

TIGHTBEAM MAY 1980

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TIGHTBEAM

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cover by David Heath
backcover by David Heath

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GRUNTS AND GROANS was reprinted from TIGHTBEAM #6 (May 1977).

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EDITORIAL

by Lynne Holdom

Most of you have probably received the letter/petition from Donald Franson. I was disturbed by it. Before I get to the exact reasons for this, I wish to publish this letter from Harry Andruschak -- Director.

"As a 1979 Director, I resent Franson's allegations that the dues raise to \$6.00 was illegal. It was properly done, and it was needed. I firmly believe that the Directorate should have a free hand to raise dues as needed to cover increasing Postal Costs and insure that the fanzines of the club maintain a high standard.

Although I would vote for a dues raise to \$8.00, I prefer a raise to \$10.00.

I find the objections that Franson raised, as an excuse to go back to the Calendar Year for dues to be weak. If the present sec'y/treas cannot do such a simple job, we can always get someone else. Me, for instance.

I am introducing a Directorate motion to raise the dues to \$10.00, starting in 1981."

--Harry Andruschak--

I was also on the Directorate that raised the dues to \$6.00. I also deny that it was in any way illegal. It was needed very much and three years of talk and petitions did not serve to raise the dues. Joanne Burger tried to get them raised. Everyone on the 1979 Directorate agreed that the dues should be raised to \$6.00. (For the record the members of that Directorate were: Harry Andruschak, Joanne Burger, Judy Gerjuoy, Lynne Holdom and Mike Lowrey.) Mike Lowrey did not vote for the dues raise only because he was away from home when the Directorate ballots were sent out and did not return in time to get the vote in. Everyone else voted for it. We live in an era of double digit inflation, like it or not, and have to have a system that responds quickly. As one example, my paper costs have almost doubled between Jan 1979 and now.

I am also against going back to Calendar Year dues. It IS difficult to explain. It also makes getting and keeping a postal permit more difficult. Everyone's membership runs out in December so you never know how many people are going to be members on Jan 1 when you apply for and get that permit. This way we have a fairly steady and slightly growing membership. I do not find keeping track of who renews when difficult. I have six different colors of index cards. Those whose memberships run out at the end of the year (actually with the Nov TB) are on white cards. Their membership started with the Jan TB. Once the Jan TB is mailed out, anyone who joins is put on an orange card and his membership runs out with the next Jan TB. It started with the March TB. May starters are blue (that includes anyone on the new members' list in this issue.) July, pink; September, green; and November, yellow. I write the year of expiration on the upper right hand corner of the card. Thus A.D. Wallace is on an orange card with 85 written on it. His membership runs out with the Jan 85 TIGHTBEAM. I do not keep track of TNFF so when I did the Feb TNFF, all those on orange cards got it anyway as I did not know whether they started with the Feb TNFF or the March TB. However, so you can check, I am writing a letter on your mailing label. A=Nov TB is the final one; Nov of this year if there is no year on the label. B=Jan 81 TB; C=March 81 TB (those who just joined will have "C" on their label); D=May 81 (those with May 80 exp. have an "X" on the label); E=July 80; F=Sept 80. Write to me or to Janie Lamb if you have any questions. Remember that I do not include TNFF in my figures. F could also mean you get the Oct TNFF.

There were some letters squeezed out of this issue (David Palter's for one) that will appear next issue. I thought you wouldn't mind the extra length given to the articles this issue. The same thing happened to some of the book reviews. See you in July.

Guest Editorial

Owen K. Laurion
6101 Central Ave NE
Albuquerque, NM 87108

I keep hoping to see discussions in these pages about how N3F can help fandom -- of possible N3F activities that would affect fandom outside of our own insular group. I have seen such suggestions made by activity heads and directors, mostly in their TNFF reports or dupletters, but I'm still waiting for the rehashing and discussing of them in TB. Did no one read in the Dec TNFF the suggestion that TB be turned back into just a letter column in TNFF? Or maybe Andy's praise of MATRIX as being a combination of TB & TNFF as supporting the same idea? Or how about the idea, from one of the dupletters, that N3F form an at-large Con Committee, and bid for a Worldcon? Or, if N3F is to be "an entry-point into fandom," just what is N3F doing to let all those closet proto fans "out there" know that Fandom exists? Every reader of OMNI and STARLOG is a potential, but they don't know it, and most first impressions they get would more likely turn them off than on. How can we reach them? Will someone in N3F write an article about us and submit it to one of these ultra prozines? I don't mean a publicity blurb, either. I mean a real, to-be-paid-for, bylined article! I'm far too new, both to writing and to N3F, to do the subject justice. But we do have a scattering (and why so few?) of professional writers in this organization. How about it, you fellas?

Recently I recieved a circular from Don Franson (writing, I think, as a club member, and not an official proclamation as president of the club) asking support for a change in dues policy. Broken down, he's asking three separate things: 1) That dues be boosted to \$8.00 per year; 2) that the amount of dues be put back into the constitution; and 3) going back to the calendar year system of memberships. I will simply state that I agree with the first point and disagree with the second, but will leave the whys and wherefores to those more informed. But on the third point, I feel that I have a need to speak out. Don's contention that "the calendar year makes it easier to keep track of memberships" is hogwash! I am one of those who needs to keep such a list (in fact, since I am supposed to be responsible for the semi-annual roster, my list is second in importance only to Janie's) and although it has taken me several months to get it properly organized (a long story behind that, but unrelated tot the question at hand), and then it was done mainly with the invaluable help of the author of this proposal; yet now that it is done, monthly updates seem to be the most logical way to keep track of it. And that implies each new member's subscription starting THE MONTH THAT S/HE JOINS, not carrying over the memberships for up to three months before adding them to the mailing list.

Letting them cool their heels waiting to start. That's up to three months of active, enthusiastic, contributing membership period that would be wasted! As Greg Hills put it in another context: "N3F... gets fans while they are most active, and so has a chance to guide their development." If I were contemplating in early October joining a club, but knew my membership wouldn't start till the following January, I'd probably wait till December to join. And by then either have forgotten about it or lost my ardor. Likewise if in April I wanted to join, but saw I'd have to join for two years instead of just one, I'd give it some long second thoughts. Joining N3F is an experiment, and one that the neo can't be sure is right for him until he's tried it. A year gives a full round of exposure; less than that would be insufficient, but more is an imposition. Certainly, in the past, many must have joined N3F despite this archaic system. But how many others, others who could have been vital, didn't?

How many profotans came, saw, and gafiated, when a more inviting system could have drawn them into the fold and fellowship of the Community of Fandom? Certainly, keeping track of members by the new current system is a pain in the x, if your files are still set up for the older system. But the older system is equally a pain in the y, and in many ways an even bigger one.

#

((I always sent TB to new members as soon as I was aware they were members and Joanne Burger did the same with TNFF so the waiting period was not too bad. This means essentially that Joanne and I ignored the calendar year system.))

NEW MEMBERS

Cynthia Bench
173 Cottage St SE Apt #407
Salem, OR 97301

BD: 9-2-59. Typist Inst: Writing, colls, corres, fanzines. Has typer, cassette. Inst fandom four years. Fav authors: Chalker, MZB, McCaffrey.

