's character.

I find the story interesting in that Shevek, the scientist, is also the revolutionary. Here on Earth where do you find scientists and engineers that are not rather identified with the establishment, the status quo? The idea of scientist as revolutionary

I find exciting, though I noticed that the biggest example of reaction on Anarres was the physics faculty.

What can we say of the science - well can you really believe that a scientist can design an instrument before the principle on which it is based is developed (the Earth scientist who develops the ansible, waiting only for Shevek's equations to become operational). Time here, in concept, owes more to Elliot's "4 Quartets" than to Einstein or physics.

"Time present and time past
Are both perhaps present in time future,
And time future contained in time past.
If all time is eternally present
All time is unredeemable."

- see how it fits Shevek's views of time - the simultaneity principle, yet basically this is a poet's human-centred view of time, a subjective not objective, scientific viewpoint.

The story is interesting perhaps on another level of allegory, for what it seems to say of the U.S. Can we look on Shevek as the American returning to the old world (Urras) as so many Americans do, to explore their roots. There is the view of the old world as home, but not quite home, that the Americans have of Europe. Just as the American dream of freedom and liberty seems to have been corrupted in practice so does Shevek see the first signs of broken principles on his own world (Anarres). The wall on Anarres which divides it from the rest of the universe (the American wall of isolationism?). Note the typical view of a disillusioned American - while the U.S style high-consumption is seen as corrupt and not free, the USSR-like totalitarian communist state is still so much worse (would an anarchist really believe that?). The idea of the aristocrat being nearer to the revolutionary - the same contempt for money and power, except for the idea of position being all, is also a typically American attitude towards aristocracy rather than a revolutionary anarchists.

It has been said that the difference between British and American views of freedom is that in Britain we believe in freedom to change our society, in America they believe you should have the freedom to move on elsewhere, the result of their settler heritage. Notice the parallel here, during the 1st revolution on Urras the revolutionaries were shipped to Anarres. Now, when revolutionary fervour is repeated on Urras they are left with nowhere to put them and changes will have to take place at home.

One point, why a male character as the 'lead'. He seems a bit of a weed, a bit effeminate.

I'd like to ask Ms Le Guin, does she see this as a feminist book - one criticism of Shevek's view of Urras is that we see very little of the substantive points that his dislike of the society is based on - the only thing that is explored in any depth is the way it treats its women.

I consider it in relation to her other work, a certain uniformity. LEFT HAND OF DARKNESS too is a story of a not quite human society and the woman's role seen through the eyes of a stranger. The quest in the EARTHSEA series is in many ways like

Shevek's - and all these stories have allegorical bases, in the children's novels less disguised perhaps than in the others.

Much of the story of THE DISPOSSESSED seems based on the political theories of the late 1960's (Marcuse/Fanon/Chomsky plus red guard/maoist 'continuous revolution'). I was surprised that one Marcusean idea was not used - that of the willing slave. If Urras had had so many thousands of years of exploitative capitalism and totaliterian state capitalism surely they would long ago have reached the stage where revolt of the workers was impossible. In any case we find inconsistencies in the history, take the fact that the world URRAS is supposed to have been through its ecological disaster phase and learned from it, yet in the Urras/America state they still have conspicuous over consumption.

Going back to Ms Le Guin's feminism, or not, I was quite disquieted by the monogamy of the main characters. We are led to believe that they are completely sexually free and less prone to jealousy than us, yet here we have a totally monogamous union. This may not be incompatible but it does not represent a true exploration of the society of Anarres.



It is a sign of the increasing relevance and status of SF that we can now criticise the book as 'literature' and not as SF, as Blish (Atheling) would have wished. It's uniqueness is not in its store of ideas but in the unique way it presents them.

Le Guin: That the future is a metaphor for the past is absolutely true. I didn't conceive Urras and Anarres as future Earths but simply as metaphor. The future Earth does occur in the book as reported by the ambassador from Earth, as a nearly devastated wasteland, under an intensely centralised survival government. So I do give the current gloomy view of the future Earth once, mainly for ironic effect. About Marcuse and the rest, I have not read him, and I know of Marcuse that he can't read me. He's apparently tried. The ideas are much older, they are not five to seven years old. They are sixty to a hundred years old. My sources are the anarchists, the most recent one is Paul Goodman then we go back through Kropotkin, who would be the basic source, right back through some of the socialist Utopias to Godwin. So the sources are actually much older and the ideas more second hand than you perhaps assumed. It's an interesting question about Shevek not questioning his dedication to science. It seems to me that his society does it for him so insistently and consistently that, in a sense, he doesn't have to ask himself whether he's doing the right thing. The other thing is simply that, from personal experience, people that have a job to do don't usually spend too much time wondering whether it's useful or immediately useful. He typically rejects, somewhere in the book the idea that everything must have an immediate socially useful application.

There's one thing I've just made a note of. This idea about the old world and the new world, that is absolutely fascinating to me. I never thought of it, and I think you're right. One does write as an American, or whatever one is, and I think the idea of the old world and the new world does run through American literature, what little I know of it, and I suspect you've hit on something absolutely valid, some sort of unconscious source material.

I don't see by the way, oh you were quoting Ian Watson, saying that Shevek was the kind of scientist he was because of the kind of society he lived in. I don't feel very strongly one way or the other. Was Einstein the kind of scientist he was because he grew up in Switzerland? How can you say? I certainly wasn't trying to say either one or the other. I don't think that's a particularly fruitful line of enquiry.

Farmer: Then you disagree with what Watson was saying? ((In a review of THE DISPOSSESSED in FOUNDATION))

Le Guin: To some extent yes. At least that's not what I intended. I suppose you can read it that way. Obviously he did, but that's one thing that I hadn't deliberately put in. You can't say that you only get a Shevek when you have an anarchistic utopia because that's ridiculous, we've already had a Newton and an Einstein, in very far from utopias. These people just pop up. There obviously has to be a time and place that's right for them but it doesn't have to do with the virtue of the society.

Farmer: In science it has always been a fact that scientific theories have followed very much on the heels of changes in society.

Le Guin: Yes but also there have been great changes in society followed by centuries of silence in science. The fall of the Roman Empire was a very large change in society, it took a long time for anything very much to get going afterwards. It depends. It depends what the change is. There are so many variables. How can you make a statement that a change in the society will be liberating?

From Audience: Isn't it true that a change in science can sometimes bring about a change in society.

Le Guin: It has done, the industrial revolution and little old things like that.

One other thing you mentioned. You said something about Takver and their relationship, as giving up her freedom. Just as a married woman on Urras gives up hers.

Farmer: I was making the point that she decides, or she and Shevek decided....

Le Guin: There's quite a difference between, she decides, and she and Shevek. The difference between one person and two people is quite a difference.

Farmer: Shevek, it seems to me, doesn't do much deciding. He hangs around and she attaches herself. I find Shevek a very 'Mary Shellyish' male hero.

Le Guin: Not like the monster?

Farmer: I don't know if it's a woman's view of a man, or my reading of a woman's view of a man, or what, but he seems to come across as a bit less masculine than I think the character would have been if a man had written it. I wonder in fact why you chose to make the Shevek character a man?

Le Guin: Basically you do not chose as a writer. I was presented with a character, he happened to be male. Usually, it's women who ask me this question, in an extremely annoyed tone of voice, and I'm sorry. I would have liked to have had a woman Heroine, just at this point in time. It's rather nice to strike a blow, and all that. I cannot do anything about what my unconscious supplies me. If you write from the deeper levels you have to sit back and take what they give you. The protagonist, to me, was a couple, with the more active character, unfortunately, being the man. But Shevek does not come without Takver nor Takver without Shevek. The relationship there, does it not strike you as different from any Urrasti marriage?

Farmer: Yes, but I'd like to bring into the discussion how the Urrasti marriage differs from ours.

Le Guin: It's more exaggeratedly sexist obviously. Nineteenth century victorian.

Farmer: In that Urras is more exaggeratedly sexist, yes it is very different but then you must admit that Anarres is more exaggeratedly the other way.

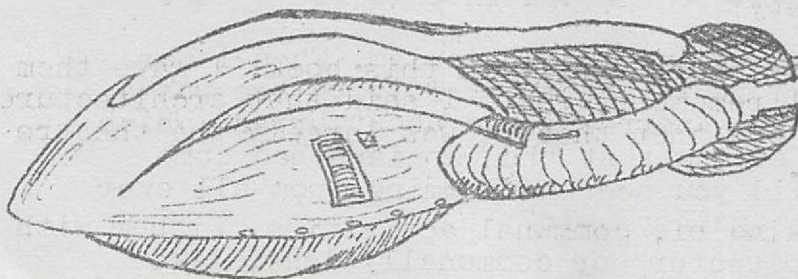
Le Guin: I think if I was trying to point out anything there it's that even the strongest sexist society, say the victorians, can have real marriages. There are real marriages now; there are always going to be real marriages. Some people meet together in couples. All that I was trying to point out was that on Anarres you don't have to, you don't have compulsion, and you have no institutions whatever to support marriage, but some people nevertheless want it. I find this one of the most interesting things about human beings I have to admit that.

