

LIEN

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In Brief --

Another double-issue, you say? Well--one person said we should continue with them, another said to drop them, and the rest of you said nothing. So, we'll use our own discretion, publishing a double-issue now and then when we feel the type of material we have on hand warrants it. ## We will publish another double-issue in March, to get out the 4th Quarter '73 Prozine Index; if Delap's next prozine column is short enough, we'll run it in a single issue; otherwise, there may be two double-issues in March. (Normally, we'll have a max. of one double-issue/mo.)

The last pages of this issue should be run off March 26. It will probably be collated Mar. 27, and mailed Mar. 28. So, please let us know the date you receive it, so we can continue our statistical analysis of 3rd-class vs. 1st-class delivery.

SOTWJ #136 should be mailed the weekend of Mar. 30/31, so it may reach some of you before this issue....

And remember, if your sub ends with the first half of this issue (#134), your renewal (if you renew) will start with #135.

TWJ #83 at printer's; #80 still at publisher's; #84 moving right along (tentative deadline is still April 15; final deadline will be set when #83 is mailed out).

SOTWJ is at least weekly; subs: 25¢ (10p) ea., 9/\$2 (12/£1) or multiples thereof; this issue is 50¢; all subs incl. any issue of THE WSFA JOURNAL pubbed during sub (count as 3 or more issues, dep. on length). TWJ is again available on its own, at the staggering price of 4/\$5 (4/£2 U.K.). For info on airmail, 3rd-class subs (now 8/\$2), ads, Overseas Agents, Trade-Subs, etc., write ed. Address Code: A, Overseas Agent; C, Contributor; H, L, or M, WSFA Honorary, Life, or Regular member, resp. (# = # of WSFA issues left on sub); K, Something of yours is mentioned/reviewed herein; N, You are mentioned herein; R, For Review; S, Sample; T, Trade; W or Y, Subber via 1st- or 3rd-class mail, resp. (# = # of issues left on sub); X, Last issue, unless you sub, renew your sub, contribute, trade, etc.).... --DLM



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REVIEW EXTRACTS (from the press) --

SF/Fantasy: Catholics, by Brian Moore (Holt, Rinehart & Winston; 107 pp.; \$4.95) [Mayo Mohs; TIME, 5/3/73]: ". . . ironic but compassionate story . . . it is at least part of the book's insistent fascination that Moore teases the reader for a while before the resolution becomes clear--or even explicable." ## Catholics [Walter Clemons; NEWSWEEK, 26/3/73]: "The spare, lucid but mysteriously powerful Catholics, which first appeared last summer in Theodore Solobaroff's NEW AMERICAN REVIEW 15, is one of the best things Moore has ever written. . . Moore is a matter-of-fact writer who taps powerful springs of chagrin and unease, never more movingly than he does here." ## Breakfast of Champions, or Goodbye, Blue Monday, by Kurt Vonnegut, Jr. (Delacorte Press-Seymour Lawrence; 295 pp.; \$7.95) [Robert Evett; WASH. STAR, 27/5/73]: "This vastly entertaining book has as weak a plotline as a novel can manage. . . Vonnegut uses his plot as a clothesline to which he fastens jeux d'esprit, his political opinions, and subsidiary stories without number. . . he is getting better all the time, and every new work of his is something to celebrate." ## Gothic Tales of Terror, Volume One: Classic Horror Stories from Great Britain, ed. Peter Haining (Penguin; \$2.50) [?; WASH. POST, 19/8/73]: 30 stories dating from "the golden age of the original gothic motif", 1765-1840; some are anonymous and others by authors virtually unknown today, but there are also famous writers included, such as Percy and Mary Shelley, Horace Walpole, and others. "The tales often have a medieval setting and characters that range from magicians and wicked knights to ghosts, vampires, dancing skeletons and devils." ## All Right, Every Body Off the Planet!, by Bob Ottum (Random House; 239 pp.; \$5.95) [Robert J. Williams; WASH. POST, 29/3/72]: A (sort-of) live robot is constructed by beings in outer space to look and act human; his mission is to plant a cover story in TIME magazine announcing the arrival of the alien spacemen, in order to smooth the way for a peaceful invasion of Earth. Williams says that the book's best character is "a smart-alex computer self-named Rufus", and states: "The story is billed as humorous science fiction but I have my doubts. There isn't a whole lot of science . . . and it may not really be fiction. Also it's hilarious, although there may be a few grumps who don't go for such stylized, offbeat prose." ## Rendezvous With Rama, by Arthur C. Clarke (Harcourt Brace Jovanovich; 303 pp.; \$6.95) [Joseph McLellan; WASH. POST 1/10/73]: ". . . Clarke has recaptured some of the feel of 2001 . . . while giving the content a new twist. . . the book is a long prose poem on the wonder of discovering something new and the slowly unfolding joy of exploring its details. And more subtly, in counter-rhythm, it is an elegy on the incompleteness of discovery, the constant intrusion of two or more new questions for every new bit of knowledge. The work is superbly engineered . . . But in its de-emphasis of human interest it directs itself primarily to hard-core science fiction fans."

Non-Fiction: The Coming Dark Age, by Robert Vacca (Doubleday; 221 pp.; \$6.95) [James Ridgeway; WASH. STAR, 25/11/73]: "This dreadful book is based on a bad idea which is becoming popular . . . the coming of the new dark age. . . He believes that large scale technology is breaking down all around, and that men are not capable of fixing it up or substituting something different and better . . . large systems are out of control . . . The book's factual underpinnings are scant. It is devoid of historical, economic, political theory. But Vacca's vision of the future comes over clearly, and it's a pretty horrible, and--he says--unavoidable prospect." ## The Cosmic Connection: An Extraterrestrial Perspective, by Carl Sagan (Anchor/Doubleday; 274 pp.; \$7.95) [Edward Edelson; WASH. POST, 25/11/73]: ". . . a book that is very nearly perfect. . . Sagan's subject is . . . the study of possible life on other planets. . . it is a success on every level. . . a marvelous combination of wit and science." ## In Search of Dracula: A True History of Dracula and Vampire Legends, by Raymond T. McNally & Radu Florescu (Warner; \$1.50) [?; WASH. POST, 16/12/73]: "A work of scholarship both thorough and readable, this study includes a variety of vampire legends and other items of folklore as well as lists of books and films about vampires. Its focal point . . . is a brief biography of Vlad the Impaler . . . whose zest for genocide gave rise to the Dracula legend. . ."

(dissecting)  
 ^ THE HEART OF THE MATTER:  
 Magazines for Dec., 1973

Operational Procedures  
 Supervised by  
 Richard Delap

I don't have much comment this month. There are seven magazines, but with the exception of F&SF none of them shows much spunk this time around. WEIRD TALES has not made a news-stand appearance since the distribution of this issue, and it looks as if it may not survive--too bad, if it happens, because it looks as if public sympathy might take a turn toward this sort of fiction once again.

The yearly wrap-up and best-of-the-year list will appear in TWJ #84.

AMAZING STORIES -- December:

Serial:

The Stone That Never Came Down (conclusion) -- John Brunner.

Novelette:

Moby, Too -- Gordon Eklund.

Eklund's autobiography of a whale (not just any whale, but an intelligent mutant with telepathic powers) is a rambling, sometimes forced narrative that is never gripping or particularly dramatic yet has an easy flow that makes it brisk and mildly entertaining reading. The basic concept seems a bit silly--what with most of mankind dead from a worldwide plague, whales all but extinct, and the few survivors of each knowingly doomed--but Eklund weasels his way around the fractured logic by making the whale an amusing, slightly pompous storyteller who can excuse his own half-truths for the sake of drama. Not a memorable story but fun to read nonetheless. Okay of kind.