Crispin Burnham
1051 Wellington Rd
Lawrence, KS 66044

BD: 10-4-49. Dishwasher. Inst: Writing, art, colls, pubbing, books, mags, fanzines, reading, movies, tv. Has typer, taper, photo-copier. Inst SF over 20 years. Fav authors: Lovecraft, King, C.A. Smith.

Beverly A. Clark
612 N. Markswell
Moore, OK 73160

BD: 3-10-51. Occ: U.S. Treasury Dept. Inst: Writing, editing, art reviewing, fanzines, colls, corres. Active in fandom 1 year. Has typer, cassette. Fav authors: MZB, Heinlein, McCaffrey.

Deborah S. Claypool
343 N. Montgomery
Memphis, TN 38104

BD: 11-14-52. Student. Inst: Writing, reviewing, fanzines, games, cons. Has typer, cassette Never active in fandom. Inst in SF all her life. No particular favorites. Inst in real world as well.

Bob Dominy
5411 Kruse Dr
Fort Wayne, IN 46818

BD: 3-27-63. Student. Inst: Writing, art, books, fantasy miniatures, games, Will be active where possible. Has typer, taper. Pres of NSFFL. Will be moving to Knoxville soon. Also inst in fanzines.

William L. Donohue
Box 111, Upper Dubois St
Hallstead, PA 18822

BD: 12-14-63. Student. Inst: corres, books, zines, fanzines, posters. Has typer, taper. Will be active. Prefers corres. Reads most SF zines. Fav authors: Heinlein, Niven, deCamp, Chandler, Sturgeon, Pangborn

Ahrvid Engholm
Flotviksvagen 39, S-16240
Vallingby, Sweden

BD: June 12, 49. Teacher. Inst: games, editing fanzines, reviewing, film appreciation, Apas, cons. Has typer, taper, photo-copier. In Tolkien Soc. Likes humorous SF

Esther Leiper Estabrooks
P.O. Box 57,
Jefferson, NH 03553

BD: 1.18-46. Writer, Small business owner Inst: art Writing, reviewing, corres, pubbing. More inst in fantasy. (Uses Leiper as a pen name.) Never active.

Melinda Ann Holley
P. O. Box 2793
Huntington, WV 25727

Occ. Secretary. Inst: Writing, corres, re-viewing, collecting comic books, RRs, apas. Fav authors: MZB, T. Caldwell. Bombeck.

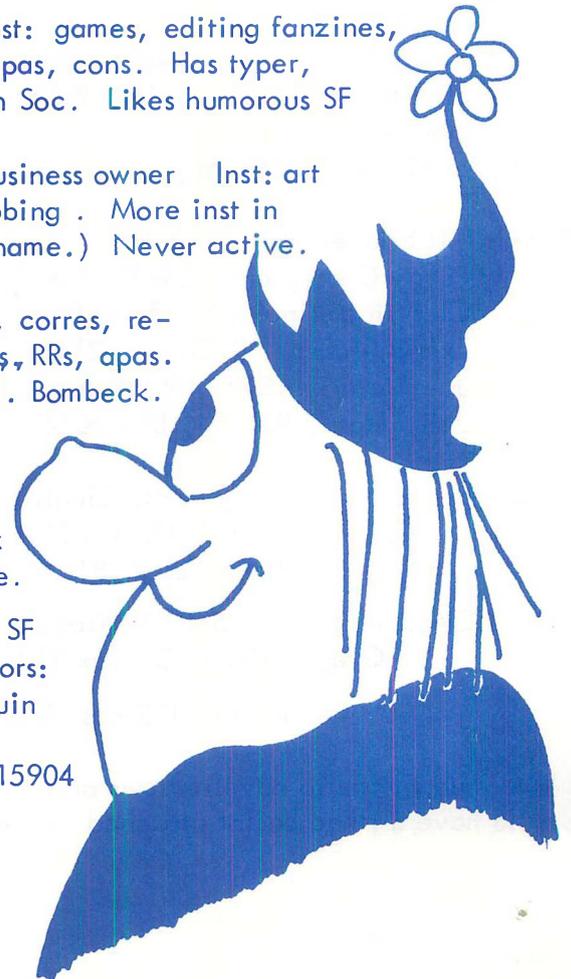
Eric Kramer
71 8th Ave
New York, NY 10014

BD: 10-27-34. Bookdealer. Inst: books, fanzines. Reads most prozines. Operates a book store.

Sherry Lendall
4507 Kenyon Rd
Little Rock, AR 72205

BD: 3-21-51. Housewife. Inst SF 16 years. Likes S&S. Fav authors: Brackett, Moore, Norton, LeGuin

COAs: Rick Brown, 400 Luray Ave, Apt 11-A, Johnstown, PA 15904
Allan Chen, 23-05 126th St., Queens, NY 11356
Kurt Cockrum, 309 Allston #16, Boston, MA 02146
Danny Hamilton, 4517 Sanger, Waco, TX 76710



- Vera Lonergan
P.O. Box 148
Earlwood, 2206 N.S.W.
Australia
BD: March 7, 1946. Clerk in Commonwealth Services. Inst: pubbing, (is planning a fanzine soon). Collects SF books. Also inst writing, cons, apas, corres. Has typer, taper. Been in fandom 2 years. Inst in SF 15 years. Prefers hard SF. Fav authors: MZB, Brunner, Elgin, Butler, Tubb, Heinlein.
- Ken Manson
1344 S. Grove
Berwyn, IL 60402
BD: 10-28-54. Newspaper reporter. Inst: reviewing, index, colls, books, mags, reading, moies, games. Has typer, taper, photo copier. Active in fandom 9 years. Slightly inst in fanzines. Fav authors: Varley, Vinge.
- Pat Mathews
1125 Tomasita St NE
Albuquerque, NM 87112
BD: 1-3-39. Inst: writing, art, reviewing, corres. Has typer. Inst fandom two years. Favorite authors: MZB, Dickson. Is co-editor of a zine SOR-CERESS with Owen Laurion.
- George Phillis
1225 Island Dr #204
Ann Arbor, MI 48105
The victim of a vicious filing system that every so often reaches out and bites. Seriously, George joined last September but Janie lost his address. Now it has turned up so WELCOME finally.
- Fred Singer
Hanau American HS
A.P.O. New York 09165
BD: 9-2-43. Teacher. Inst: writing, pubbing. Would like to be active but lives in Germany. Has typer, ditto. Never active in fandom. Inst in SF 25 years. Fav authors: Silverberg, Bloch, Weinbaum, Wilhelm.
- Marrie Tsikopoulos
P.O. Box 242, N.D.G.
Montreal, PQ H4A 3P6
Canada
BD: 3-27-55. Writer-researcher. Inst: writing, reviewing, science, books, Will do club work. Has typer, taper and has attended cons. Inst SF 12 years; active 9 years. Prefers stories about aliens, and perceptions on life.
- J Jack Herman
Flat 1, Stirling Manor
67 Fletcher St.,
Bondi, NSW 2056 Australia
No known birthday. Teacher. Candidate for DUFF. Also publishes a zine called WAHF-Full. The first three issues have been very interesting.