From Audience: She did have the freedom to choose. I mean, vegetarians choose not to eat meat ...

Farmer: You could say that about our society.

From Audience: In our society there's freedom to choose and therefore also the enormous barrier of what society thinks of you. On Anarres of course they live in a society where the norm is in fact not to choose.

Le Guin: You could say that's a severe artistic flaw in the novel, in that I say, I announce to you, that the norm is not to choose; but then what I show you is the exception.



From Audience: What I thought was that she had a real freedom. she wasn't abashed by societies view.

Le Guin: She and he both. Of course we're more aware of the problem from a woman's point of view. But I was trying to get across the fact that men can get trapped into marriage too.

Priest: Can I bring things around to Odonianism. When I was reading the book, I've read it twice now, I felt there was a rather vague feeling that the Anarresti had about Urras. Which was that, you've got the feeling that the Odonians had come from A-Io initially. Now did you see them coming from all over Urras, or were they rebels against A-Io?

Le Guin: The revolution started in Thu.

Priest: Thu you say.

Le Guin: The I thaid.

They came from all over, but I think that since the most highly developed countries are Thu and A-Io probably the large bulk of the immigrants came from these two.

The story about Odo has not been published in this country?

Priest: THE DAY BEFORE THE REVOLUTION ? I know of it but I regret I haven't yet read it.

One thing that interested me a lot, and I think you only touch on it very briefly, is that there was no free press on Anarres. I think we see only one playwright who has written a less than ideologically perfect play. Could it be possible for a hundred and fifty years to pass without a literature evolving which criticised the society?

Le Guin: The arts got very short shrift in this book. I gave them about two paragraphs, as I remember, where I said that architecture had developed very highly and that theatre was largely the theatre of the travelling company.

Priest: Well they were, kind of, communal activities. Either with a communal focus like architecture or communally done, like music and drama. I don't know why but it felt literature was just too much to cope with. If I'd quoted some other thinkers, some post Odonian thinkers, it would have got so complicated.

Priest: The other thing is, about the sexual relationships. Now, we meet Bedap, who is homosexual. It struck me that homosexuality would be very frequent, in a society like that, where there seems to be a cause-and-effect relationship between a lack of both parents around growing children which in our society produces homosexuality. This seems to be institutionalised, that the partnership is broken up soon.

Le Guin: This is all terribly speculative, as from what I've read nobody knows anything certain about it. In our society the lack of, particularly the father seems often to bring about homosexuality. In a kibbutz instead of the parents they've got the peer group and it's no more than statistically common there. I don't know, who can say what the natural occurrence of homosexuality or heterosexuality is, because who's natural.

Priest: It's like all these things, we're talking about a book where we are on such a high plane of appreciation that small things sound larger than they are. It struck me that Shevek's response to Bedap was very easy-going, he slept with him, but the homosexual ethos didn't seem well integrated into the society.

Le Guin: I was trying to imply, and that was about the only place that I could do it without giving a lecture on it, that homo and hetero were barely a distinction there, that you had sex the way you wanted it. When you found someone else who wanted to do it the same way. Naturally personal preferences would arise. The only thing that's 'wrong' is when you force somebody to do it the way he or she doesn't want to. I was trying to compress all that into a rather short scene between Shevek and Bedap. It's obvious that there was too much information compressed in that. On Anarres, from puberty on, all sexual activity totally permitted. Which to my imagination would lead to a good deal of homosexuality among young kids and would probably lead to more heterosexuality later; but some people may not agree with this. If Freud is right in that homosexuality is essentially related to puberty rather than adulthood, but he may be all wet about that I don't know.

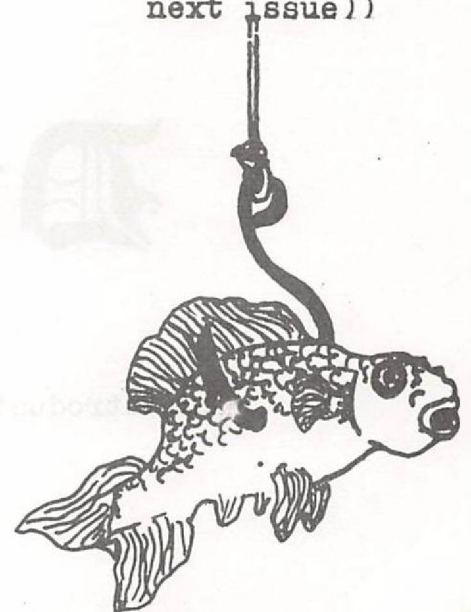
Priest: What about contraception?

Le Guin: Ah!

Priest: You're sick of that one?

Le Guin: No it's only a few people and they always say it very gently, as you did, because it's such a glaring omission. Well they've got something awfully good that either sex can take is all I can say. Maybe they've got biofeedback. Vonda McIntyre the science fiction writer, who trained as a geneticist, she has been shouting very hard about biofeedback as a birth control method, and says that it's beginning to break through a little bit. So that you just tell yourself - "I'm not going to get pregnant" - or - "I'm not going to make her pregnant" - and you don't. You can prevent ovulation. You can prevent sperm formation, if you get the technique down. I just wish I'd put in one sentence about that. But anyway they've got a technique.

((To be continued
next issue))





Dungeons AND Dragons

An Introduction to Fantasy Wargaming

By Ian Livingstone.

To the person who walks into a shop, takes the lid off the box and flicks through the 100 odd pages of rules in the three booklets, D&D is unlikely to induce any sort of cataleptic state or even raise an inquisitive eyebrow. You have to play D&D in order to discover what it is that makes this game so addictive. First of all it's completely different; there's no board no inter-player competition and, as long as your character doesn't die, no end to it.

So how do you play? Well, before play actually starts one of the players must elect to become dungeonmaster and as the whole game revolves around him, he must be imaginative, talkative and humorous but not have any sado-masochistic tendencies for reasons that will be explained later.

The dungeonmaster, using the three booklets, must map out a set of dungeons on graph paper. Not just one level but up to 15, starting with the 1st and going downwards. These should interlink by stairways, chutes and sloping floors. A dungeon level should consist of rooms, chambers, alcoves etc, all connected by passages and entered by doors (both ordinary and secret), windows, iron grills etc. As I said earlier, the dungeonmaster must have a good imagination to make the dungeons interesting and above all exciting for the other players. Therefore a multitude of items should be scattered about the rooms (eg signs, cryptic messages, drawings, danger notices etc). Having mapped out an intricate set of dungeons, the dungeonmaster must now fill them up with a liberal helping of monsters and treasure. Again the booklets should be referred to for distribution ratios but the lower levels will contain more fearsome monsters and greater riches. The monsters on level one, for example, are usually orcs, trolls, goblins, giant insects, pixies etc, but on the fifth level you would find ogres, wyverns, zombies, evil priests, gorgons and werewolves.

Treasure, besides the standard gold, silver and gems should also include wands, potions, rings, spells; useless items such as bits of carved wood, pieces of metal, liquids which players spend ages over, trying to find a use for them. As well as these there should be weaponry in the form of magic war hammers, girdles of strength and enchanted arrows and other magical items like; wands, potions, rings and scrolls of spells.

As can be seen designing a set of dungeons is no easy task and can take hours to complete. However it is worth taking your time because a game is only as good as the dungeonmaster makes it. In order to start play, all the other players must assume a character type, either fighter, cleric or magic user. By now it's pretty obvious what the object of the game is - send your character, in a party, down the dungeon to slay monsters in search of treasure. To determine what your character will be dice must be rolled for strength, intelligence, wisdom, constitution, dexterity and charisma and later for gold pieces. Each character type has a prime requisite, fighters: strength, clerics: wisdom, and magic users: intelligence. Having determined your character type and named him you must equip him for his adventure with items from the 'shop' paid for by his gold pieces. As a fighting man would be in the thick of it tackling the monsters he would need armour; plate mail, sword, shield, bows and arrows. A cleric would be fighting undead creatures and would therefore need holy items; crosses, holy water, silver mirrors, garlic and wolfsbane. The magic user, casting spells, would need little equipment besides his staff and dagger.

The party of players characters are now equipped and ready to go on their fantastic travels. Remember, it's non competitive and they will all help each other against the evils that lurk in the dungeons. The dungeonmaster may read out a brief history to the travellers which may or may not include important facts - "You are walking along a cobbled path in a ruined city when you come across an old fallen temple which has a huge wooden door with a notice on it which says; 'This is the inner temple of the Sanctum of the 6'th province. Danger lies to all those invaders who dare to trespass and loot the riches of king Equipole' - ".