Short Stories:

The Immortality of Lazarus -- William Rotsler.

One immediately remembers Heinlein's novel, I Will Fear No Evil, while reading Rotsler's tale of an old rich man who seeks to have his brain transplanted into a new young body. But where Heinlein granted the power of money and concentrated on sexual identity, Rotsler looks for exceptions and focuses on greed. A short story, however, is hardly the place to deal with such subject matter, as becomes obvious with this depthless treatment in which the characters have no time to do more than chatter plot details. Mediocre.

Different Angle -- H. H. Hollis.

Like many mystery stories, this one forces the reader to accept the basic contrivance of an observed murder in which the detective must discover who saw it and why they won't speak. Hollis has a very unusual observer in this case, an experimental hologram camera that just happened to be in use at the scene of the crime. Hollis' characters are not so hollow as one might expect in a mystery which is concerned with the how of the crime, so should please readers who find this type of corny plot hard to swallow.

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ANALOG -- December:

Serial:

The Sins of the Fathers (part two) -- Stanley Schmidt.

Novelette:

The Hellhound Project -- Ron Goulart.

Goulart jumps to the year 2030 and the future he sees is a grim one, emphasized by an unrelieved concentration on the most dour aspects, beginning with the recruitment of a societal drop-out from Manhattan's skid-row to the obscene alliance between the government and the monied class. The recruit is hired by the Opposition Party to infiltrate the rich Walbrook family (by posing as a member who has survived a period of suspended animation), and his job is to discover

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DISSECTING THE HEART OF THE MATTER (Continued) --

exactly what and how deadly is the Hellhound Project, a supersecret weapon apparently financed by the Walbrooks. Goulart is not particularly inventive with his plot but his pacing is actionful, his characters agile and always on the move. The story's best asset is its swiftness, which helps to cover some persistent questions about motivation and the rather simplified cloak-and-dagger accretements. Okay of kind.

## Short Stories:

Skinnerian Box -- Roger A. Beaumont.

The subject, utopia; the viewpoint, antiutopian--in which Beaumont conceives a near-future working for utopia with a brainwashing method which forces each man to choose the route most pleasurable to him but cannot and does not allow him to question the morality of the end result. The story is told in diary form but cannot hide the sermonistic and sketchy protest in its subject, invalidating rather than supporting the drama it attempts.

Soldiers' Home -- Lawrence A. Perkins.

Anthony Randolph trusts no one, for he is sure that the room in which he is being kept is watched by Yankees, that he is imprisoned for reasons unknown following the disastrous end of the Civil War. But what are those strange bulbs and tubes that produce light? And who is Brownbeard--a fellow Southerner or a Northern spy? And Miss Stimson, who watches him closely--can she be trusted? It's an intriguing situation which Perkins resolves in an offensive mess of redneck fears and ignorances that pile the garbage up so heavily that even the ultra-conservatives will surely be offended. Poor.

Weed Killers -- Ronald Cain.

First take a race of intelligent mobile trees zipping around the universe in spaceships. Next bring them face-to-face (well, face-to-branch?) with intelligent animals--the human race, to be exact--and watch them register shock to see their Earthly relatives standing deaf and dumb while the animal "weeds" rule the world. Now what to do?--leave things as they are or change them? Cain doesn't seem to have much respect for any intelligence, since he makes both races seem equally stupid in his desperate play for infantile humor. Dreadful.

## Science:

Beyond the Blue -- Walter B. Hendrickson, Jr.

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FANTASY AND SCIENCE FICTION -- December:

## Novelettes:

The Women Men Don't See -- James Tiptree, Jr.

A plane crash in Yucatan leaves four people stranded in a swampy district with little to do but wait for rescue. The Mayan pilot and his three American passengers are not the usual heroics-and-betrayals group we might expect in such a setting, however; for Tiptree is seeking philosophical points amid the twists of a plot that keeps its improbabilities within reason by hinting strongly that the unexplained is not unexplainable but merely, well...unexplained. If logicians will squirm a bit at this, their discomfort will be only a minor one next to those readers who will find the approach to sexual roles of men and women quite offensive. But Tiptree thankfully refuses to preach as he continues to explore subjective opinions with a sneaky objectivism. His characters sound each other out with marvelously inventive dialogues that avoid the deadening dramatic trap of explanations. Intelligent, infuriating, inventive, Tiptree again proves himself unafraid of controversy and one of the most versatile stylists of modern SF. A fine, fine story.

The Power of Blackness -- Jack Williamson.

Old-fashioned SF adventure stories set on other worlds become more and more common as they become less and less good. An old hand at this sort of tale, Williamson here sets the stage for a new series of gung-ho stories, but the plot doesn't get interesting until he gets the "adventure" out of the way and begins, if

(Cont. next page)

DISSECTING THE HEART OF THE MATTER (Continued) --

ever so tentatively, to examine the characters who have obligingly paced through the opening charade of depthless action. The protagonist, who comes to be known as Blacklantern on his world of Nggongga, must fight the deadly tly before an arena of spectators to gain his name and fame. Down but not out after a rigged battle, he sets out on a mission of revenge, only to be conveniently nabbed at the last moment by the interworld Benefactors. At this point the characters begin to display themselves as a bit more than cardboard pieces but, alas, Williamson cuts the story off with only a promise of more interesting developments. It might become a fast-paced and exciting series if the people are allowed to do more than merely rush through situations.

Short Stories:Time-Sharing Man -- Herbert Gold.

A new deal-with-the-devil story here, one that does, believe it or not, take a new tack on what is perhaps the most well-worn theme in fantasy. This time a business executive leases (as opposed to sells) his soul in exchange for relief from the minor annoyances of life. Small bills, keys, stamps, etc., just appear or disappear conveniently. Readers who stop and think a moment will surely figure out the drawback, but Gold hardly gives them a chance as he quickly butchers insouciance with a sharp knife of quick wit. Fun.

12:01 P.M. -- Richard A. Lupoff.

At 12:01 P.M. in Manhattan, Mr. Castleman hurries through the street traffic on his way to lunch. An hour later, he is returned in time (along with the entire world) to 12:01 P.M., beginning another lunch hour. Again and again and again it happens, as predicted by a professor who has foretold a collision between a "counter-universe" and our own, but Castleman finds himself in a special kind of hell for only he remembers each repetition. The ending is a bit weak and rather uselessly pessimistic, but otherwise the story carries a nice cold chill of starkness that makes it an engaging read. Okay of kind.

Ms. Found in an Oxygen Bottle -- Gary Jennings.

Jennings shares writing credit with Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley, whose story of The Mortal Immortal (which even among SF fans is not widely read) he continues here. Shelley's hero is a sad, brave man who by drinking an elixir made by Cornelius Agrippa gains immortality and spends centuries working for a better world, forever doomed to leave each project when he can no longer hide the incorruptibility of his body. He fondly remembers his first love as he seeks through the years a duty commensurate with his immortality. Ferman calls it "poignant", and I agree, for Jennings resists the maudlin, and with clarity and simplicity reaches for the heart of hope in a cage of despair. Nicely done.

Moonacy -- C. G. Cobb.

A nice old-fashioned romance complete with a mildly smug but likeable hero, pretty heroine, and romantic rival/villain (who does everything but wear a black hat and snarl) is the free-swinging hinge on which Cobb hangs a highly entertaining story about the planet Frolich, a frontier world undergoing preliminary surveys for future human habitation. Along with the romance there is some delightful repartee dialogue between the hero and his companions, an intelligent and telepathic dog and horse, which gives a solid counterpoint to the danger which suddenly emerges on the night when Frolich's three moons concurrently appear in the sky. It's a sassy, energetic story that should please readers of almost any persuasion. Very well done.