COAs: Bill Bridget, 610 Athens Ave., Etowah, TN 37331

Peggy Gemignani, c/o Dianne Sue Miller, 910 Imperial Ave No, La Segunda, CA 90245

Cicatrice Hinchliffe, 1847 N 2nd St, Milwaukee, WI 53212

David McGirr, P.O. Box 2145, St Petersburg, FL 33731

Joe Siclari, 4599 NW 5th Ave, Boca Raton, FL 33431

Jeff Siegel, PSC #4, Box 20145, Keesler AFB, MS 39534

Renewals: Laurence Gray 4/81; Cicatrice Hinchliffe 4/81; William Neal 4/81; Pamela Nicolson 4/81; David McGirr 4/81; Joe Siclari 4/81; Helen Steere 4/81; Roger Waddington 4/82; Louise Andre 6/81; William West 6/81; Robert Medcalf 12/81.

More COAs: Phil Arny, 5401 Whitcomb Dr., Madison, WI 53711 (This is his home vs college, address-)
Greg Hills, P.O. Box 11205, Wellington, New Zealand

Mike Horvat, 112 East Burnett St., Stayton, OR 97383 -- Mike rejoined but there is no info

Next issue I hope to have reviews of all the novels nominated for the Hugo and one of STAR WARS II. You should have a Hugo ballot attached to this issue. VOTE.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Donald Franson.

The N3F's Clubhouse. The LASFS (a local club in Los Angeles) spends a lot of money maintaining its clubhouse. They have made it a pleasant place where any member or visitor can come and meet like-minded fans and take part in some activity, or just socialize.

The N3F doesn't have a clubhouse, because it's spread out all over the country (and some parts of the world). TNFF and TIGHTBEAM hold it together, but there are other activities which any member can participate in.

Naffer Amateur Press Alliance. N'APA is the N3F's own apa, and is a good place to start in fanzine publishing. It is not merely a letter-writing group, as members must actually publish their own fanzines, to send in to the Official Editor to distribute. With the advent of convenient xerox shops, this is not so hard as it used to be, when you had to own your own Enchanted Duplicator, or prevail upon someone else to run off your painstakingly-cut stencils. Contact Frank Denton, 14654 8th Ave. SW, Seattle, WA 98166, for further details.

Welcommittee. Now that you know a little bit about fandom and the N3F, you can take your turn at informing others. Join the Welcommittee, and make new friends by writing to people you don't know. (I always thought it strange that some fans only want to communicate with those they already know. Carried to extremes, this would mean you would only talk to your mother all your life.) Write to Fred Jakobcic, 113 W. Ohio St., Apt. 4, Marquette, MI 49855, to be given lists of new members to welcome.

Writers Exchange. This is a writers' workshop that costs you nothing except postage. You submit your finished manuscripts (preferably short--remember the postage) in several copies, and they are sent out to other writing hopefuls to criticize, to be sent back to you (eventually.) In return, you are expected to criticize other peoples' stories. This is not a fanzine manuscript bureau (we have one of those, when it is operating.) This only deals with serious would-be professionals who want to improve their work (and can stand criticism.) Write to Edward W. Ludwig, 16540 Camellia Terrace, Los Gatos, CA 95030, and if you send a manuscript, include a large SASE. Mark it "Writers Exchange" to distinguish it from the Story Contest, which Ed will also be handling.

NFAS. Now we come to my own New Fanzine Appreciation Society. If you want to get fanzines of course, there are many ways to receive them, but it's sometimes hard for the new fan to get started. One way is to get your name on the NFAS list, promising to write a letter of comment on every fanzine you receive (or contribute, or trade, or subscribe if nothing else). Fanzine editors hate to send their fanzines into a Black Hole, where nothing comes out. The least we can do is appreciate their efforts and expense. And if you're a fanzine editor, just starting out, here's a ready-made mailing list.

These are only a few of many activities in the N3F (see list in TNFF). The N3F is a framework on which to build. It's a home for fans of every description. It's a gateway to fandom for new fans, and a place where old fans can relax or be active as they choose. If nothing is happening in the N3F that appeals to you, here's a place to make it happen.

The N3F doesn't need a clubhouse. It IS a clubhouse. DF.

The Keeper's Price

by Marion Zimmer Bradley and the Friends of Darkover

reviewed by William West

One of the first things that impressed me when I joined the Friends of Darkover was the amazing amount of interaction and dialogue between Marion Zimmer Bradley and her fans. I had not thought it possible that any author would not only allow her literary creation to be worked over and expanded by aspiring writers, but actually encourage them in their efforts. The result has been an imaginative, vitally active group of fans, some of whom will one day be heard from on the professional scene. Most of their work appears in the magazine STARSTONE, and recently MZB ran a short story contest in its pages. The winning entries, plus some other goodies, were gathered into an anthology, THE KEEPER'S PRICE.

The stories span the whole spectrum of Darkover's "history" and range in subject matter from the founding of its feudal system to encounters with the Ya-men and diplomatic missions to the Catmen. While all the stories are excellent, I would be less than honest if I didn't admit that I have personal favorites. One is "The Fires of her Vengeance", by Susan Shwartz, an excellent translation of the legend of Marilie Hastur that will leave vivid images in the reader's mind. Elizabeth Waters' "The Alton Gift" while one of the shortest stories in the book, brings home the horrors of the Breeding Program better than most stories ten times its length could. The start of the use of laran for healing purposes is dealt with by Kathleen Williams in "Circle of Light". And having a somewhat pessimistic idea of the post WORLD WRECKERS Darkover myself, I found Paula Crunk's "A View From the Reconstruction: or Happy Times on Modern Darkover" a fiendishly funny encounter between the new bureaucracy and the common man.

The other goodies consist of two stories by MZB herself and a collaboration. "Hawkmaster's Son" gives us new insight into the background of HERITAGE OF HASTUR and the psyche of Dyan Ardais. "Blood Will Tell" tells the story of how Lew Alton first met Dio Ridenow on Vainwal. Finally written in collaboration with Elizabeth Waters, the title piece of the anthology "The Keeper's Price" details the story of Hilary Castamir mentioned in THE FORBIDDEN TOWER. All three stories are well written and are invaluable just for the new light they shed on several of MZB's most popular characters.

Ironically, the only sour note to come from this book was the cover. Don Maitz either hasn't read MZB's books closely enough, or he has stretched the concept of "artistic licence" to the outer limits. Except for a huge red sun, there is little on the cover that bears resemblance to Darkover. A woman, who I assume represents a Keeper, sits between two large pink crystal balls, sparks arching from fingertips to crystal. Standing next to her is a child of undetermined sex, wearing a topless sarong and staring intensely at the white crystal in his/her hands. Anyone who has paid attention to the descriptions of starstones knows that they are blue, and that it is highly unlikely that any large matrix, pink or blue, would be used outside the controls of a Tower and Circle. Nor would any child be allowed to stare into a starstone for any length of time without at least adult supervision, if not that of a Ieronis or Keeper. And on a planet as cold as Darkover, the chances of encountering sarongs are slim to none. It might behoove DAW books to exercise a bit more editorial control over their covers in the future, especially the cover for MZB's soon to be released novel.