The party must then decide whether or not to open the door or walk on. If they open the door the dungeonmaster tells them what they can now see. He acts as God, if you like, deciding the fate of the travellers and acting as their eyes by referring to the drawn out dungeons. This is really what makes it so different from all other games in that the players are role playing and trying to act as though they were in the actual situation. One of the players should have graph paper in order to keep track of the route as they explore, noting rooms and passages. In this case if they enter the temple the dungeonmaster would then explain what was inside. The players would have a number of choices on how to proceed; one of three doors, one of four passages all leading off in different directions. When opening doors they would probably encounter some monster. To add to the fantasy level it is better to resolve combat using figures rather than just pencil and paper. Minifigs and Hinchliffe produce Sword and Sorcery metal figures that can be painted to add to the realism.

Combat is resolved by tables in the rules and some dice throwing. Characters usually get the chance to run if they think they are unable to tackle the monster before them - an impulsive or foolhardy player will soon get his character eaten up!

This is how the game goes on; the party zooming round the dungeons, hopefully killing monsters and picking up treasure. If they manage to get out alive a players character is awarded experience points for monsters slain and treasure found. On reaching certain experience levels the characters themselves move up a 'level', which enables them to go deeper into the dungeon and tackle bigger monsters. The whole thing is cumulative and can go on forever as long as the character is not killed and the dungeonmaster can go on drawing different levels.

Dungeons and Dragons (as well as other SF&F games) is available from - GAMES WORKSHOP, 15 Bolingbroke Rd, London W 14.

Games and Prices.

=====

DUNGEONS AND DRAGONS	3 Booklets	£6-75
GREYHAWK	Supplement 1 to D&D	£3-40
BLACKMOOR	Supplement 2 to D&D	£3-40
WAR OF WIZARDS	2 Wizards in magical combat.	£4-95
EMPIRE OF THE PETAL THRONE.	Mammoth fantasy game encompassing a whole planet.	'only' £16-75
GALACTIC WAR	Spacecraft combat	£1-00

THE TOMES OF SPACE

PART THREE: SLIDING DOWN THE RAZOR BLADE OF LIFE. © Rip Offs 1976.

THE STORY SO FAR: IN A FIT OF SUICIDAL DEPRESSION, GOD CREATED THE WORLD. LATER, WHEN HE WAS FEELING MORE HIMSELF, HE DEVOTED HIS TIME TO BASKET WEAVING AND RAISING GUINER PIGS. WHEN ASKED 'AVE YOU DONE?' HE REPLIED 'I AM NOT OMNIPOTENT, I WASH AS OFTEN AS ANYONE ELSE. I DO NOT WRITE A CARTOON FOR O.F.C. AND HAVE NO INTEREST IN THE THING WHICH IS FORMING IN THE AIR EVEN AS THE HERO AND HEROINE MAKE HEATED LOVE. NOR AM I A NIHILIST, OR EVEN A FIGMENT OF... (REST DROWNED BY TAPE HISS) SO IT IS LEFT UP TO J.C. (MUTATED TO A DRAGON LIKE CREATURE BY HOME BREWED BEER), HIS GIRL-FRIEND JULIETTE CRUELTY AND HIS CAT HENNA, TO SAVE LONDON (THE REST OF THE WORLD HAVING BEEN EATEN BY VOLES, IF IT EVER EXISTED).....



GREETINGS. MY NAME IS MISS PETROCK. I HAVE COME TO WARN YOU OF A GREAT DANGER. MANKIND AS WE KNOW IT MAY SOON BE EXTINCT DUE TO THE ATTACKS OF VOLES ON OUR FAIR CITY... ONLY YOU CAN SAVE US!

EARS HAVE VOLES, MY FRIEND!



DISCOVERING HIS NEW-FOUND POWERS FOR THE FIRST TIME, J.C. LEAPS SKYWARD. HENNA THE TOOTHED SLAYER LEAPS INTO HIS HAND, TRANSMUTING INTO A SWORD. HIS FINGERS TREMBLE NERVOUSLY AROUND THE BUTTONS OF HIS RAINCOAT— BUT NO TIME FOR THAT NOW! CHANTING A STRANGE WARDRY TORN FROM THE DEPTHS OF HIS BEING, J.C. ATTACKS!





**A Game Of
Snakes And Ladders**

by Steve Sneyd

"One advantage when your home planet goes up in smoke, at least their criminal records go up too."

Alright, it sounds fiendish and cold-blooded or whatever, I must admit, that that should be my first thought when the weary tinny receiver I left on all day long for company aboard my rusty little stolen get-away ship, suddenly squaked interruption to its tedious midday program of Aldeberanian folk music 'by request only', and the announcer gave out that "Planet Sol 3, traditional claimant for the honour of human origin-home, was burstwiped today by force or forces unknown. Standbye, all peoples, for further soonest details from Allspan Aircorp, your favourite station on the dial in every local parsec". And then back to the whine of "It's hell on the methane hills" or whatever farmhand crap was on at the time.

And any impartial observer, seeing me splitting sides with fractured laughter, choking, belly clutching, falling about weightlessness, bouncing off my bare unhomely home from home like a losing game of squash, while barebones stars winked in at the fun through the scratched and greasy portal, would've wept for how little regret a son of famous fabled Earth could show for her dying.

But then the old Impartialo wasn't Public Enemy Number One back home, with more policemen, space guards, patroleers, satellite watchmen, space customs, cadets and every other kind of uniformed cretin you can imagine than even the Solar Centaur of Cellaris could afford to bribe to lay off out of his cloned opposite sex sibling smuggling racket for the use of jaded incest-minded with an eye for fine-print legal loopholes, all after me at once.

So I laughed. And laughed. And laughed.

Till only a meteor shower alarm got my mind back on things.

Mind, the scene'd've been different if the daft bastards had put my name, rank and retina pattern onto the Interplanet Police. Then Earthdeath would have done me no good, and my reactions might have been different.

But homeplanet small-mind pride'd made 'em determine to catch me themselves, no sticky outside fingers on the prize - or the hefty rewards out for me. An all-time record, I understand, though as a man of intellect I feel myself above such tedious competition.

Anyway, after evading the Perseid swarm, and after calming down with only the slightest smidgin of synth to celebrate, my divided nature began throwing up possibilities that could go wrong. Perhaps all crime records were duplied and a copy kept at Manarchive over Alpha way for opening "in the event of Earth's death" as they say.

Or perhaps the only other survivors would be a shipload of Specials out after me, drugged to the eyeballs with my image till no tragedy to their mere homes, families or loved ones (probably not the same could take their minds off the chase).

Maybe even somehow, despite knowing me always as a one man operation, I'd get the blame for calling the burstwipe in: as if I had any friends anywhere, let alone friends with access to such

expensively high class death technology. I could even be declared Enemy of Mankind on every planet us two-leg pseudo-intellectual so-called self-proud swarms crapped upon, and all the gaps between, with the fist ship or shape to do me in automatically in line for Glory and hard cash, immunities and such usefull things throughout the Epitomes of Truse.

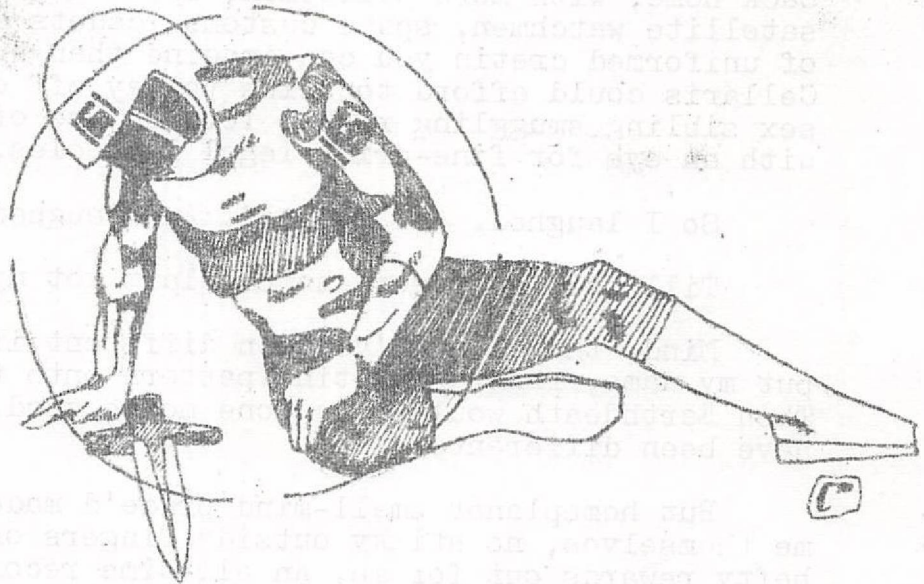
A bit more synth cured thoughts like that.

A bit of fumbling set the auto for a random travel pattern, in case of pursuit in my sleep.

And sleep in turn came heavy like a blanket to warm my mind: I even dreamed I sat in the High Council of the Epitome where quarrels among far flung sons of our tribe are sorted, and myself twirled the lucky globes whose random seizures or settlings stop or start events when thought, argument, logic, law and compromise all fail in face of two equal but opposing goods or bads.