Voyage with Interruption -- Doris Pitkin Buck.

Arc'ro, a jockey from Earth, is kidnapped from a starship, sold as a slave, falls in love with a lovely alien woman, and at last puts his talent to good use when forced to ride a winged insect, a ride which must be either his death or his flight to freedom. What Ms. Buck has done here, and done well, is to take what most writers would puff into a novel and reduce it to the essentials for a simple story that somehow seems improved for its lack of frivolous detail. It's a basic, semi-symbolic tale with the inherent strengths of a good fairy-tale and little of the weakening fussiness that so often creeps into refurbished versions of such. Nice.

(Over)

DISSECTING THE HEART OF THE MATTER (Continued) --Not a Red Cent -- Robin Scott Wilson.

This is a pleasant, subtly uplifting story of ethnic pride that gains stature by refusing to slop over into easy fanaticism, finding a common stand for all ethnic individualism. The setting is a mere fifteen years into the future, when Lake Erie is drained in the on-going effort to find more living space, and seen through the eyes of an Amerind reporter whose rediscovery of his Indian heritage leads him gently into an even more wide-ranging and important discovery of human heritage. After so much vicious and violent social propaganda in recent SF, Wilson's story comes as a gentle breath of fresh air. Well done.

Science:

The Figure of the Farthest -- Isaac Asimov.

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GALAXY -- December:

Serials:

Inverted World (part one) -- Christopher Priest.The Dream Millennium (conclusion) -- James White.

Novelette:

Sweet Sister, Green Brother -- Sydney J. Van Scyoc.

Van Scyoc offers another story in the series about men who, desperate to escape the overcrowded CityAmerica of Earth, are willing to take chances with five-year stakeouts on newly discovered planets. The settlers on Narr have problems with "intelligent" plants (as did the settlers in the previous "Mnarra Mobilis"), and again it is the problem of human interfering with the already balanced ecology. Threatened by storms, the trees give up their sap to the stream, which then returns it when the danger is past. The humans, unfortunately, are not a very interesting lot, and Van Scyoc's interludes of communication between the trees and the stream read more like overdramatized personifications than intelligent or even instinctual contact. The flammable treesap (which, for some unknown reason, Van Scyoc persistently refers to as "inflammable") makes the water unfit for the humans, which leads them to ignorant and dangerous actions. This type of story demands a cautious tone and careful detail, and the author has muffed it on both counts. Too bad.

Short Stories:

Unbiased God -- Doris Piserchia.

Crashlanding on a small sandbar protruding from the waters of a harsh ocean world, two men survive only by wearing special belts called "the Physician", a protective device with capacities unknown even to its human inventors. A simple story of survival is not quite all that Piserchia is writing, however. More important is the speculation on man's fate at the whim of an "unbiased god", a god nurtured and grown from a technology that respects only man's survival instinct and not his aesthetics. While the story is too condensed and heavy to be very believable, it carries an SF philosophical punch that hits hard. Good.

Her Fine and Private Planet -- Roland Green.

Any story that begins with such a coy line as "You can't neck in a spacesuit" doesn't seem to hold much promise, but Green quickly moves beyond the opening romantic interlude into a hard-core rundown of the technical side of preparing a module liftoff from the surface of Mars. When a latch mechanism fails to work, it is necessary for the crew's only female member to squeeze into the bay area to make repairs, and it is only at the story's end that the sad irony of the opening falls into place. It's a quiet, disarmingly unpretentious little story, nicely handled.

A Better Rat-Trap -- Charles Hoequist & Robert Phillips.

Sam 47 is a very special rat. His body is loaded with strengthening implants of metal and wire; his brain is controlled by a computer and a human controller; and inside his body he carries a miniature bomb to destroy an American rocket. A weapon of some unnamed enemy--obviously a cruel and heartless dictatorship, since the controller will be executed if the mission fails--Sam is a poor little creature

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DISSECTING THE HEART OF THE MATTER (Continued) --

at the detonator end of a vicious plan. I doubt many readers will shed tears for him, however, since the propagandistic puerility of the plot and the corny conclusion rather effectively destroy any empathy one might feel.

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WORLDS OF IF -- November-December:

Serial:

Inheritance (conclusion) -- Robert Wells.

Novelette:

Price of Honor -- Kenneth Von Gunden.

On the planet men call New Kansas, once more we are faced with the problems that seem to inevitably arise when humans, searching for living space, fail to respect the rights and welfare of other races of beings. Here men are altering the ecology of a world and greedily battle the native Centaurs, refusing to acknowledge the natives' intelligence and not at all hesitant to kill. Man is assisted by mutated talking dogs, who unfailingly observe "the law" to serve and protect their human masters; and while the dogs and the aliens are each given hefty chunks in the story to present their viewpoints, they are unable to lift it from the routine plot that shudders and breaks apart under the weight of sermonizing, a dullish cast of human characters, and a tiresome series of author's devices and coincidences used to keep the story moving along a totally unconvincing line. Such a waste....

Short Stories:

How to Blow Up an Asteroid -- Duncan Lunan.

Planetary Agent McKay and his hearty Interface crew are back in action (sigh) once again. "This one's our biggest emergency ever!", exclaims McKay as he and his crew blink off into space to destroy an asteroid on a collision course with Earth. Golly gee whiz, see them sweat to get those bombs planted on that super-sized rock! Look at the female who makes hot coffee for them, "cute as a button in her brief space-skirt and scarlet body-stocking"! The boss tells them, "Billions down here are cheering you on." But look, there's trouble! Will they make it back?!? Oh, goodness, the suspense--it's unbearable!! Much too unbearable for anyone with a brain in his head. Agh!!

Dingbat -- Ron Goulart.

John Wesley Sand is hired by the Political Espionage Office to trace down a load of stolen dingbats, weapon-equipped robots that seem appropriate to the laconic and rather backward world of Silvestra. Sand, too, is somewhat laconic, a youngish Gary Cooper so to speak, who is not too enthused about the job but drags himself through it anyway. It's the usual Goulart fare, with a fair share of humorous dialogue and one character, Moms Granada, who is really funny. Regretfully she only gets to play a secondary role as the plot grinds down to a trite and hurried conclusion that isn't nearly as amusing as it might have been. Fair.

Man of Many Parts -- Susan Ellison.

When research scientist Rex Hereford spends most of his extra time on a "private project", his co-worker, Irving, is compelled to watch closely and find out what it's all about. Irving is shocked to discover handsome Rex is unfaithful to his wife with a variety of women, and also shocked (though in a different way) to find that Rex has duplicated himself to indulge in these philanderings. Ms. Ellison doesn't know how to handle the psychology (Rex's actions don't make any sense at all) or the humor ("Rex tickled her in an unmentionable spot"), and her tale is no more than a limp joke told in monotone. Mediocre.

Velvet Fields -- Anne McCaffrey.

A colony of humans settle on the planet Zobranoirundisi. They are troubled by the fact that the small muraled cities have been unexplainedly abandoned by the natives, who are nowhere to be found, but too busy raising crops and meeting charter requirements to obsess themselves with the mystery. McCaffrey reveals the mystery a bit too simply and speedily for my tastes--oh, how I wish she'd taken more time

(Over)

DISSECTING THE HEART OF THE MATTER (Continued) --

with the psychological traumas that would surely be evident in the colonists--but her basic ideas, both biological and moral, are so splendid that I find the story's weaknesses very easy to overlook. Interesting.

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VERTEX -- December:Novelette:A Nice Place to Visit -- Stephen Goldin.