A lot of pride can be taken in this anthology. The fan writers, especially the newer ones, show a great deal of talent and sensitivity, and deserve the recognition this book will bring. It is to be hoped that they will keep on writing and polishing their skills so that someday they will be well known writers on the professional level. And MZB deserves recognition herself. By her encouragement and criticism, by her willingness to let young authors try their wings in her "universe", she has brought enjoyment to us all.

You lend us grace, domna.

A Look at Gordon R. Dickson's Work

by Greg R. Hills

Dickson is a writer I find it very hard to get into. It is almost impossible for me to simply sit down and start reading one of his books; I must needs wait until the right moment. I don't know how many other people feel this way, but it would not surprise me greatly if this was common. It would, at least, surprise me somewhat less than if people found him an easy writer to read.

In the process of attempting to analyze why this is so (for me, at least), I have come across several minor items that may, or may not, be relevant. I present them here without any particular effort to explain why they may fit together.

In every book by Dickson that I have read so far, the protagonist has been male. Not just a man, but very often a superman of some description. He meets and deals with men almost exclusively as regards the story line, and where women figure, the spectre of a sexual liaison is inevitable -- either from the start, or after an initial period in which she expresses independence or indifference.

The man is almost invariably competent; rarely does Dickson use an incompetent major character. Where he does (as in PRO), the incompetent meets his just rewards by the failure of his efforts and possible damage to himself. He is often saved at the last moment by the competent person he scorns. (This attitude holds true for a woman who tries to make the grade alone. For some reason the male characters can face the world and win unaided, but the women are eventually frustrated and forced back on male help.)

Where a woman is depicted sympathetically, he is usually an ally or associate of the male protagonist. She shares his triumph, or she dies a martyr and provides the male protagonist with inspiration/determination to carry on.

Dickson tends to concentrate on situations where the fate of the country/world/universe hangs in the balance. He begins the tale in some cases with the protagonist unaware of the role he is playing, and in others with the protagonist perhaps the only major character who does know what is going on. Or who thinks he does. These are the two overriding scenarios -- all others are variations on the theme.

The protagonist generally finds himself in a paranoid's paradise -- except that within the compass of the novel/story, the character cannot be a paranoid because everyone is out to get him.

Dickson usually makes the unbeatable assumption that the competent protagonist can search out and defeat the long-established and carefully-hidden opponents. A rather interesting assumption in my opinion. It bears evidence that Dickson is an optimist. And, truly, even in the books Dickson must often make use of rather feeble devices such as the powerful secret organisation which has been plotting the defeat of the protagonist's opponents from the year dot, and which is sufficiently interested in the protagonist's case to volunteer him aid -- often at great risk of the downfall of said organization.



Leaving plot and such behind for now, we come to theme and style. Dickson has a rather prosaic and flat style. His major characters, and hence presumably Dickson himself, hate complexities and ambiguities. Dickson insists on breaking a situation down into little pieces -- each with its place. It is this fundamentally nuts-and-bolts approach that may be the reason I find it hard to start a Dickson book. While I like to have a situation clear to me before I proceed, I do not insist that it be simplified. I find it incomprehensible that some people actually do believe there is some master-group in this world who are guiding all things to their own ends.

We have seen this attitude time and again -- Hitler, McCarthy, Muldoon -- in world or national leaders. If some small group were responsible for the state of the world, how simple things become! Defeat, break up or destroy this group, and the Millenium begins.

This is the viewpoint that Dickson takes. I won't say it is the wrong attitude -- as Dickson develops his worlds, the characters must adapt to such a situation or else be out of tune. I do question its relevance to any real system.

Dickson also has a remarkably dry prose technique: there is little flourish nor elegance to his books. They are competently done, in the main, but nothing to get worked up over. I don't give a fig for style or any such item, but used judiciously they do turn otherwise dull books into enjoyable reading hours. In Dickson's case, unless his has an interesting idea or subject, this does not happen. If the topic is interesting, it is possible to ignore the bareness of the writing. Where action or plot or idea flag, I get bored very easily.

So I think at base my problem is that Dickson and I are out of phase. Our ways of thought are too divergent, our attitudes subtly oblique to each other. To read and enjoy Dickson, I must be in the right mood -- right environment, time of day, and state of health. I must become somewhat nearer to the Dickson viewpoint.

Then I enjoy reading him!

#####

***My readings in Dickson range through the Dorsai books, Naked to the Stars, The Outposter, Pro, On the Run, The Dragon and the George (that, strangely, I can read and enjoy anytime), Home From the Shore, Alien Art, Wolfing, and a couple of others I can't recall at this writing (my book collection is 130 miles north-northwest of here). But all in that reading I haven't found significant contradictions of the opinions promulgated in this article to warrant mention. Perhaps someone with wider reading of Dickson can correct this deficiency? Or perhaps reinforce the conclusions.....

#####

GRUNTS and GROANS

(Comparisons and Contrasts between Gordon R. Dickson's NAKED TO THE STARS and Robert A. Heinlein's STARSHIP TROOPERS.)

by Dennis Jarog

If Mother, the Flag and Apple Pie are what made this country was it is (or was) then these two books should be used as a practical guide to the future. But since I don't think that the Military has the corner on the rationality market.....

In both stories a breakup of the current socio-political setup is postulated; sort of a new emerging majority like we heard about a few years ago. In STARSHIP TROOPERS (from here on ST will stand for STARSHIP

TROOPERS and NS will stand for NAKED TO THE STARS), it is suggested that the new realpolitic emerged as vigilanteism which later became the status quo in the face of no effective opposition. In the Dickson novel, the past is not as clearly spelled out though there are some glimmerings of what has preceded the present government.