And woke to thoughts unique even in 20 years of criminal brilliance.

A frenetic search of the cretinously out of date computer aboard the ship (I had had no time to check spaceworthiness, let alone comfort, stealing



the "Irenarch" one step before the cops 3 weeks since back at Suringapatan base and had in fact cursed ever since that, once my loot was stored, there was scarce room enough for me to stretch, let alone work controls dated as the legendary Ark the first space settler Nosh used in all the childrens' stories bigger bullying kids at school had smashed me for still

believing; black and blue I was) led, so laboriously I all but tore my teeth out nailbiting (best electron steel they were, those teeth, replacing the work of an aggrieved fellow-robber's boot), at last to proof all the plan that had come to my mind in one flesh of sleep-insight was correct.

Yes, now to set it up.

First the call to Epitome. A preliminary conversation with low rank idiots. At last someone of rank: he looked at me as if I came from beneath a stone on Maris where the slimemolds rule, or vultured over dying kings, and hurriedly, to make it look good, I forced a tear or two, and even ostentatiously waved the black armband I'd made by burning the strap of the case the loot had come aboard dressed in, before the screen. Perhaps that helped. Or perhaps he merely recognised law's sad necessity to

at least pretend equal rights for bad and good. Anyway, he made some notes, and said I should call back, not before 7 cycles so's to check the possibility of other miraculous escapes like mine.

Lucky the festival of Homecoming had drawn, as far as I knew, all law-abiding Earthmen home.

Lucky, too, my fellow-criminals had, as far as I knew, all long sincetaken the offer of amnesty if they went with the Milk, the greatest generation-ship built yet: and were asleep at least another 700 years, the cowards, just because police detection rate had got to 99.999% (and I the other 0.001!)

And with even more luck the cops had still been orbiting in range of Earth, waiting for spoor or news which ship I'd 'liberated' for my need: or at least not quite far enough away to miss the burstwipe blast.

And Earth had sold its space fleet long ago, preferring the more profitable tasks of letting fools come to such planet of spacephobes for holidays that let the ground-bound fathers of mankind bleed them nearly as dry as law allowed (who hated me for stepping just too far.)

7 cycles: now to prepare.

Lucky I am a man of curious knowledge.

Lucky, too, the tools of my trade, for entering and breaking buildings, ships, or minds, also will double as a healer's tools: or at least a grave robber's or a surgeon's.

Beside, alone as I am, always you must be your own doctor as you must be your own counsellor, lover, friend, investment advisor, guide, guardian, God, and all the rest.

Bad as it was the computer at least gave me the code of the mastercomp on Gamm-Oph ... and one of my stolen credit codes gave me access to restricted deep sub nodes I had to have.

As for the basic concept, that indeed too was old: back in those stories faith in which, as I told you, got me so many childhood scars: just because I believed there could still be a brighter truer life than merely running a seedy bygone pimps' paradise for fleeing fools, all scared ourselves to even dive the teeniest timid foot into their "raw, nast, uncivilised dangerous Out-There world".

Alright, dear I've explained it nearly all.

Burstwipe effects will be clear in less than a year.

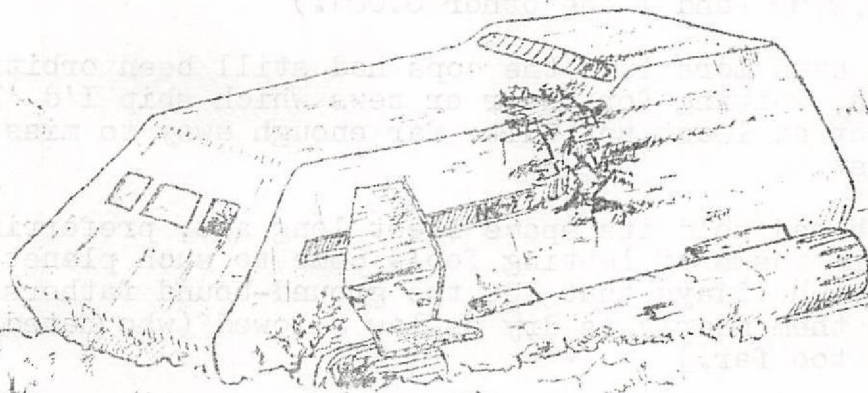
Yes, the bandage on my side here is for a reason.

You were made from there: a rib, if you must know. I always believe in being true to legend.

And the court on Epitome admits my claim. The last surviving couple of true Earthmen, so, by salvage law, and the luck of Epitome's spin, the planet we all come from belongs now to us, to you and me, to breed and set a new and better people on.

My lovely child, my glorious glowing twin, what's that ?
 Hungry? You speak a little shapelessly; perhaps not all the
 impress from my braincells took ... A bet? A pet? Don't worry,
 love, I'll make you some when we get back.

No snakes though. Even in the museum of childhood they
 used to always frighten me to death.



BOOK REVIEWS

THE DOORS OF HIS FACE, THE LAMPS OF HIS MOUTH

====
 Roger Zelazny

Corgi 50p

Reviewed by Peter Close

Corgi continue their stylish Zelazny list with this collection
 of 15 short stories originally published in 1971.

Most of these pieces will be familiar to anyone who has been
 reading SF for any length of time. Although Corgi have declined to
 include the now customary list of original appearances, most of the
 stories here date from the early and mid-sixties - the time of
 Zelazny's prolific appearances in the magazines, before the success
 of his novels took him almost entirely to that part of the market.

The quality of the stories is as uneven as one might expect
 from a beginning writer. Several of the stories are little more than
 one-punch vignettes, but there are also such ambitious pieces as the
 title story and A Rose For Ecclesiastes (both of which were included
 in FOUR FOR TOMORROW/ A ROSE FOR ECCLESIASTES, and many other
 collections), as well as This Moment of the Storm, The Keys to
December and This Mortal Mountain.

Reading the book in one sitting is probably a mistake.
 Zelazny's style, characterisation, themes, plotting and dialogue
 all seem to be a little too much when laid on so liberally in
 story after story. Hard-boiled Burt Lancaster types tackle big
 sea-creatures (The Doors of His Face...), big mountains (This
Mortal Mountain), big storms (This Moment of the Storm). Everybody
 talks in the brash, laconic, machismo style by Chandler out of

ing; he
pages. The Monster and
the legend of Perseus and Andromeda, which is
all you need to know, while The Great Slow Kings and Collector's
Fever are competent minor whimsies and A Museum Piece is pure John
Collier.

But, warts and all, the best of the stories have enormous power
and are compulsively readable. A Rose for Ecclesiastes (hyperbole,
italics, strings of meaningful full stops, exclamation marks,
'and all', as Zelazny very often says) is genuinely brilliant, with
stunning metaphor (the last line alone is unforgettable) and
painstaking characterisation, while The Keys to December catches
and sustains its complex mood to perfection.

The book is well worth buying to get most of Zelazny's shorter
work in one place, although I would have preferred to do without
the more widely available stories and have For a Breath I Tarry,
King Solomon's Ring and Nine Starships waiting instead. With
Zelazny now working almost exclusively at novel length, it's
unlikely there will be another collection for some considerable time.

Minor grouches: For some reason, Corgi haven't put story titles
at the top of each page (annoying in a book which contains so many
short stories) and each story has a chapter number. And the cover's
a bit too garish. But your 50p will be well spent.

CONJURE WIFE

By Fritz Leiber

Reviewed by Chris Nikoloff

Mr Leiber should be a hairdresser, I shall justify this statement.
Beginning the above book, my fancy was tickled by the notion that
all women might be witches: Ha ha. But we have a pragmatic sociologist
(even if a swinger) husband to put a reign on our imaginations -
for a jif. Several fingernails later, and is it really that cold?
I am, quite simply frightened: Why? Why not?

This stylist Leiber has got me by the short & curly; peering
over the book at various women's faces on the way to work, I
shudder. Rubbish. Rubbish?

Unfortunately I left it behind whilst going away for the weekend,
I almost forgot all about it. Back for one hour - just finished it.
I am frozen. Gripping is not the word, shared perhaps with a rare

treat of both sides of a coin presented together; leaving one either totally sold on both (at last true doubt think) or disbelieving one or other - or both.

Do you like Lieber? Its for you.

" " " Horror " " "

" " " Detective fantasy; it's for you.

" " " Women " " "

But: if you value your sanity & peace of mind, pass over this one, relax with H.P. Lovecraft or someone else equally be-symboled and esoterically divorced from reality. Before I read Conjure Wife I thought Fritz Leiber was the German Karma Sutra, now my hair

Sadly CONJURE WIFE is not available in paperback but two of his other novels are available at the moment: THE WANDERER (Penguin 75p) and NIGHT OF THE WOLF (Sphere 50p).