Jeffrey Ryan enters the mysterious, beautiful alien city into which sixteen men have gone and never returned. Desperate to unravel the unknown technology behind the city, Earth has decided Ryan will be the last to try--if he fails, the city is to be destroyed. Keeping in contact with Java-10, the authoritative supercomputer waiting in ship's orbit, Ryan finds the missing men and discovers they love the city and have no wish to leave. It cares for them totally, giving them their own fantasies in fleshy illusions that are indistinguishable from reality. Determining that the city represents incarnate and useless hedonism destructive to men, Ryan battles only to find self-character is his only weapon. The whole concept of this story is a well-worn SF cliché, and Goldin wastes his plot with silly detail as he lets his characters fade away. Ryan's climactic rejection of both his Earthly past and the city's unreal pleasures is not only a trite plot twist but psychologically preposterous from the basis of Ryan's flimsy character. It's an empty, shallow story, doubly annoying in its pretense of revealing the power of inner human strength when such strength is never defined or given reason. Awful.

Short Stories:I Mind -- Allan Asherman.

Once more we see a repressive future in which the Minders (telepaths) are sought out and destroyed by society, which once used them to find criminals but now fears their power obsessively. The Minders cannot even contact each other without fear of discovery, but their talent (along with the suggested mental deterioration of "normal" humans) may prove to be the answer to its own curse. Asherman tries to avoid the explicit melodrama of such a hide-and-seek world, but his tale of initial contact between two frightened Minders does not succeed by substituting for plot a worry symposium about all the possible dangers. Fair.

A'la Mode Knights -- William Rotsler.

Whatever happened to the Hero and Heroine who flashed through the illustrations in the old SF pulps, the lady screaming at BEM's, trying to keep her diaphanous wraps from slipping away, the man rippling his muscles and battling every sort of alien menace? Well, according to Rotsler, they're spending the time wishing for the return of the good old days, squabbling about which one is having the worst time of it in the modern world. What might have been a funny spoof becomes instead a cloddish, humorless exercise in bad taste under Rotsler's stone hand. Poor.

No Bands Playing -- Robert A. Heinlein.

Three men, visiting a veterans' hospital and seeing the battle-scarred remnants of what were once whole men, enter a discussion about the true meaning of bravery (as opposed to fortitude). All of which leads into a reminiscence about the early days of modern medicine and the courage of both doctors and patients who must face or deny the challenge of taking chances. The story is not science fiction--except as a philosophical discourse which seems the basis of much SF--and reads like a minor incident pulled from a longer work, thin and unsteady when forced to stand alone. Fair.

Dark, Dark Were the Tunnels -- George R. R. Martin.

The year--approximately 2500; the place--tunnels dug into the Earth, a new home for the mutated light-sensitive men who have hidden from the war-ravaged radioactive surface; the crisis--"normal" men returning from exile on the moon, searching for new genes in Earthly survivors. Martin's aura of doom has a close

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DISSECTING THE HEART OF THE MATTER (Continued) --

relation to the one-note bomb catastrophe stories of the Fifties. The helplessness and/or stupidity of his characters has no meaning because their actions are dictated by a demeaningly idiotic plot that has no room for convincing detail of any kind. Awful.

For the Good of Society -- Terri E. Pinckard.

In the "anarchistic, lawless society of 1993", what can a man do who clings to the outdated values of law and order and wishes to live with "decent folk"? In this case it's up to a computerized judge to decide as the man on trial waits nervously for the verdict. Reversal of values is a good SF tool, but in the hands of a near-illiterate writer it becomes a travesty and mockery. This piece of garbage is so poorly conceived and executed that even an amateur crudzine would reject it in a flash. That VERTEX prints it as professional work is a disservice to readers and a serious threat to the magazine's already questionable stand as a worthy publication.

Sikh, Sikh, Sikh -- Larry Eisenberg.

An overworked, unappreciated assistant to a wealthy publisher famed for his galaxy-spanning pornography empire, is unexpectedly given a love potion and decides to get even by dallying with the boss's wife, who is kept in seclusion and reportedly is a real beauty. The plot revolves around twists and double-crosses that are flatly without imagination, while Eisenberg's sense of humor never rises above the obviousness of the silly title. Bad, bad, bad.

Springtime, A.D. -- Richard Ashby.

Having fled the comfortable but stifling trap of an executive job in the modern rat-race, Ben Thornton retires to a California beachhouse to find himself again. Instead he finds a lovely young woman who speaks with an odd accent, seems puzzled but fascinated by conveniences like television and radios, and is very anxious to become his lover. Ben indulges himself in fantasies about the woman being a time-traveller from the ancient Roman Empire, but the truth is something else again. Ashby's story, while not remarkably original, is smooth and freshly written, permeated with a pleasant romantic tinge that makes it satisfactorily uplifting. Okay of kind.

The Reason Why -- Stephen Utley.

A minister, now old and ill, awaits death and wonders why God has not yet revealed to him the reason he alone was spared from "the final, fatal human folly" that has left him the last man on Earth. His only friends are the animals which crowd around him daily, to which he sings and tells stories. Utley closes his one-page story with an ambiguous statement that is the ultimate in passion or perversity--whichever way you take it, it works, indicating that Utley has concocted a rather clever speculation. Good.

The Questers -- Herman Wrede.

Wrede's short-short is the narrative of one with a metal body, "humanlike in form but with no soul", who with his two comrades awaits the arrival of "Our Leader". My description should be enough to clue readers in on the literary takeoff here employed; if not, go back to your TV and watch for old Judy Garland movies. Wrede reveals his base so quickly that the story's lack of further purpose becomes even more aggravating. Poor.

Articles:

The Rationalization of Pragmatic Time -- Lawrence Neal.

Aztec Medicine -- Raymond Friday Locke.

Even Relativity is Relative -- Igor Bohassian.

Life at a Distance -- James Sutherland.

Interview:

Vertex Roundtable Interviews Dr. Sidney Coleman and Dr. Gregory Benford -- Paul C. Turner.

Art:

The Art of George Barr -- William Rotsler [text].

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(Over)

DISSECTING THE HEART OF THE MATTER (Continued) --WEIRD TALES -- Winter:Short Stories:Chicken Soup -- Katherine MacLean & Mary Kornbluth.

Jewish SF and fantasy seems to be the latest "in" thing (witness the recent all-Jewish Jack Dann anthology, Wandering Stars, for example), which sometimes takes almost as much ethnic knowledge to fully appreciate as it does to write. This example about a young man whose grandmother's chicken soup, spiced with such ingredients as marijuana and thorn apple, whisks the two away for a momentary peek at a witches' orgy, is simplistic and corny, much too diluted and closer to mass-market popularization of the Jewish myth than to the specialized but very real Jewish humor. Fair.

The Cats of Rome -- Miriam Allen deFord.

In the deeply buried catacombs that lie beneath modern Rome there exists a great leader who one day will rule the eternal city where man will be happily deluded and subservient. The world is not going to the dogs, it seems, but to the cats, those domesticated but very mysterious and strangely distant animals that, for all their affinity to man, somehow remain aloof. DeFord's story might have been a good fantasy but she is never quite able to convey that needed pervading sense of the bizarre, tht outré. The concept is vaguely interesting but the writing is flat and pedestrian. Routine.

The Double Tower -- Clark Ashton Smith & Lin Carter.

Once more Carter tries to duplicate the style which gave Smith a limited but devoted readership, and once more the results are a travesty that makes a sort of false god out of convoluted and often unreadable writing style. The story, if such it can be called, tells of a magician "of the race of sentient ophidians which immediately preceded man in the dominion of this planet", and his fearful fate when he accidentally trades places with a horrible beastie from another world. The ending is such a crass steal from Harlan Ellison that Carter should have titled it "I Have No Mouth and I Must Hiss".