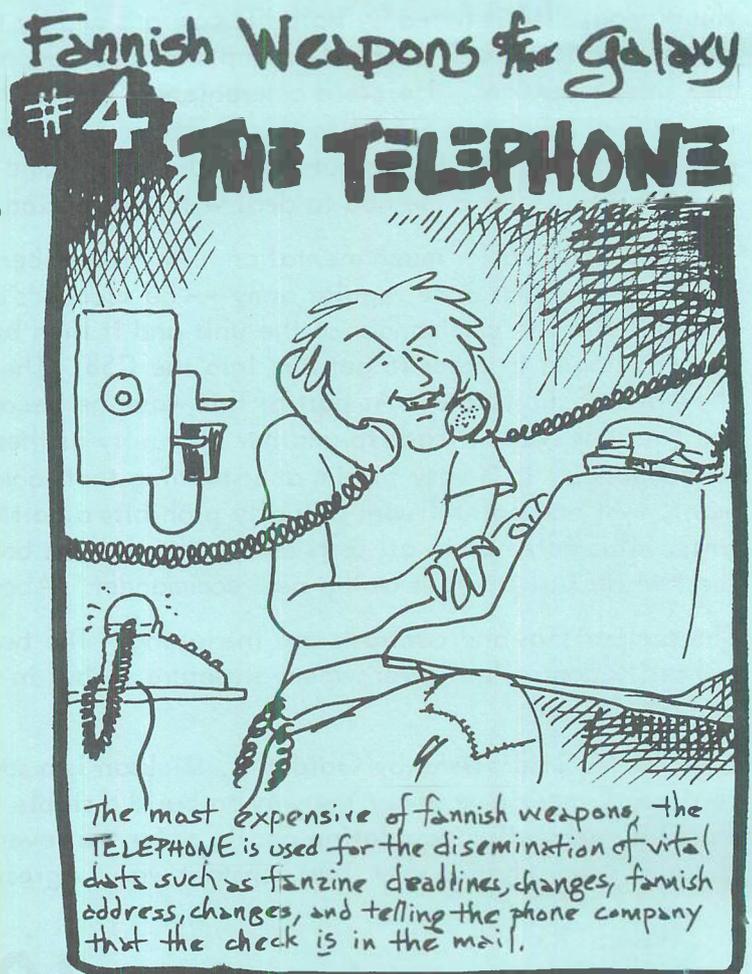
In NS, the franchise is extended to all citizens as well as the other legal rights. Those who have served honorably in the military are given a second vote. Both books assume that the veteran will be the most devoted in the exercise of his right to vote since he has put himself in jeopardy to gain it. However Heinlein goes a step further. Veterans are the only citizens. Only by going to war can one achieve the status of citizen. Those who choose not to do so are considered legal residents -- free men but essentially second class citizens. This also presupposes that the government is the exclusive realm of those who have served. Heinlein again goes further -- only one who has given service is fit to indoctrinate the new generation. In short both societies are warrior oriented (Heinlein's more so than Dickson's). They have some of the qualities of both Sparta and Athens; whether or not it is an effective combination is another question.

During parts of US history, foreign affairs have been guided by the principle known as "Manifest Destiny" This, in effect, said that this country and its people are blessed by a beneficent God and have a duty to conquer, colonize and civilize the savages around us. This caused the decimation of the Indians and the wars with Mexico and Spain. Both ST and NS take this assumption as a starting point. In NS the book opens as the protagonist is leading an assault on a planet some light years from Earth. The reason for the war is basically "We should conquer them before they can develop the technology to get us." (This brings out another postulate of both authors: any alien species is of necessity, hostile. That is a dangerous position. While I would hardly assume that all alien societies are peaceful, neither would I say they are hostile. The reality lies somewhere in between.) The ultimate problem with this argument is one neither author has considered, what happens when we encounter a society that is far beyond us technologically?

One of the characters from ST tells us that the... "noblest fate that one man can have is to place himself between his home and war's destruction". (p74). No one would argue that the defense of one's home and hearth is ignoble -- if one does not defend it, who will? But it is a long, long jump from that to the territorial imperative.

So in the background of the two books, we have a strikingly similar feel for the role of the individual in society. He doesn't owe the state anything but the state indoctrinates him from childhood on to accept that his interests and the state's are in all cases one and the same. Here the stories begin to take on a different character.

Juan Rico, the protagonist of ST is a misspent youth who rejects the fancy plans of his father (the best schools, then entering the family business) and instead volunteers for the Mobile Infantry (MI). It should be noted here that military service in both books is voluntary -- depending on your viewpoint as to whether anyone has much choice in the major decisions in his life. Many more attempt to join the armed services than make it. However Juan goes into training which he completes successfully. Neither of



our heroes had a perfect training camp -- the authors suggest perhaps, that there is nothing saintly about them. The heroes are more or less run of the mill at camp. Obviously neither could fail in their training period. However Juan Rico serves with distinction and eventually gets recommended for Officer Candidate School, where in a singular rejection of chance, he meets his father who has been assigned to the troop that Juan Rico had been a part of.

One incident is illustrative of the society that Heinlein sought to create. Early in the training camp, one of the soldiers is discharged for striking a superior officer. The point of interest in this is the fact that the commander tells his sergeants that they (the recruits) shouldn't get a chance to violate that rule. (p59). The paternalistic nature of the society is such that the given person or soldier should do the right thing by nature while thinking he has in fact chosen the right thing. Thus one has the best of both worlds: the externals of a democratic society with the internal stability of an empire.

Rico, of course, goes on to greater glory as an officer. As one might expect, in his first command role, he takes over as his superiors fall in battle and he does the proper thing. At the end, father and son are reunited for the last drop.

Cal Truant, the protagonist in NS is a kid who rejects his cowardly father (from the standpoint of the society) and joins the army and goes on to achieve greater and greater command responsibility. During one mission -- the human campaign against the Lehaunan -- he suffers a blackout. This gap of time remains unaccounted for and he is discharged from the service. He finds that he cannot readjust to civilian life. His parents are both dead, his home has been destroyed in retaliation bombing and he has no ties left to Earth. He refuses psychoprobe might might fill in the missing time and make him eligible for the service again. Thus there is only one avenue left to him.

In NS there is a branch of the service called the Contact Services Bureau whose job it is to attempt to smoothe the relationship between the Terran and the alien after the war is over. Cal accepts training for the Bureau. He is hated by both his comrades and by the enemy. (In having Contact Services this book is more realistic than ST since it attempts to look beyond war to the relationship that will evolve between the two sides afterward. Heinlein conveniently ignores the fact that one cannot place armies of occupation upon every inhabited planet in this Galactic Quadrant. In spite of the broodmares that his society supports, you are going to run out of population at some point. Thus Dickson accepts the time that comes after and begins to show a method to deal with that period.

Truant becomes after much mental anguish, a member of the Bureau. In spite of the fact that he is doubly damned -- he was once regular army -- he succeeds even when assigned to his old unit. He comes into contact with the commander of the unit and it then becomes apparent that the whole episode of the blackout was staged in order to get him into the CSB. The good general reveals the setup and Truant seems to be the wave of the future. As part of this wave he becomes leader of the contact section of the expedition to the Paumons (which leads to another difficulty as these aliens are especially humanoid. As one of the characters puts it, it is easy to aim at something that looks like an insect; it becomes difficult when it looks human). At one point Truant actually prohibits a battle (he has such authority) and arranges a peace of sorts. This gets him in all sorts of trouble, but his boss had pulled a fast one in the meantime and so in a short while Cal emerges as the new commander. Above all he wins a measure of self-respect for himself.

The comparisons and contrasts are intriguing. The two authors start with the same basic background -- the militarily controlled government structure -- but in the end, I think one book is a success while the other one is a failure.

NAKED TO THE STARS by Gordon R. Dickson is a success for several reasons. The author realizes that the territorial imperative is not the way to build a stable society. Expansion is desirable in order to deal with a rapidly expanding population and in order that everyone can have his own place. But he realizes that there must be a better way than constant war. Aggression is a dangerous game for it creates enemies where

there might have been friends. It also ignores the possibility, even the probability, that there are some weapons and aliens against whom we have no defense. Simply hurling bodies is also the best way to decimate the species. Thus Dickson created the Contact Services Bureau to the point where they follow the military and perhaps ultimately to the point where they precede the military to see if alliances might be formed thus preventing war. Parts of the book are contrived; most importantly the blackout and the subversion necessary to get Truant into the Bureau. But the book does succeed and gives us sideways glances into the world of the Dorsai.