THE CONTINUOUS KATHERINE MORTENHOE

By D.G.Compton

Reviewed by Geoff Challinger

Katherine Mortenhoe is a pseudo-author who writes books by feeding basic outlines and strings of figures into a computer. All her books are published under pseudonyms for the computers, but Katherine works hard at her job and has successfully built herself a career which provides her with a very solid routine. She comes to base her life on the routine of stability which her job and her second husband give her.

This routine of Katherine's is then split wide open when she is informed, by her doctor, that she is going to die in four weeks time. In a world where medical science has progressed to such an extent that the only deaths are the ones by accident or old age, this comes as quite a shock to her. Naturally enough what is shocking to her is interesting to other people and in this twisted situation there is great news value in Katherine's impending death. One particular organisation specialises in premature deaths - NTV. They want to conduct a documentary with film of Katherine, taken as she's dying.

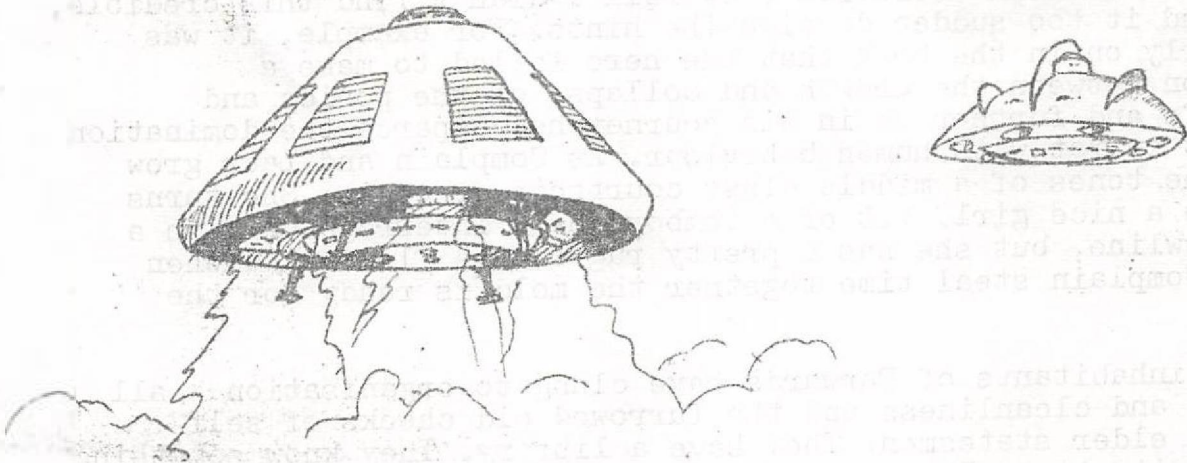
For this they use the ultimate roving camera - Roddy. Roddy is the Faust-figure in the story who has sold himself to NTV. Behind his eyes are TV cameras and thus everything he sees is seen by other people. For some reason, the TV cameras can never be left without light and so Roddy has to be further doctored so that he will not sleep. Thus Roddy loses his privacy and his right to dream. He sells these rights for money.

The pressure on Katherine and her husband, Harry, builds up as commercial firms vie for the use of Katherine as a kind of advertising symbol. NTV still strive to get exclusive rights and eventually Katherine agrees, and then runs off in an effort to drop out. But Roddy is following and the two of them meet up, without Katherine realising who Roddy is.

There are some quite moving passages in this section of the book and you can see there is an excellent depth of character, so it is really possible to see Roddy's point of view.

he is continually searching for the real, the continuous Katherine Mortenhoe, but he has made the decision and, like Faust he is now trapped in it.

The plot and characterisation throughout is excellent. The story is a very clever reworking of the old Faust-like stories. My one quibble is the style of writing. It is very jerky. This could be a subtle device to represent the workings of the TV cameras behind Roddy's eyes or it could be just badly written. Either way it mars what is otherwise an excellent book.



NON-STOP

By Brian Aldiss
Pan 60p

Reviewed by Pauline Jones

I found this book incredibly rich in description and incident yet economical of words. I enjoyed the unexpected metaphors, the humour and the hints and cross references to the final explanations. The story builds steadily to a climax, final revelation then resolution. Perhaps the final catastrophe, the dissolution of the starship into its constituent decks - a piece of unconscious mischief on the part of fleeing and semi-sentient moths, is taking too much of a slim chance, it really is the final turn of the screw. The situation at this point then leads to a solution of the foundering and involved world of a decaying starship. Yet the image fits, light bursts upon the protagonists, the shutters of generations are put aside and a nightmare world is brought into the larger world of normalcy.

The ship is like a mountain jungle opening and climaxing at the top. I find a convincing and haunting world in this great hull. Men, life - shortened and mutated, regressed, creeping about the great corridors, haunting the rooms in feral squalour, their mores tribal, their world view superstitious as Brazilian Indians, their religion a curious perversion of Freud's doctrine of the Id, an accommodation to the frustrations and limitations of the hopeless environment which is perhaps an allegory of the Id itself. In the Greene tribe running amok was even considered manly and slightly awesome, all fear, aggression and subconscious filth is extraverted via ritual.

The characterisation of the early chapters is convincing. I discovered I had quite an affection for the corpulent and wily priest, Marapper. I enjoyed his greasiness and self interest, his dislike of the sincerity of Zac Deight, and the cowardise and narrow minded petulance of his expeditionary force.

Perhaps though what few nits I have to pick start here. Although the characters and relationships are convincing it is hard to conceive how such a tribal debasement might lead even malcontent men into the restless self estrangement whereby they will break with their group. Ostracised they possibly might have been, driven by greed perhaps, left behind for dead in some hacking skirmish with mutants in the green tunnels -- but to go forward led by a garrulous priest who somehow has the intellectual curiosity and restiveness of a latterday Galileo -- this is perhaps a slightly false note. But then again if this isn't so, equally difficult to accept is the hero's change of consciousness and sensibility when he finds himself in 'Forwards'. Overall I didn't find this credible, or I found it too sudden despite the hints. For example, it was noted early on in the book that the hero failed to make a comparison between the growth and collapse of the ponics and human life and further on in his journey he compared the domination of rabbit by rat with human behaviour. As Complain and Laur grow close, the tones of a middle class courtship creep in. She turns out to be a nice girl. Bit of a tomboy, hard interrogator with a Belsen jawline, but she has a pretty rug on the floor. And when she and Complain steal time together the mold is ready for the pouring.

The inhabitants of Forwards have clung to organisation -- all corridors and cleanliness and the furrowed old cheeks of self appointed elder statesmen. They have a library. They know something of their situation. They strive for a solution when not diverted by skirmishes. Yet here again, much of their outlook is mythic, superstitious, just as one would expect. So why is this Spartan and well ordered society in the starships nose not as socially atavistic as the rest. Could Zac Deight's influence, with 2 or 3 others, have raised the level in such an environment. Also being concerned with regressed beings in predicament, could romance come into it?

The landscapes are haunting and strange and pervade with great power and evocation. The sense of mood and place is intriguing. Gradually one moves into the whispering living corridors, puts clue to clue as Complain's odyssey moves to the light -- to the final revelation of the Earth's dawning crescent and the ship is then a great foul womb -- thus out becomes the only way forward, but the haunted dimness of the green backworld is still curiously attractive. so the tension in the story is not only from the tight and kaleidoscopic narrative but also from the regret that Complain must surface, all be revealed, and the dream end. All within the hull pullulates incipient and chilling sentients arising in dark hothouse obscurity. What the imagination of the reader does not supply (and it conjectures enough in this endless whispering labyrinth) is imaged in the book with odd rathives, imprisoned rabbits and furminded moths brushing the brain with the strange wings of their tiny sentience, a subworld, infinitely rarified, echoing the great preying mutating warren of the ship itself. These images have a dream like sharpness and stick in my mind.

It his hard to decide if the science in NON-STOP constitutes an irony -- the pervading vision being so haunting that explanations involving misfortunes with protein chains are almost in questionable taste. However this ostensible explanation of the catastrophe and the detection by Complain and Laur adds a further richness, an anchor, an odd twist to the books hold on one.

So one is given the slow revelation and release from an enclosed environment, a fairly credible humanity, a humanity changed by and interacting in an easy symbiosis with this world, yet it remains human enough for the reader to enter the landscape and penetrate it beyond them.

One final nit to pick about starships - is this the most effective way of solving the population problem. Surely it is a long term evasion and only starts the old trouble somewhere else, providing you don't get the wrong amount of protein.