Reprints:The Balloon Tree [1883] -- Albert Page Mitchell.Sea Curse [1928] -- Robert E. Howard.The Terror of the Water-Tank [1907] -- William Hope Hodgson.The Figure with the Scythe [1927] -- August Derleth & Mark Schorer.How We Found Circe [1942] -- A. Merritt.Ghostly Hands [1928] -- Miriam Allen deFord.The Mysterious Card [1896] -- Cleveland Moffett.The Mysterious Card Unveiled [1896] -- Cleveland Moffatt.The Splendid Apparition [undated] -- Robert W. Chambers.The Dramatic in My Destiny [1880] -- Emma Frances Dawson.Article:William Hope Hodgson--The Final Years (conclusion) -- Sam Moskowitz.Verse:The House -- H. P. Lovecraft.Time -- Olaf Stapledon.Challenge -- Virgil Finlay.

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FOR YOUR INFORMATION (a few items of possible interest in various "mundane" publications) -- "I Can't Believe I Saw the Whole Thing!", by Isaac Asimov (SATURDAY REVIEW OF SCIENCE, 2/9/72, pp. 25-32; article on holography); "Parapsychology in the U.S.S.R.", by Stanley Krippner & Richard Davidson (SATURDAY REVIEW, 18/3/72; very interesting article on the state of the art in Russia); "The Search for Man's Relatives Among the Stars", by John Lear (SATURDAY REVIEW, 10/6/72, pp. 30-37 (Parapsychology article was pp. 56-60)); "A Detective Story in Astronomy: What Venus May be Like", by Carl Sagan (SMITHSONIAN, 9/73; pp. 64-71); "The Search Goes on for Bigfoot", by Russ Kinne (SMITHSONIAN, 1/74; pp. 68-72; on the Sasquatch).

## MYRKEWOOD'S SECOND CROWN TOURNAMENT

A Report, by  
 Lord Wilhelm of Bothnia &  
 Lady Sita, Begum of Bothnia

Myrkewood's Second Crown Tournament was held on October 20 and 21, 1973, at Seneca Creek State Park near Gaithersburg, Md. Weatherwise, both days were bright and sunny, the temperature hitting a maximum of 70° F.

A huge tree was more or less the center of activities. This was surrounded by cleared fields, one of which was used for the main combat area. A second combat area, for practice matches, was set up opposite the main area. Beyond the second area was a grove of trees, under which many had pitched their tents. The Equerries were also located in this area for the Feast.

The event had three Co-Autocrats: Lady Sita, Begum of Oudh; Lady Anne McAyr of Gorabh; and Lord Gwydian-Am-Y' Gorllwyn.

We arrived at 12 noon, which was the time the Tournament was scheduled to begin. We immediately donned our medievalls and set the banners in place for the main combat field.

Present at the Tournament were representatives from nearly every Shire and Barony in the East Kingdom. Our most notable guests were King Angus the Black and Queen Allison. Also present were various members of the Markland Confederation, with Frank Roberts and his group providing the musical entertainment.

During the Tournament, only a very small Equerries table was available, supplying only soft drinks and beer. To one side, an archery contest (overseen by the Lady Sita, and won by Duke Cariadoc) and a knife-throwing contest (won by Lord Gwydian) were conducted.

About 2 p.m., we ate the lunches we had brought with us; activities had not yet started. Although scheduled to begin at noon, the Grand March actually began at about 3 p.m.

Seated at the throne was King Angus the Black, and beside him sat Queen Allison. Introductions of all the Lords and Ladies present were then made by the King's Herald, Lord John of Brook-Lynne.

It was then ordered that the combat for the Crown begin; this was a double-elimination contest. Grudge matches occurred intermittently in the secondary combat field.

There were 13 participants at the start of the Crown Combats: Duke Cariadoc of the Bow, Duke Akbar, Count Jehan de la Marche, Sir Asbjorn the Fair Haired, Lord Sean Ruabarua, Lord John of Canterbury, Lord Tostig, Lord Brach, Lord Hrolf Blood Axe, Lord Bhaltair Chlaidhimh, Lord Rorik, Lord Raymond the Gruesome, and Lord Lawrence.

During a lull in the fighting, King Angus, with the agreement of all of Myrkewood's Great Lords, proclaimed Lord Sean Ruabarua as Vicar of Myrkewood. This means that, in the absence of Myrkewood's Baron, William of Jutland; Lord Sean will serve in the Baron's place.

At about 7 p.m. (it being nearly fully dark by then), a halt was called to the combats. At this time, only six contestants remained to vie for the Crown. They were: Duke Cariadoc, Duke Akbar, Count Jehan, Sir Asbjorn, Lord Sean, & Lord Brach.

Lord Wilhelm, being sorely afflicted with a very bad head cold, departed at this time to have a Chinese Dinner with some friends. However, most of the others remained for the Feast prepared by Myrkewood's Equerries: Lady Eleanoir of Shire, Countess Abrizhade, Lady Sita, and all and sundry (many thanks to those who helped).

We were later informed that the Feast consisted of beef stew, trenchers, cheese, cider, gingerbread, and soft drinks.

Following the Feast, most sat around the camp fire, telling stories, singing and reading poetry. This continued until quite late.

Lord Wilhelm's cold was so severe that it prevented him from attending the second day. Therefore, the following account was relayed to him by the Lady Sita.

(Over)

MYRKEWOOD'S SECOND CROWN TOURNAMENT (Continued) --

It was rather cold for sleeping out that night; the temperature reached a low of 40° F. Even though they were in sleeping bags and tents, some complained of the cold.

Most awoke and arose about 9 a.m. The first order of business was the preparation of breakfast.

The Tournament was continued starting at about 11 a.m. During a lull in the fighting the Lady Sita presented King Angus with a Ceramic Mug which had his Coat of Arms on it. This was presented on behalf of the Barony of Myrkeewood, the Household of the Mountains, Myrkeewood's Potters Guild and Lord Szeven za Daemon.

By 4:30 p.m., only two contenders for the Crown remained, namely, Duke Cariadoc and Sir Asbjorn. After about an hour of fighting between these two, it was finally decided that fighting should cease. This was done because of the numerous injuries to Sir Asbjorn's knee: it was so badly injured that a fair fight could not be waged. It was, thereupon, decided that the conclusion of the fighting should be postponed for one week. It will be concluded at the affair at Bhakail on October 28.

It was then time to start packing, in preparation for departure. The last individual departed the field at about 9 p.m.

Most of the participants adjourned to a sandwich shop, in Gaithersburg, Md., called Roy's Place.

About 9:15 that night, Lord Wilhelm received a call on the far-speaker from the Lady Sita. It seems she had lost the keys to her horseless chariot. Coming to the aid of the Lady in distress, Lord Wilhelm drove his vehicle some 35 miles to bring a spare set of keys to her.

As usual, everyone seemed to have enjoyed himself at the Tournament. However, we will not know who our new Tanist is until the event at Bhakail.

P.S. It is reported that the fight for Tanist between Duke Cariadoc and Sir Asbjorn was continued at the Bhakail affair on October 28. Although the two fought for hours, it was finally decided to postpone the contest until November 17, there still being no victor.

On November 17, after the King's Birthday Revel, the contest was again continued on a nearby beach. The final victor and new Tanist of the East Kingdom is Sir Asbjorn the Fairhaired.