STARSHIP TROOPERS by Robert A. Heinlein does not succeed. He presents the military society but left it there. It is a pious presentation of a possibly necessary society, yet if that is it why bother to go on? The illusion of democracy is there but the substance is lacking. Not so much in its limited franchise; that is not unreasonable, but in the fact that as children the citizens are taught one philosophy -- no competing view is even entertained. What choice is there if only one option is allowed? The future painted shows man constantly jumping from one world to another, destroying or subjecting one species after another in the name of homo sapiens. Each newly found inhabited planet becomes just another world to victimize. Heinlein said in his GOH speech at MidAmeriCon that there will always be war. This I believe but there does not have to be planetary rape.

Thus NAKED TO THE STARS and STARSHIP TROOPERS are superficially similar in having very similar backgrounds but then they divulge and the futures they portray are also different.

----Dennis Jarog

An Interview With Gordon R. Dickson

conducted by Jack Herman

(Gordon R. Dickson's most ambitious project, the CHILDE Cycle, when completed will consist of six novels of the future, in an SF style, of which four have already been published: NECROMANCER (set 100 years in the future), TACTICS OF MISTAKE (100 years after that) and (100 years further still) SOLDIER ASK NOT and DORSAI!; and two soon to be published, set another century in the future: FINAL ENCYCLOPEDIA and CHILDE. The cycle will also have three books set in the past and three in the twentieth century. This interview, conducted on Sunday, 12 August 1979 during SYNCON 79, concerns this series.)

HERMAN: First, a fundamental question: how did you go about creating a background for the Cycle?

GRD: The whole pattern for the Cycle came out in one long asthmatic night at the SF Milford Conference when I couldn't sleep. Actually it had been brewing for about a dozen years. I had a historical novel that I was working on in the 40's called THE PIKEMAN; that was supposed to deal with. . . . I'll go back and start at the beginning. I was fascinated, in the 40's, with a certain type of character that I thought was a particularly Renaissance type of character. You might go visiting someone's house, let's say in Florence, someone with a very large house. You'd find a polite society, who, if you mingled with it and could talk Tuscan as well as the rest of them, would seem very modern to you. You might end up talking to a man whose views on politics, religion, philosophy, chemistry and so on, taking into account that he didn't have the same technological background, would sound very sane and reasonable and sensible to you and very perceptive. Later on you might see him leave: he'd go out through the front door and gather up his retainers, some on horseback, some on foot, a bunch of dogs and various things. Head out of the square. On his way out, he might see a beggar dozing in the corner and "sic" the dogs on him just for the fun of seeing the dogs tear the beggar apart. The beggar'd make all these interesting noises while they did it. That is the type, that in the present day, would be considered psychotic.

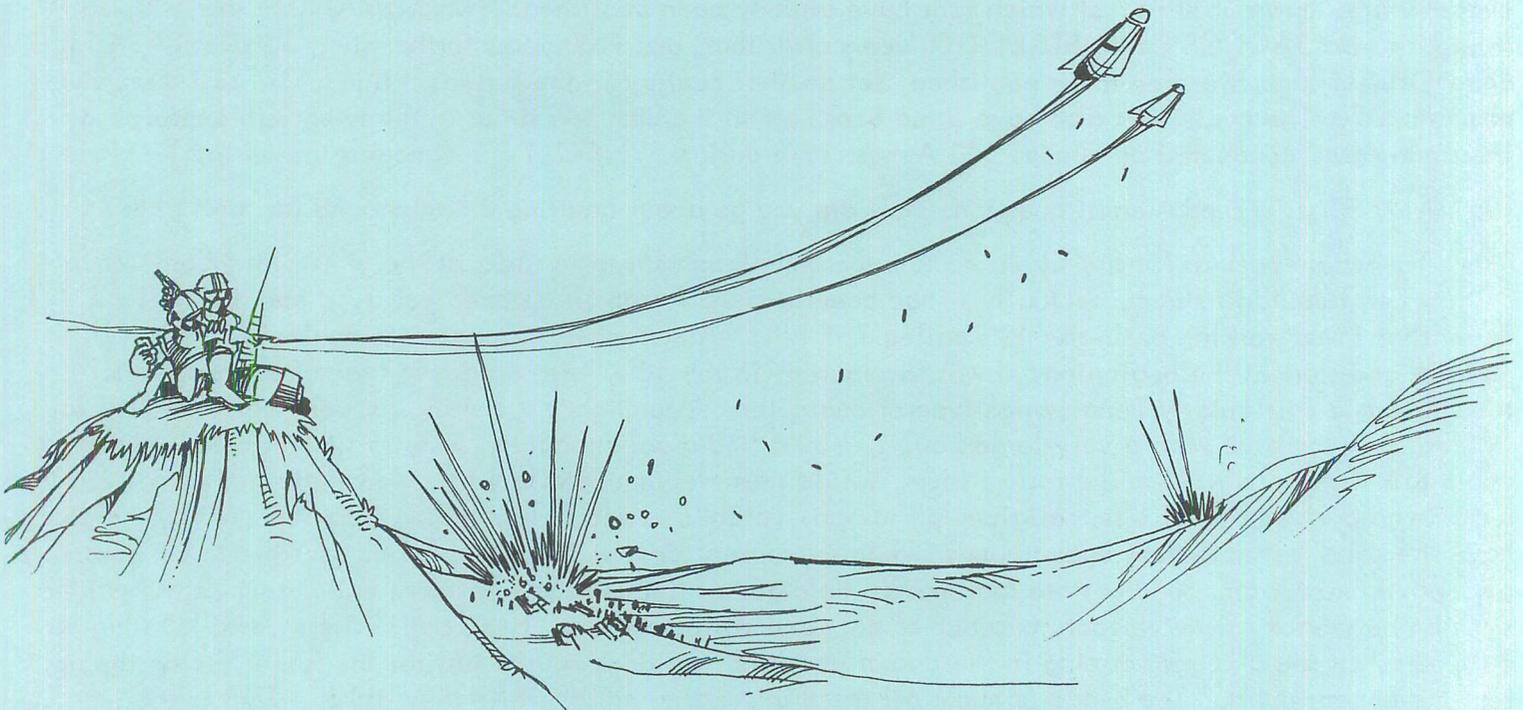
He was very sensitive on the intellectual basis, completely insensitive in the human area.

I later found out that it wasn't, when I dug deeper into the research, a Renaissance type -- it was a Medieval type and, in my opinion, stemmed from the problem in handling the real and the ideal in the same package. Really, when we've got to have the ideal on one hand and the real on the other, they were so different that there was no reconciling them at all. The answer was that you carried them around side by side and just ignored any disconnection between the two. Religion preached the kind of life that was a realistic impossibility, for example. But you believed in both. You didn't disbelieve in the real world because if you did it would kill you very quickly and you didn't disbelieve in the ideal world because if you did, you were cut off from all future life and hope of happiness.