THE EMBEDDING

By Ian Watson
Quartet 60p

Reviewed by Martin Easterbrook

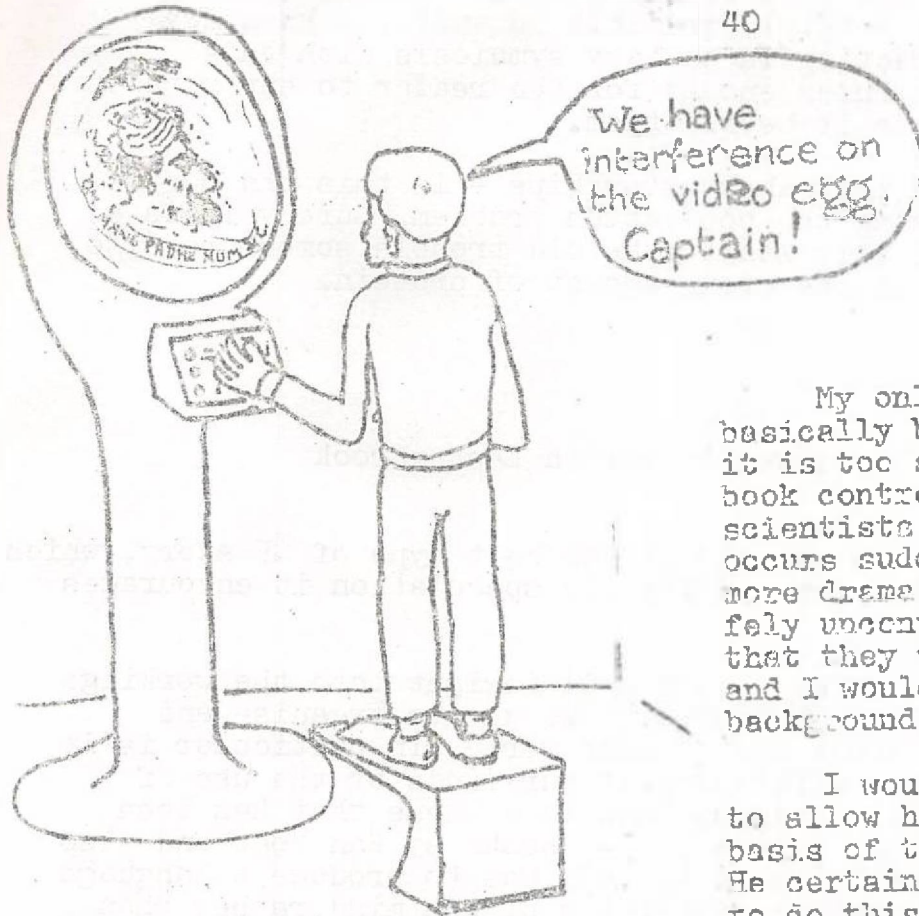
THE EMBEDDING is an example of the best type of SF story, which can be enjoyed for its plot and for the speculation it encourages about its subject.

The subject is whether we can gain insight into the workings of the mind by studying the languages we use to organise and exchange information about the outside world. In particular is it possible to improve the efficiency of our minds by the use of specifically designed languages. This is a theme that has been touched on before in SF, in the NULL-A books by Van Vogt and also in 1984 by George Orwell (where the aim was to produce a language that would block off certain activities of the mind rather than open up new ones). THE EMBEDDING takes the questions in these books one step further, asking whether the way in which our minds organise their knowledge prevents us, in some way, from understanding the physical universe.

On the cover of the Quartet edition there is part of a review from THE SPECTATOR comparing Ian Watson's book with Stanislaus Lem's SOLARIS. SOLARIS itself illustrates a situation where the scientists studying the living ocean are completely unable to make any progress because the 'mind' of the ocean operates in an utterly different way from their own. In SOLARIS it is the ocean which makes greater progress toward bridging the gap between itself and the humans while the scientists in the EMBEDDING face similar problems and take steps toward their solution themselves.

In THE EMBEDDING the central characters are engaged in the study of - "Embedded languages". These are used by a tribe in the Amazon basin (unfortunately due to be flooded by an American engineering project) and by a group of children raised in a laboratory environment. Their researches are interrupted by the arrival of a spacecraft manned by a group of interstellar traders who are willing to exchange their knowledge of space travel for the brains of intelligent creatures with unusual language syntaxes.

The pressure on the linguists is gradually stepped up as they try to persuade the aliens that their own researches are valuable enough to be traded for details of the interstellar drive. The laboratory experiment seems to be going dramatically wrong and the Amazon indians are threatened by the floodwaters behind the dam, which has become a battleground between left wing guerrillas and a sadistic police captain.



These three connected stories are described in sharp detail and combined into a plot with satisfying depth and complexity. Also Watson never allows the story to be bogged down by the philosophy behind it.

My only reservations about the book basically boil down to a complaint that it is too short. At the close of the book control is snatched from the scientists by the politicians. This occurs suddenly and thus injects even more drama into the situation but I feel unconvinced, from the facts given, that they would have acted as described and I would have preferred more background to their decision.

I would also have liked Ian Watson to allow his linguists to expound the basis of their science a little more. He certainly has sufficient knowledge to do this and I assume that he wished

to avoid the situation, found in many earlier SF novels, where the chief scientific character gives the mandatory (and boring) explanation of how a rocket works.

However, the technical basis for this story has not suffered from such over-exposure. I know of some applications of the 'embedding' principle in computer programming languages but I am certainly hazy about the theoretical development of such techniques and I would certainly have liked to know more about the linguistics of human languages. There is much that could have been used to add background to the subject, such as the various algebras, which are in fact problem solving languages which achieve their results by forcing us to organise our thoughts in an unaccustomed way.

The style of the book is compelling and powerful - perhaps too powerful in some of the descriptions of life in the Amazon if you have a weak stomach. In all this is a book which has combined the new standards of writing in SF with an idea taken from the 'new' sciences of linguistics and psychology.

FOUNDATION the review of Science Fiction

=====
 Science Fiction Foundation,
 NELS,
 Longbridge Rd,
 Essex RM8 2AS.
 £2-55 for 3 issues.

Reviewed by Alan Farmer

FOUNDATION is one of the world's most professional magazines about SF, certainly the best thing available from the UK, yet its reputation has been built up over only 9 issues. It has aimed at a high literary standard - its editor's avowed intent is to have SF taken seriously by the mainstream establishment - and if it has any fault it is that

it is sometimes too earnest.

With the last 5 issues FOUNDATION has triumphed over initial uncertainties and has settled into a format that is typified by number 9, which came out in December.

The magazine (while featuring no fiction) consists of three types of material - pieces on SF people, trends, reviews and letters.

The first of these brings in articles by SF authors, on their line of work, and descriptive pieces on various aspects of SF or a particular author's work. It is interesting to see the way that FOUNDATION has managed to get the more interesting lesser-known authors to contribute. It's a relief to find a publication that is not full of the Heinleins and Asimovs (although wouldn't the occasional piece on Niven or Farmer, say, help to ensure that it is not too biased in the other direction?). In this issue Richard Cowper has delivered a clear cut, interesting autobiographical essay, in the past Ursula Le Guin and Silverberg have done likewise. With this type of piece the styles go from acid-edged dissection of the genre to literary masturbation.

Such articles are more interesting when the authors are giving a factual history of themselves or their books, or when concentrating on generalities of the field. When they discuss their own work there is always the feeling that it is all clear cut and explained. Are we to believe that SF authors will resist the temptation to excuse themselves where possible, rationalize their more abstruse motives and skate round their uncertainties. Some are very subtle in their circumventions, like Silverberg getting round his failure to critically examine his latest work by merely pointing out how much better it is than his old sausage-machine period. Then of course there is the point of view that argues authors are the last people who should be asked for an in-depth analysis of their work.

The articles about SF are literary to the point of threatening overintellectuality in a lot of 'Deep Throat' SF analysis. Peter Nicholls (also FOUNDATION's editor) treads the borderline perilously. He can't resist the temptation of the 'apt quote', the vignette of apposite prose, and the meaningful aphorism. This has led him (in the context of review titles) to apologise to at least one author. His article in FOUNDATION 9, on three of the New Worlds writers uses quotes from Yeats and Dr Johnson - to some effect admittedly, though such literary embellishments can give an ordinary SF reader (I deliberately do not say 'fan') a queasy stomach. After all, is not one of the attractions of SF the fact that it has not generally yet been prey to the literary wolves that chew up simple entertainment and try to excrete socio-philosophical treatises that would give Marcuse semantic indigestion. Still, I must admit that on the whole Nicholls succeeds in not going to far. His comments are generally interesting and well stated without excesses. I could not agree with all his points about Ballard, Moorcock and Aldiss, yet I felt the richer for them. He condemns them basically for their 'cool' and anarchic style, yet surely his avowed admiration for some of their work would have been lessened if they had not been allowed to expand by innovation and experimentation. Also, does a 'cool' (presumably emotional) style necessarily mean it is less relevant, less incisive or less accurate? Why should writing be only about emotions - the ultimate of that is WOMAN'S OWN ?