-- WILHELM

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GLEANINGS FROM THE PRESS (Review Extracts: Mysteries) --

Looking Backwards (some 1972 clippings, to clean out our files): WASH. STAR/NEWS: 26/11 (Frank Getlein) -- The Awdrey-Gore Legacy, by Edward Gorey (Dodd, Mead; 62 pp.; \$3.95; ". . . partly parody, partly criticism . . . good as parody always is, and partly a new and absolutely perfect small work of art which uses the Christie world as its materials . . . one of the few books that really is challenging. It challenges the reader on every page . . ."; it's impossible to give the true flavor of this fascinating book as described in Getlein's long and interesting review; suffice it to say, on the basis of the review, "highly recommended"). ## 24/9 (Betty James) -- The Players and the Game, by Julian Symons (Harper & Row; 217 pp.; \$5.95; "Count Dracula meets Bonnie Parker", and together they play "their special game, leaving a trail of murdered young women who are bitten and cut to pieces and sexually abused before they die. . ."); Maigret and the Madwoman, by Georges Simenon (Harcourt Brace Jovanovich; 176 pp.; \$5.95; ". . . Simenon once again underlines the contrast between the tawdriness of crime and the tragedy to its victims . . ."); Shadow of a Tiger, by Michael Collins (Dodd, Mead; 184 pp.; \$4.95; "Michael Collins' fine series about one-armed private detective Dan Fortune takes a dip here. . . The plot is so loose it jangles, and the solution--no way."). ## WASH. POST: 17/12 (Jean M. White) -- Death by Arrangement, by Laurence Meynell (McKay-Washburn; \$4.95; ". . . a good suspense novel . . . with a menage of eccentric characters . . .").

## BUT THAT'S...MUNDANE!

SCANNING THE NEWS MEDIA (A few more clippings from our files (pulled at random)-- some so old they now qualify for the nostalgia craze....) --

Let's begin with an undated (but yellowing) clipping about a meeting of the Adventurer's Club ("a group of usually sober-minded government and business individuals and their wives . . . who say they are looking for ways of escaping the morass of suburban life") which took place in St. John's Cemetary in Bethesda, MD. The club, which meets quarterly, and costs \$100 a year to belong (with a long waiting list of couples wanting to join), was meeting to celebrate Edgar Allan Poe's birthday. Following the ceremony at the cemetary, the group was entertained by a series of "eerie blackouts" performed by the Etceteras, including the murderers' scene from Shakespeare's Richard III, the beheading of Anne Boleyn, sketches about cannibalism among a shipwrecked crew and about a man who married a werewolf, and Shirley Jackson's The Lottery.

A report dated 21 Nov. '71 tells of "tiny, eerie-looking strands of spider webs" falling from the skies all along the Texas Gulf Coast, from Houston to the Rio Grande Valley; the webs were reported to be carrying tiny spiders. The webs were said to be used as parachutes to carry the spiders across the state.

Remember the Italian town of Pozzuoli, which in March of 1970 was reported to be mysteriously rising at the rate of one-half inch per day? The inhabitants were evacuated, and the situation was compared to 1538, when a 344-foot hill appeared within a period of a few hours. Adding to the anxieties of the local inhabitants were the rising from the sea of a sunken Roman amphitheater, and harbor waters that glowed red at night. (Stories about Pozzuoli appeared for several days, then stopped; did the process continue, or did the town return to normal?)

Also, remember Project Sanguine, in which a backup nuclear "button" was to be buried in a Wisconsin forest, in the form of a huge grid of underground wires covering up to one-third of the state? This was back in 1969; in July 1973, the proposal resurfaced--this time to be buried in Texas. Have heard nothing more about it since then; was it killed again, or just hushed up?

For the record, we'll just skim through the next lot (we'll expand on any of them in case anyone expresses an interest): "Of Apes and Men and Gods", by Adam Shaw (long article about Erich Von Daniken (or is it von?--we've seen it both ways) and his ideas in THE WASHINGTON POST 2/12/73); "Tripping Through the Twilight Zone", by David R. Boldt (quite long article in WASH POST 30/4/72, re Silva Mind Control); "The Brainwave Explosion: Cult and Science", by Jules Asher (POST 30/4/72; on bio-feedback, alpha waves, etc.); "Satanism: A Practice as Varied as its Practitioners" (POST 31/10/71); "The Price of Inner Peace", by Lance Gay (SUNDAY STAR 13/6/71; re the history and then-current state of Scientology); "The Manhattan Project", by Isaac Asimov (TV GUIDE, 6/5/72); a bunch of articles about Scott Joplin's fantastic opera, Treemonisha; a couple of articles on the Center for Short-Lived Phenomena and some of the strange things it's reported so far in some of its publications (among them another sky-fall of "great globs of spider web-like material", this time in St. Louis); "Science is Finally Slamming the Door to the Beyond", by Christopher Evans (POST ?); "In Search of Forever" (WASH.POST 13/8/72; long article about Cryonics); "Five Faces of the Future", by Henry Allen (WASH. POST, 7/1/73); "An Urban Civilization Without Cities", by Irving Kristol (POST 3/12/72); "Scientist in a Strange Land", by Kenneth Turan & Nancy Meadors Kline (WASH. POST 22/7/73; about Mankind Research Unlimited, which specializes in investigating "exotic areas of knowledge" (such as astral projection, chakras, Kirlian photography, etc.)); "Science Just Might Make Men Superfluous", by Claude Koprowski (POST; date unknown; discusses possibility of Earth eventually being populated by a "self-reproducing society of women"); Discussion of "Polar Big Eye" ("a form of galloping insomnia that spreads through Antarctic stations like measles in a grammar school") (STAR; date unknown); Discussion on duplicating great athletes (thru cloning) (POST 8/2/72 (Sports Section)).

(Over)

BUT THAT'S...MUNDANE! (Continued) --

Now, let's take a look at some of the material on comics which has appeared in the local press during the past few years (and which we have not already covered in earlier issues of SOTWJ): "Horror Comics From the '50s Are Alive! (Choke!)", by Henry Allen (WASH. POST 24/9/72; a report on an "EC Fan-Addict Convention" at the Hotel McAlpin in New York City; with illustrations from scripts by Al Williams & Roy Krenkel, Jack Davis, Graham Ingels, and Frank Frazetta; includes a discussion of EC comics); "Welcome to the Second Golden Age of Comics", by Donald Smith (WASHINGTONIAN section of THE SUNDAY STAR, 22 Nov. '70; the feature article (including cover) of the 'zine, with numerous full-color illos of various comic cover art; includes report on Metro Comicon 70, the D.C. area's first comic book fan convention, a history of comic books, and a discussion of comic art, include the state of the art today); "Strip Artistry", by Martin Williams (BOOK WORLD section of WASH. POST 3/12/72; incl. reviews of the following: Fontaine Fox's Toonerville Trolley (Scribner's, \$9.95; ed. Herb Galewitz & Don Winslow; strips by one of the very early strip artists); Ten Ever-Lovin' Blue Eyed Years With Pogo, by Walt Kelly (Simon & Schuster; \$2.95; paperbound reprint of 1959 harcover collection "which gives a casual, selective view of the possum of Okefenokee in his first decade"); Tarzan of the Apes, by Burne Hogarth (Watson-Guptill; \$9.95; "a condensation of the first third" of Burroughs' initial Tarzan tale); Comics: Anatomy of a Mass Medium, by Reinhold Reitburger & Wolfgang Fuchs (Little, Brown; \$12.50; paperback, \$6.95; ". . . Translated into a kind of clumsy British, and full of factual errors, the book gives a quickie tour through newspaper-strip history in order to get its authors' real passion . . . the superheroes"); Popeye the Sailor (Nostalgia Press; \$7.95; "a model of how comics ought to be anthologized", with three complete adventures by Popeye's creator, E. C. Segar)); Review of film Betty Boop Scandals of 1974 (Ivy Film/16 release, prod. Max Fleischer, dir. Dave Fleischer; 10 animated shorts featuring "the first cartoon femme fatale", which include a rather bizarre version of "Snow White", "Bimbo's Imitation", and eight other flights of fancy (this one states that Max Fleischer was Popeye's creator....)); "Underground Artists Take a Look at Their Success", by Leroy Aarons (POST 29/4/73; report on Berkley comics convention on underground comics and the current state of the art); Report on state of the comic book market (STAR 11/8/72); "Who'll Rescue Annie? (Arf!)", by Paul Richard (POST 5/2/74; on the trials and tribulations of LOA in trying to find a satisfactory artist since the death of Harold Gray many years ago).