What I wanted to do was show this type of character through a pair of clear, modern eyes, so I picked a young pikeman, one of the Swiss levies that was simply drafted by his Canton and sold South, in the first levies of pikemen that went down. Most of you know that the pikemen were the enemies of the men on horseback. Not that the man on horseback wasn't willing to face the pikes but the horses weren't. When the first few horses got piked, the others refused to go near them.

What I wanted to do was send this young man down and have him last about five years down there and see the evolution of a Cesare Borgia-type character.

That got put aside because, at the time, I was having a fit of common sense which, thank God, didn't last too long. I'd always intended to write from the time I was old enough to read and I was one of those people that had myself reading at four years old. I had taken it for granted, I hadn't assumed that there would be anything hard about being a writer: you know, just go ahead and do it like you do anything else. I stuck with this right through WW II, up until after WW II when everyone was being sensible and saying, "Alright, now we will get jobs and settle down. None of this nonsense." I caught the fever and, for a while, I said, "I'll get my PhD and teach and write in my spare time and make the teaching feed the writing." After about nine months of Graduate School, luckily, I came to and said, "This is ridiculous: why not make the writing feed the writing?" and dived off and went to work, mainly in the "pulp" magazines of that time for that's where you could make a quick buck. Writing a book took too much of an investment of time. So all book ideas got put aside.



of it. If you conceive of a man who lived essentially in the arena of hand-to-hand combat all his life and died in his bed in his late 70's or 80's -- we don't know exactly. To successfully survive the whims of chance, while putting yourself at risk over that period of time is freakish. And there are some reasons I'll be arguing in HAWKWOOD why it isn't chance. Research on that has taken me as far afield as the martial arts in Japan. There are certain things at work.) is to introduce my reader to a hero who does things for 14th Century reasons and have those reasons believable. Which means I'm going to have to con my readers into thinking like a 14th Century person. This requires techniques that I've been developing while I was doing the "future" novels of the Cycle. I can't sit down and give you an example of even one of them without talking for three hours. Basically, what makes the Cycle possible is what Henry James called "the technique of the roving narrator" which James dug out from what Flaubert did in MADAME BOVARY. It was a big jump that Flaubert took forward in MADAME BOVARY. You can only do it with a controlled point of view. I'm trying to take it another step forward. Eventually, to understand the Cycle, I'll have to have all the books done, because the story will lie, thematically, in the connection between the novels as much as in the novels themselves.

Now, in FINAL ENCYCLOPEDIA, which is coming up next, Hal Mayne, who's the hero both of that and of CHILDE (FINAL ENCYCLOPEDIA and CHILDE are really one large novel -- prequel and sequel), will sit down and chart out the whole pattern from HAWKWOOD up forward so my readers will have some idea of what the connection is. But still, to appreciate it, to get the results I want, I'll have to have the dog-gone twelve novels all done.

HERMAN: In your other works, since you started the Childe Cycle, the concept of thematic consciousness has been developed a great deal. I noticed similarities between the Childe protagonists and, for example, Marc Despard (TIMESTORM) and Johnny and Tomi Joya (in THE SPACE SWIMMERS). They seem to be developing the same sort of consciousness as your Childe "heroes". Is the Cycle rubbing off on your other works?

GRD: Bear in mind that up until I formulated the idea of a consciously thematic novel (which I didn't do, consciously until after DORSAI!) I didn't write what I would call a consciously thematic novel. After that, there's one novel that isn't one: NAKED TO THE STARS, which is a propagandistic novel.

The difference between a propagandistic novel and a Consciously Thematic novel is:

Imagine an art gallery. You step into this long, narrow corridor. Off to the right, there is a life-sized statue. (I first formulated this image during the VietNam War, so, you can see slightly old-fashioned echoes applying.) The Statue shows a man driving what looks like a thick-bodied spear through the body of another man. The other man is on the ground at his feet. The man standing up and handling the spear is wearing business clothes with a hat with a "Press" card in it and his spear turns into a ball point pen, and transfixes somebody wearing black pajamas.

To the left, there are a series of plaques. The first shows a Sumerian dagger; the second, a Roman short sword; third, a wheel-lock pistol; fourth, a sub machine gun; the fifth plaque shows the front page of a newspaper with the headline, "VIETCONG COMMITS FURTHER ATROCITIES IN BIEN HOA".

(I'm not pushing a political point of view -- this is an example.)

The statue is a piece of propagandistic art. It gives you no choice but to accept it or reject it. You have two things saying the same thing, that the power of the press can be used unfairly. The statue gives you no choice -- which is what a propagandistic novel does. The series of plaques, on the other hand, leaves it up to you whether you want to complete the thought chain that gives you that answer or not. You can look up there and say: "I see a number of weapons and a piece of newspaper, but what's that mean?" In other words, it gives your subconscious a chance to reject it. You don't have to have it rammed down your throat. So if the Statue is like the propagandistic novel, the series of plaques is like a Consciously Thematic novel -- but it leaves it there for you to draw your own conclusions. My consciously thematic novels have points to make but they don't ram it down your throat.

And it all got buried so deeply that I didn't realise I still had it all till I wrote DORSAI! and discovered after I'd done it that what I had done was rewritten THE PIKEMAN in terms of DORSAI!

This zeroed me in on roughly what I'd been doing all along, which was: I wanted to break new craft ground; I wanted to do a different type of novel, different type of writing, actually, which is what I've since labelled "the consciously thematic story" or "the consciously thematic novel" and I also wanted to do a work which would showcase this and it had to do with a number of things: I'm a galloping optimist (and it would have to reflect this), I had various ideas about where the Human Race was going.

What happened after I finished DORSAI! -- four months later I was at Milford. I used to go to Milford even though I would get galloping asthma attacks there, simply because writers are so doggone hard up for shop talk that they're willing to sell their souls to get it. Milford Writers' Conference was a voluntary association of pro writers in the SF field that would get together and we did a lot of reading each other's manuscripts and most of the important stuff that went on was sitting up until 6 AM drinking and talking.

As the week went on and I would sleep less and less and my asthma would get worse and worse and it finally hit one night where you go to sleep and you kid yourself maybe I'll sleep through because you felt fairly good and you go to sleep, sleep for about half an hour, then are awake for about six hours and are unable to move because you didn't have the mind and strength to do it. My mind was going 90,000 miles an hour because the way your body fights the asthmatic attack is by pumping adrenalin so your mind is galloping while your body can't move. I worked out the whole plan for the Cycle at that time and it's never changed. I played with the idea of changing some aspects of it in the 60s but found it wouldn't work. At it, literally, has operated from that time to this.