Where Nicholls succeeds, one of the other essayists, Barbara Bengels fails. Here is an example of the US-university-postgraduate-thesis-on-SF disease (or how to say something simple in as many words as possible, bringing in all possible philosophic ideas from Socrates to Wittgenstein, preferably leaving the reader totally confused); the literary equivalent of a bad trip in a hall of mirrors. The author gains extra points if it contains a sentence grammatically incorrect but so abstruse no reader spots it). She spends 4 1/2 pages cultivating literary sores on the skin of Stapleton's work, to point up (I think) the bestiality of ODD JOHN by comparing it to SIRIUS. Yet surely the dog in SIRIUS is used to make points about humanity by utilising a convenient alien viewpoint (come to think of it she might have said this - I confess I gave up thinking after a few paragraphs).

Fortunately where the authors give their autobiographies or analyses of their own work they are less liable to make the mistake of over-intellectualisation (indeed many openly pooch-pooch in-depth analysis of their work). In FOUNDATION 9, one exception to this is seen, in part, in an article by J.G. Ballard, whose explanations always seem somewhat too earnest. My immediate reaction is to dive back into his books and appreciate what he says there, not his explanations of it. His remarks in F 9 on the reversal of fact and fiction in the modern world, though fascinating, are a little suspect.

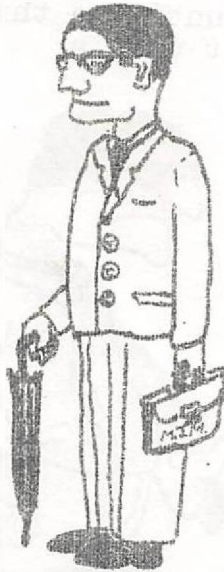
The second element of FOUNDATION is the reviews section. It takes up some considerable space, and is interesting for showing the ordinary SF reader how SF authors treat other SF authors. This section is usually fascinating for several reasons. The reviews are not primarily to tell the reader what he should or should not buy. There is anyway, at least in the last few issues, an obvious pre-selection of books so that only the more interesting are treated. Rather, they give analyses of the relevance and quality of the new work.

Because they are often by authors, they are interesting for the insights they give into the reviewers views, predispositions and prejudices. Ian Watson's piece on Ursula Le Guin's THE DISPOSSESSED is such a two-bodied article. While he should, perhaps, have stuck to the literary qualities and not attempted the heinous sortie into scientific analysis (of THE DISPOSSESSED? Yes, indeed!), it is on the whole a thoughtful, interesting piece. I'm still trying to decide if his criticisms are valid, but at least it makes one think! His other review of REAL TIME WORLD must have brought a groan from the lips of its author, Chris Priest, who has somewhat sickened of his work being called Kafkaesque.

The letters pages, too, are better than the average. They are certainly better than ANALOG's and F&SF's, but then what isn't? They are interesting for the same reason as the reviews - SF authors on SF authors - with the added bonus of the use of the right to reply. The only improvement would be to allow 'equal time' to authors to discuss their new works simultaneously with the reviewer. It is very hard to find a bad letter in FOUNDATION, just about says it all.

So, if you are at all interested in the workings and characters of SF rather than just the surface pose, the clockwork rather than where the hands are pointing, you should subscribe to FOUNDATION. It has its troubles, like so many other publications in SF, with appearing on time, but it is worth waiting for.

THE LETTERCOL



In such publications as this it is customary to allow the reader the opportunity to strike back at his tormentor. This section was missing from the last issue owing to my impatience with the mealy-mouthed practice of 'fighting fair' coupled with the fact that we went over budget (broke!) and couldn't afford a letters page. However during the preparation of this issue I was seized by the left ear, by Elke Stewart from the British Science Fiction Association and told that if I was trying to introduce people to SF fanzines I just had to have a lettercol.

Fortunately tradition also allows the editor to shelter between double brackets and snipe back as the mood takes him.

The first missive of the pile is still able to deliver a nasty bite even when hacked into tiny chunks

Peter E. Close
London E 5



Dear Editors,

.....For a start, why OUR FAIR CITY? All right, it's the title of a Heinlein story. So is The unpleasant profession of Jonathan Hoop. The only thing I can think of is Panshin's summary of the plot of our fair city which refers to a "crusading whirlwind".
Hmmm...

Martin Easterbrook's report on Beneluxcon III is quite interesting, but does not encourage me to start attending any conventions, conveying as it does a certain 'fourteen pints and only puked twice' atmosphere which I associate with rugby clubs and other aspects of adolescence. The references to convention events and personalities were intriguing, and too few.

((Actually Pete it was only once. I hope though that everyone didn't get the same impression of Beneluxcon from my report that you did. The Belgians take their SF far more seriously than we do and would rightly be annoyed if my emphasising the humorous aspects of the con prevented people from realising that they had put in a great deal of work to organise a serious (though not dull) program.

Perhaps I should also have mentioned that we did all the clearing up after the parties ourselves since it was not our intention to have fun at the expense of other people.))

... Now we come to Charles Goodwin's IN PURSUIT OF THE LAST UNICORN. Despite intermittent efforts throughout the last month, I have not been able to get through the entire length of the oeuvre in one sitting. I would, however, guess that Mr Goodwin has read every issue of NEW WORLDS that John Carnell did edit, that he passionately admires Michael...



Samuel.R.Deleney and Thomas.M.Disch, and that he only did one draft of his story. I may be letting my prejudices run away with me, but I hate this kind of stuff. I write it myself when I try to write, and most writers do at the beginning of their careers. What a writer has to do however, is not to give it to his friend who is getting out a fanzine and needs material, but to bash away at it until he thinks it's as good as he can make it. He can then inflict it upon a professional editor who draws a salary which more or less compensates him for the ordeal. If he is a good editor he will read the story carefully and send it back with a covering letter. It is his job to tell the writer that, for example, the story is not about anything in particular except a walk through Hyde Park. I walk through Hyde Park too. It's quite nice. I don't need seven and a half tedious pages to tell me about it. The editor will also tell the writer that his material is far too slight for the emotional lumber he is trying to hang upon it, that his mood changes are too fast and extreme, that his sentences have too many subordinate clauses crammed into them, that surrealism looks easy but isn't, and that, maybe, a few years of hard work will make him into quite a competent writer. But this story now is just a drag, and nobody is going to wade through all this dross for the few golden nuggets which are there, honestly!



Ahhhh... gasp, gasp... On to the next victim.

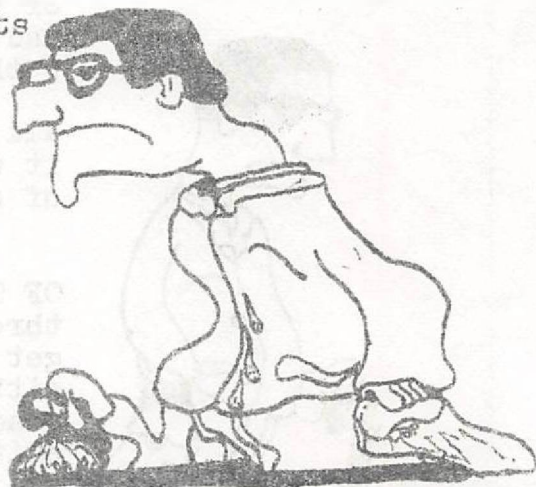
This is the irritatingly fragmentary conversation between Brian Aldiss and Chris Priest. The various disasters which seem to have afflicted the tape remind me irresistibly of THE OLD GREY WHISTLE TEST. (Bob Harris blinks earnestly at the camera and whispers, "As you know, we were planning to have live spots from the Rolling Stones, the Mahavishnu Orchestra, Paul Simon, Jimi Hendrix, Bob Dylan, Janis Joplin and Rod Stewart; unfortunately, none of them can be with us tonight, and they even tell me one or two of them are dead. So instead I'm going to play you the title track from A HARD DAY'S NIGHT...")

What else? Well, the drawings are OK, although often hard work to decipher, but Kirk, Austin and Rotsler have nothing to fear as yet. The editing could be improved; I kept tripping over mistakes in grammar and punctuation that should never have got in, and the comment that somebody made in STARTLING STORIES in 1952 still applies:

I hate the Sci-Fic fanzines
They always give me fits
By writing it's when they mean its
And spelling it's as its.

Anyway, that's about it. Best of luck for the new year; your zine is certainly worth a subscription, and further developments are awaited with interest.

((Well I hope you have'nt wasted away waiting. Having read your letter I think I'll go away and stand in a corner while the next writer takes his turn.))



Andrew Stephenson,
19 Du Pre Walk,
Wooburn Green,
High Wycombe,
Bucks HP10 0Q.

Dear Martin,

...Thanks for both OFC 2 and 3; with the exception of most of the book reviews which I disliked for their tendency merely to summarise the plots, I enjoyed them. (By the way, I did like the review of THE INVERTED WORLD; can't you do most of them like that?) I particularly admired the article on the BIS.