Back to the "quickies" once again, to clean out our files: "Unearthing Theories on That Long Lost Atlantis", by Wolf Von Eckardt (POST 24/2/73; speculations that Atlantis may have existed on island of Thera, given impetus by the "joyous" works of art being uncovered in excavations on that island); Some Loch Ness Monster material, incl. an article on some photos taken by a taken by a team of British and American scientists which "show something awfully big that needs explaining" (STAR 3/11/72), an article on plans for a 10-man team of Japanese scientists to search for the monster with two miniature submarines and sophisticated search equipment (POST 30/9/73; incl. short history of monster sightings), and review (by Gene Mueller, STAR 26/6/73) of book by James B. Sweeney, A Pictorial History of Sea Monsters and Other Dangerous Marine Life (Crown; \$9.95; 315 pp.; "a joy to behold and will serve as an argument and bet settler for decades to come"; starts with "sea monster stage settings from mythology to the 1900's"; second section deals with dangerous marine life known to exist today); Articles on use of weather as a weapon of war, with emphasis on its use in Laos and Vietnam; Articles on perception in plants: "Your Plants May be Perceptive (POST 18/4/72; on experiments with plants and polygraphs); "Can a Plant Read Your Mind?" (STAR 14/10/73; more on the resarch of polygraph expert Cleve Backster); Article on "the laying on of hands" as a healing force, with emphasis on experiments with mice and plants (STAR 26/11/72); Article on bilharziasis, an ancient disease known as the "Scourge of the Nile", which has been increasing rapidly in Egypt as a result of the Aswan Dam irrigation project (POST; date unknown).

## HUGO NOMINATION SUGGESTION POLL RESULTS

DON D'AMMASSA --

(9/11/73)

With regard to Dave Stever's suggested poll, I'll take the plunge. I still haven't located a copy of the new Heinlein, so I could conceivably change my opinion before actually voting, but unless I am greatly surprised in the next couple of months, these would be my choices for the Hugo, in ascending order:

The Cloud Walker, by Edmund Cooper (Ballantine Books). This is easily Cooper's best novel. It is a good adventure story that has more depth than usual, with understated action, little emphasis on brutality for its own sake, excellent characterization, and a moving theme.

Rendezvous with Rama, by Arthur C. Clarke. Clarke's latest novel is an entertaining, well-executed adventure story with lots of Sense of Wonder. It would be unfortunate in my view if this won the Hugo for Clarke, because while it is a good novel, it is not good Clarke.

The Man Who Folded Himself, by David Gerrold. This isn't as good as When HARLIE Was One, and many of the more interesting aspects of this time-travel and paradox novel are not fully realized. Nevertheless, it is one of the more inventive novels of the year and is extremely well-written.

Trullion: Alastor 2262, by Jack Vance (Ballantine Books). Jack Vance has outdone himself with this, my personal choice to date as best novel of 1973. This is a leisurely paced adventure story dealing primarily with interpersonal conflicts. The setting is beautifully drawn and the background rich and complex. In particular, the portrayal of the hussade games includes some of the finest descriptive writing I've ever encountered.

That's it. If I had to pick the fifth best, it would be Koontz's The Haunted Earth, but I'd vote No Award before giving it a Hugo.

RICHARD DELAP --

(10/1/74)

As for Hugo nominations, I'll pass. I'm still reading, looking for something (anything!) worth recommending. I'll find something yet, mumblemumble, still looking, mumble, ah ha! here!...er, no, seemed at first like it might... mumble, still looking, mumblemumble....

GEORGE FLYNN --

(17/1/74)

As for Hugo novel suggestions . . . So far, I've only covered the magazines through August, and I haven't read that many other novels yet. (The results of your poll will be helpful guidelines for crash reading.) Of what I've read, I'd say Time Enough for Love (better than I'd expected), The People of the Wind, and Protector should--and very likely will--be on the ballot.

(16/2/74)

I know your Hugo nominee poll has expired, but I might as well update my ideas anyway. I listed Time Enough for Love, People of the Wind, and Protector. Upon reflection, I think I should have included Trullion: Alastor 2262, and since then I've read The Cloud Walker, which also belongs up there. That makes five, but there are still quite a few likely choices I haven't gotten to yet; of these Rendezvous with Rama and Hiero's Journey sound most promising.

BARRY GILLAM --

(28/1/74)

. . . When I tried to come up with the five best novels of 1973, I found that I had read very few SF novels in the past year. Most of those were not of Hugo quality, including the probable winner, Rendezvous with Rama. So I only have a few on my list and none of these has a chance, for varying reasons:

To Die in Italbar shows Zelazny, like the late Conrad, constructing a fable in a spare style, relying on allusion and the power of the subject to carry the burden. Language is used as a photograph rather than as a painting. The subject is the problem of power, its amorality. The characters confuse creation and destruction just as the reader does, through Zelazny's device of ambiguous personal pronouns in place of names to identify the opponents in the Manichean conflict of the novel.

(Over)

## POLL RESULTS (Continued) --

The Fallible Fiend. De Camp. This minor novel possesses such charm in its characterization and abundant incident and such inherent interest for its graceful exposition of de Camp's perennial themes that I'm amazed at the shabby treatment it has received. And I think it's time readers admitted that de Camp is not only far more entertaining but also far more intellectually rigorous than the fairhaired boys like Eklund, Effinger and Dozois.

The Tides of Lust. Delany. An ambitious novel that often chokes on its own eloquence. At once porn, fantasy and a critique of the SF genre. The sex is often repulsive, the artist's memoirs often luminous. A variation on the Faust legend in which creation and copulation get confused. Fascinating, clinical, self-conscious, impish.

Memoirs Found in a Bathtub. Lem. Another ambitious novel whose author is too smart for his own good. The protagonist is put through a grueling trial in which all paper proves false. He is given his orders but never allowed to read them, he is given access to the library but finds it in chaotic disarray. Lem is a great writer but perhaps too careful a rewriter. Memoirs reveals Lem's propensity to cover inspired prose with layers of revision and accretion. A splendid failure.

## NICK JONES --

(undated)

My Hugo recommendations for novel:

Rendezvous with Rama, Clarke's newest novel, brought back my sense of wonder with his vivid descriptions of Rama's interior and his extrapolation of the colonization of the solar system by man and the all-too-believable stupidity and stubbornness of the human animal as represented by the people of Mercury.

Heinlein's Time Enough for Love should be on the ballot even if large parts of it are dull (too bad the tale of the Adopted Daughter wasn't a separate novel-la). Regardless, the entire novel goes on my nomination sheet.

David Gerrold's The Man Who Folded Himself: engagingly kinky and another dizzily written time-travel possibility.

The other novels I've read this year don't measure up to the enjoyment these three gave me.

Short fiction-wise, Tom Disch's Red Moon Rising gets my LOCUS poll vote as best original anthology of the year, and three stories from it remain with me: "The Village", by Kate Wilhelm (this should be required reading for any "My country right or wrong" idiot); Harlan Ellison's "Whimper of Whipped Dogs"; and Geo. Alec Effinger's "Relatives" (these last two struck me as memorable and well-written). Also Joe Haldeman's "We Are Very Happy Here" in ANALOG and Pohl's "In the Problem Pit" in F&SF struck me favorably.