((Both these pieces were by Alan Farmer. Unfortunately writers like him are hard to find, he got the best recorded pass in the University of London extra-mural SF exam. Most of the letters I've recieved have raved about his stuff but I thought I'd let you speak for them all as I don't want him getting a swelled head. I shall be getting as much of his stuff as I can, even if I have to buy him drinks. At the moment he is settling into the office routine, having left college, and when last seen was actually wearing a suit. I hope that he will be able to drop the businessman image occasionally to be mis-printed in our pages from time to time though.))

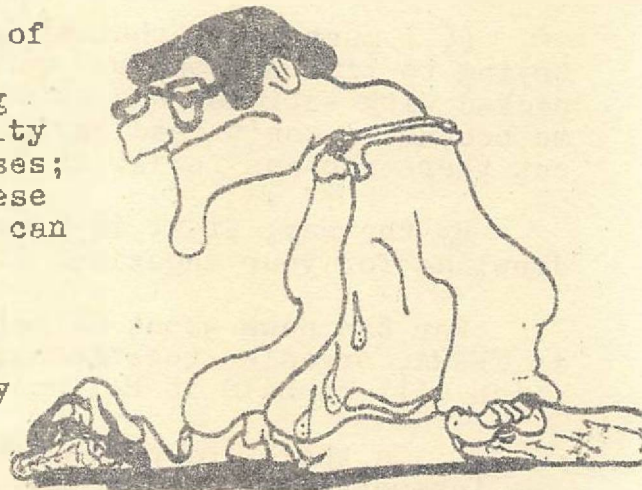
I rather think your function will have to be that of a club zine instead of a regular fanzine. If my understanding of your aims is correct, you are aiming at the massed apathy of London University in all its multifarious collegiate guises; also you want to inform and attract these said masses into a society wherein you can really work on them. Yes?

If so my suggestion is to keep it simple and informative, and you'll be appreciated even if few people actually write in.

((That is the basic idea but I'm very worried about the situation as it is evolving at the moment, where there are a small handfull of us with some knowledge of the sort of activities that SF fans have carried on in the past and who are trying to duplicate them within the University. To many members we must appear to be a small clique intent on running things our way and I am afraid that if they don't like the things we are doing they will just leave rather than confronting us with our sins. In my own college, Royal Holloway, I tried to organise a group around a library and a discussion group as this was the way that I became involved in 'Fandom'. This didn't work but luckily the emphasis switched to Fantasy wargaming, something where I was as much of a newcomer as everyone else, and the craze for this created interest in the library and discussion of SF rather than detracting from it.

The other reason I was screaming for reaction was that there are too few of us to organise the society properly. The gap between the issues of the magazine illustrates this. I think that our mebers have a right to feel disappointed with our activities this year but we have been 'running faster just to stand still' because of shortage of manpower (sorry, personpower.)

....But what's this? Encouragement from an unexpected quarter of Europe. Remember last ish I wrote about the Dutch coming to bail us out of some hassles over a room party, Well here providing yet more



moral support is 'Han', one of the 'new' fans who are doing so much for SF on the continent. Here is how the organisation of 'TERRA' has been carried out on the continent.

J. Slotema,
Jac.v.Lennepstraat 342
Amsterdam
Nederland

Dear Martin,

...I am going to start from the top and tell you a little about TERRA.

We have started with 5 SF crazy guys who wanted to contact other madmen and so we gave birth to an organisation. And you should have seen our first magazine.

Because of the little money we had, we just made a gamble and started with a movieday, and we made it. Now we have about 175 paying members, but on our days we have 500 people and we have had to send away 300. So next year we will have a building for 1250. Six times a year we produce our magazine and sometimes an extra only for members. I sent you a copy with this letter, it's Dutch but maybe you can do something with it.

((I must admit that my Dutch is completely non-existent but I'm trying to find someone who can review it for me. It's a 44 page zine packed with articles and artwork, and it's sitting there frustrating me because I can't read any of it. Is there any kind Dutch speaker out there who can review it for me.))

By the way, if it is possible for you to do, try to get some drawings for your magazine, it will attract those who are interested.

For the news about SF activities in Europe, first of all we, that is TERRA, organise together with the N.C.S.F. the next Beneluxcon which will be held in Holland on 15 and 16 of May 1976.

...On the 27 of March TERRA has a Perry Rhodan day and those who are interested can write to :

TERRA,
Postbus 3997,
Amsterdam,
Nederland.

Lots of success with your SF club.

((Thanks Han. I wish we had TERRA's organisation here in London. This issue is a bit late for the conventions mentioned, but I hope that people will be able to use the addresses to get in contact with fans in Holland.

I would be interested to hear of any other SF organisations to see whether we can duplicate any of their activities in the University society.

Meanwhile there will be space next ish for anyone to take pot-shots at OFC, (and even more space for anyone who liked it)))



47

your

raise

hands

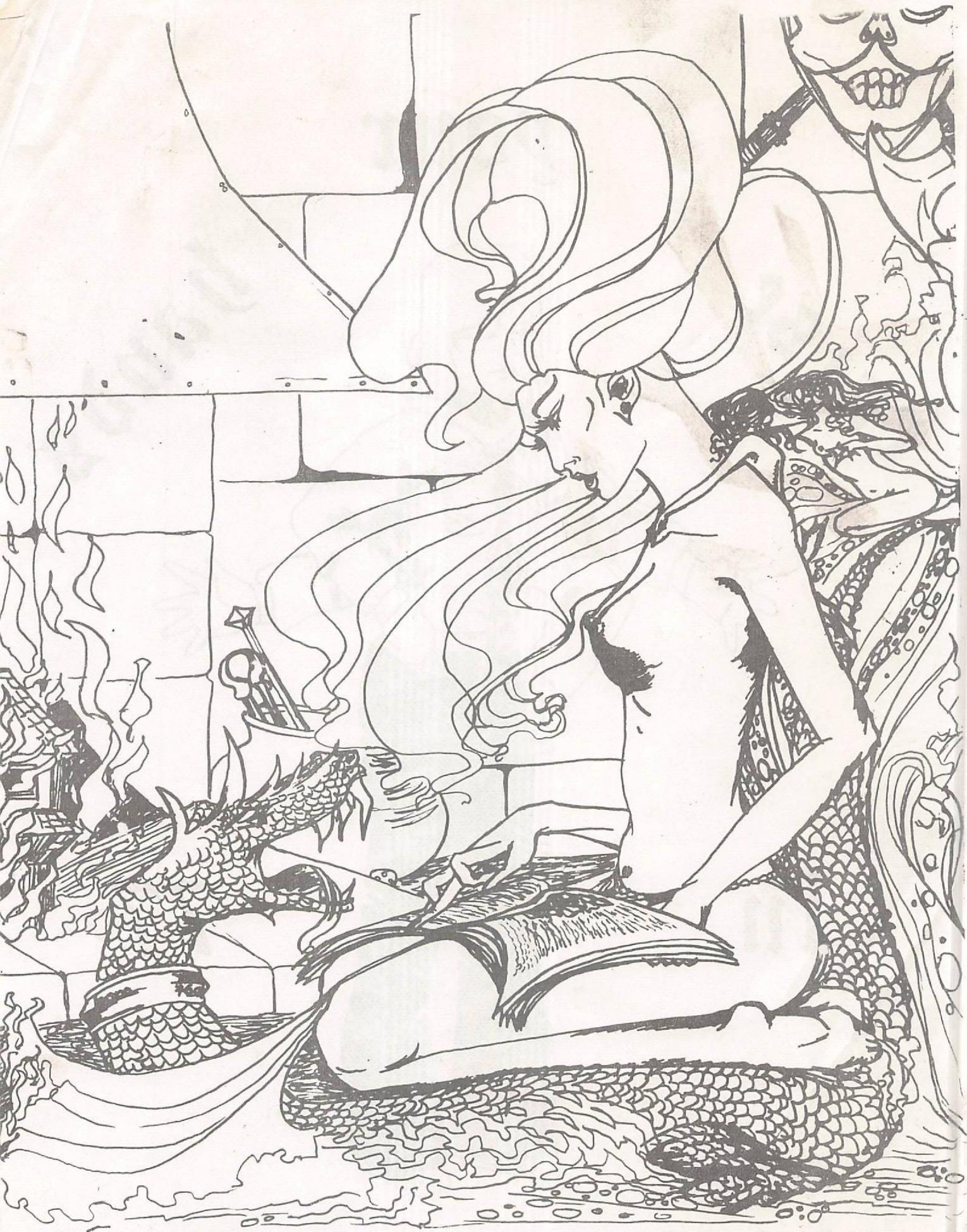


in

77



Vote for the Harvey's bid for the 78 Eastercon. This is your chance to make Easter 78 a Harvey's Festival.



OUR FAIR CITY is published by The University of London Science Fiction and Fantasy Society. Editor Martin Easterbrook, Physics Dept, Royal Holloway College, Egham Hill, Egham, Surrey.

OUR FAIR CITY is published three times a year and is available for trade, letter of comment and is distributed free to members of the Society.