Movie-wise: Soylent Green was much better than Westworld, and Day of the Dolphins doesn't start here 'til next week.

## DENNIS LIEN --

(11/11/73)

Only Hugo nomination recommendations that come to my mind are Time Enough for Love for Best Novel and Vance's "Rumfuddle" (from Three Trips in Time and Space or "Morreion" (from Flashing Swords #1) for Best Novella. I don't get that much of a year's output read in time for nominations or even for the voting, usually. So I can't name five in each category and shan't defend my choices at any (literally at any) length.

((Well, there it is! Statistically, a rather poor percentage of the total SOTWJ readership (whatever happened to the second half of the alphabet, including Dave Stever, who suggested the poll; and where are all the WSFA members?); nevertheless, we feel that those who did respond did a good job of it, and so the results should be of some use (they were to us--we have yet to read any 1973 novels because of our eye trouble, and such polls serve as a handy guide prior to the final balloting). We will make this an annual event in SOTWJ, so read those 1974 books now, and be prepared when the poll strikes again! --ed.))



## S. F. PARADE

SPECIAL REVIEW -- "The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas", by Ursula K. LeGuin (New Dimensions 3, ed. Robert Silverberg; SFBook Club; \$1.49) [Warren Johnson, Reviewer].

Ursula LeGuin's latest story is set on an alien world, in the city of Omelas, which borders on a sea. Omelas is a paradise, in which everyone gets what he wants. There is nothing but peace and joy here. The society is not highly technological; the descriptions of "houses with red roofs and painted walls . . . old moss-grown gardens . . . avenues of trees . . . great parks . . ." show that this is a rather simple civilization. The inhabitants are not backwards--they simply prefer this type of life. The society is formally unstructured, but there is a strict system of taboos that controls the behavior of its members.

The beings in the city are a happy people, although they more or less take it for granted. "All smiles have become archaic", says the narrator of the story, but this does not mean, according to him, that they do not have a glad outlook on life. (Exactly how the narrator comes to the conclusion that the inhabitants are happy is never fully explained; he does observe that they carry on festivals and such, but are still happy. "We can no longer describe a happy man", he says, and leaves the reader hanging on this point.)

Given this initial bit of disbelief, the recurring phrase of the story is similar to: "But I wish I could describe it better. I wish I could convince you!" The narrator (and hence the author) has taken on the task of trying to describe something which is very difficult to describe adequately, and so does not attempt to be exhaustive in the narrations. Yet there is something in the prose, something which transcends the apparent inability to describe everything satisfactorily, that does make the story believable after all: many things are left to the imagination, as in real life; not everything is told (despite the incredible amount of detail for a seven-page story)--we are left to fill in the blanks ourselves.

As mentioned above, the technology of Omelas has not progressed as far as that of present-day Earth; in fact, it corresponds approximately to that of the 19th Century. Also as mentioned above, this simplistic lifestyle is of the Omelan's own choosing; they could have many of the "modern conveniences" that we have, yet they are content to live without them. They do not have the aggressive desire to "forge ahead". (As an aside, we could draw an interesting parallel between the society of Omelas and that of the dolphins on present-day Earth. Dolphins are reputed to have intelligence that meets or exceeds that of man, yet they do not have the formal structure of civilization that man does, but one similar to that of Omelas; they move about freely (without the responsibilities to which modern man is bound), and so forth.)

The morals of the Omelan society are radically different from our own. Copulation is open, and free sex is uninhibited. Women walk around (nude, of course) looking for whatever male they can find. There is nothing in the story connecting copulation and reproduction on Omelas, however--in fact, there is hardly any mention of anything even remotely dealing with the birth/death cycle.

Drugs are also accepted in this society. Drooz (a pun on the slang word for alcohol, no doubt) is the most common one. Its effects are "first . . . a great lightness and brilliance to the mind and limbs, and then, after some hours a dreamy languor, and wonderful visions at last of the very arcana and inmost secrets of the Universe, as well as exciting the pleasure of sex beyond all belief . . ." It is physically non-addictive, and the society in which it is used makes psychological addiction rare (if it exists at all). But the use of these drugs is not why the people of Omelas are so happy all the time; in fact, it is stated that most of them don't use drugs because they don't need them. (This does not parallel human society today, in which drugs--legal or illegal; sleeping pills or marijuana--are almost an obsession to many, and an addiction to an unfortunately large number. The effects of overdoses of these drugs are harmful and sometimes fatal; the same is probably true for drooz, although, because of the way it is used in Omelan society, the question is merely academic.)

(Over)

S.F. PARADE (Continued) --

The plot of the story (what there is of it) centers around the Festival of the Summer, a pageant about which everyone gets excited, etc. However, this is merely a device to introduce the society outlined above; the festival in itself has no significance.

The real thrust of the story centers around one room in the city. Why is this one room that important? Because in there sits a child (whether male or female, we are not told), age 10. It sits in this room--a toolroom without windows, with the only opening a locked door--and ponders its misery. Withered and frail, the child sits and looks at the mop (in the dark), which is its only companion in its solitude. Every so often the child is given food and water, but at no time does the person who gives it its sustenance offer it a kind word. Neither do its visitors; they may curse it, but few ever do. The child was put there recently, since it remembers its mother's voice saying intelligible words. Everyone in the city knows the child is there; everyone knows it sits there day after day, with no one to speak to or share its misery. So why is it still there?

The child is there because it is the strictly enforced taboo of this civilization not to talk to it; no one shall console it, no one shall help it. But what did the child do in the first place to deserve all this? Why was it placed there?

**It did nothing.** It is not there of its own doing.

This brings up an apparent contradiction in the Omelan society. These are peace-loving beings, right? They are happy, joyful, heartfelt people, right? They wouldn't let a child rot in a cell for no reason, just because it was the "custom", would they?

Well, they do. But why? To answer this, we must first make an important observation about who the inhabitants of Omelas really are. Are they actually beings from a strange planet, light-years away?

No, they're human beings. How do we know this? Well, consider the planet on which Omelas is situated, and what it has on it: tree, a sea, boats, buildings, etc. Consider the fact that the measure of time on Omelas is the day and year--the same as on Earth. These and other clues clearly tell us that the planet of this story is Earth--and that, logically, the Omelans are human.

With that out of the way, let's return to the child who sits in the cell in misery. How does it fit in?

Obviously the story takes place in the far future, probably after the Bomb has been dropped. The few remaining humans decide that the society they rebuild out of the radioactive ashes will not have the fallacies of the old--the inherent stumbling blocks to a perfect society. They build new buildings, create new civilizations, and repopulate Earth, this time according to the pre-arranged plan they drew up.

This, therefore, is a utopia--a paradise. Its creators are well aware of what destroyed the society from which they came, and so they recognize this fact: human beings, by nature, are barbarians; they have to have a scapegoat on which to direct their feelings of anger and violence, even if the scapegoat did nothing to deserve it. In the book 1984 there were "hate sessions", in which the people were given propaganda and were instructed to direct their feelings toward a certain scapegoat--in this instance, to an "enemy" that they were perpetually "fighting" somewhere. The child in this story serves the same function as the mythical enemy in 1984--the channeling of the barbarian instincts of the Omelans.

Although it appears on the surface to be a simple story of a paradise, "The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas"\* is actually a profound statement on human nature. Its theme is an old one--but LeGuin presents it brilliantly.

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\*The title comes from the few people who do not realize why there has to be a child in a cell, and leave the city in revolution, or who are truly compassionate and non-barbarian, and leave the city in protest.

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