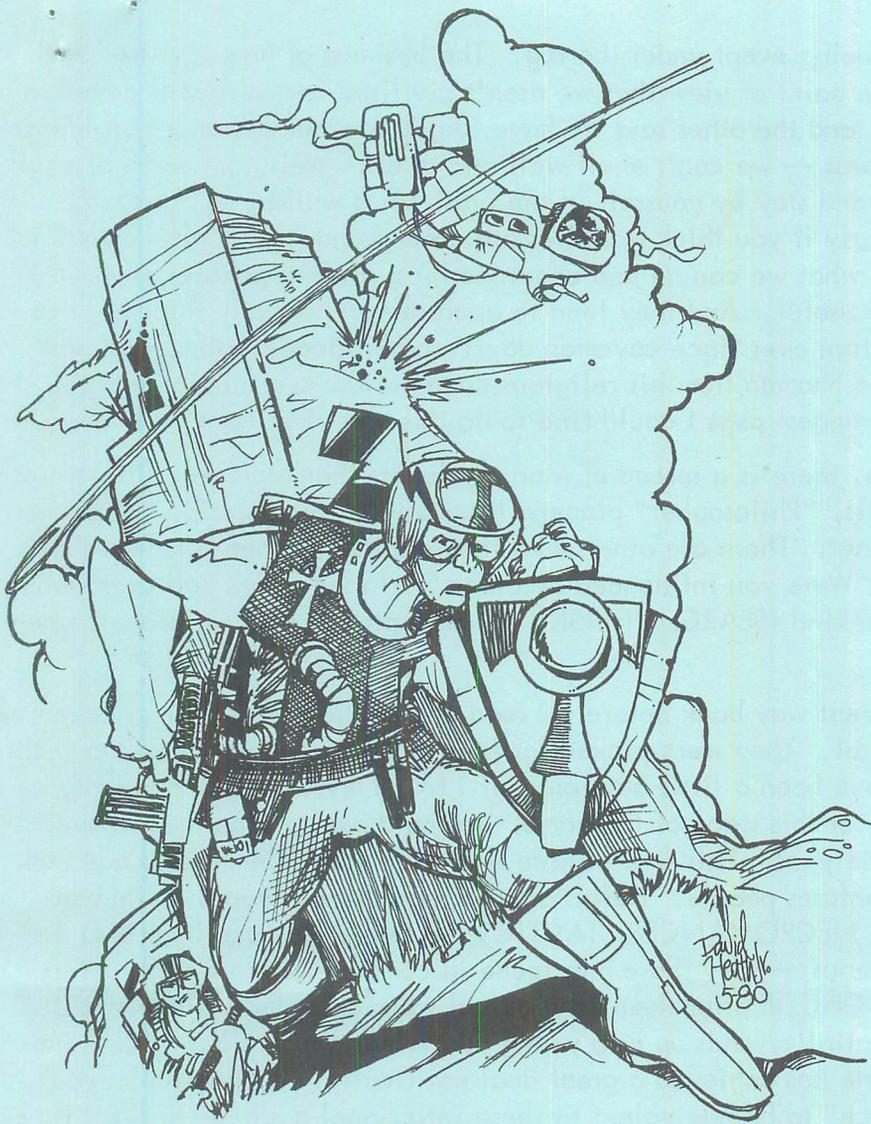
The reason it did is that it was the conscious end result of nearly twenty years of unconscious playing with three various ideas. So that, in a sense, it was like a set of clothes or shoes that had been cut and laid out for the elves to sew up and that night the elves sewed them all up.

HERMAN: This concept of the consciously thematic novel or (as it has been called elsewhere) the novel of thematic consciousness: you're consciously trying to make the book thematic and the theme you're trying to relate to is the consciousness of their involvement by the protagonists. How has this sort of stylistic approach affected your writing?

GRD: The name is a jaw-breaker; it really doesn't matter what I would have called it. It could have been Barbeque Three and it still would have been the same thing. It's an attempt to pin down in words what I'm working with. It's a codification of what I was reaching for from the very first time I conceived of writing -- the way writing should be. What's largely forgotten is that writing is constantly in a state of evolution and new techniques are essentially uncovered, invented or what have you by writers, and once used, are picked up and used by other writers who have then a second-hand use of them. Because, as I said the other day, writers write what they want to read and most of what we learn, we learn by reading. I seem to have got off the track. The question was...

HERMAN: How has trying to write the Cycle in that particular style affected the writing of it?

GRD: It determined the pattern. In effect what I had was the consciously thematic novel, first, although I hadn't codified it and was hunting for a vehicle that would allow me to showcase it. So when this pattern came along, I had my showcase. It was a very interesting thing because, of course, I'm learning as I go. Essentially, what I'm doing with the Cycle, in one aspect, but not all of it, since the novels are discrete and can stand separately, is working with the same machinery over and over again and getting a little bit more expert at it, every time I handle it. The Cycle, in this sense, is developing itself. The novels are developing themselves. By the time I go to HAWKWOOD, I'll have six SF novels under my belt and I'll have a much clearer picture of how I want to show HAWKWOOD. Essentially, what I'm after with this particular man (I suppose all of you know he was an actual historical character -- he's called the first of the modern generals and a fair amount is known about his life, not the early part but about the end



THE FRIENDLIES

the same way) all the novels since DORSAI! have been consciously thematic novels. As such, they are sort of non-critical laboratory experiments. These are books I want to do and I'm flexing the same muscles and the same machinery in them. But I'm using them aside from the main argument of the Cycle. In all respects you could lump them with the Cycle except they are not in the same story line.

HERMAN: If we turn to the content of the Cycle; it deals with the development of the split in Mankind between the three types you are trying to emphasize: the Warrior, the Philosopher, and the Faith-Holder. Why did you choose these types and, in what ways is NECROMANCER supposed to show this split?

GRD: The three archetypes actually come about because I had to limit my stage. You wouldn't think with twelve novels (and they will end as twelve large novels because FINAL ENCYCLOPEDIA will run 150,000 words and, if I live long enough, I'll go back and bring the others up to size, the way they should have been. So, in effect, the future leg will double because we'll have six long novels instead of six short ones.) you wouldn't have to limit your stage. This limitation was the same sort that caused me to throw out the possibility of the Human Race encountering an alien culture. I spend more time excluding things that I do bringing them in. Because the minute you start approaching life, it gets so complex that it runs away with you.. What I wanted was clearly to extrapolate -- the whole Cycle follows the pattern of a SF short story in that it starts out with known fact and extrapolates rigourously forward from there. To make this as simple as possible, I chose three pegs, of which archetypes were available in the areas I wanted. Characteristic of the Middle Ages in the Western World were these three characters: war, religion and philosophy (aside from religion) were the three doggone bumpers around which the average medieval person bounced, one way or another- And having taken these as a base, I had to move forward in the same pattern. Now, it would take an extra half hour to substantiate this, but I have certain reasons for arguing that these

You'll have critics that assume I'm making points that I'm not making and that I'm ramming it down their throats but I'm not, because my points turn out to be very different from what they think they are. What the Cycle shows is (as I have mentioned) the evolutionary development of responsibility in the human race. My argument is, starting from Renaissance time, we are half-way there now or half-way along the doggone road. Whether we have achieved half is another question. In other words, I'm arguing that Man does develop and that Man gets better -- the human race gets better -- and this is what the whole Cycle is arguing -- but it doesn't sit down and say "take it or leave it" -- it lays it out and if you want to pick it up, you can.

HERMAN: How has this sort of style affected your other novels?

GRD: With the exception of NAKED TO THE STARS, which was a propagandistic novel, in reply to Robert Heinlein's STARSHIP TROOPERS, (It wasn't really a reply -- it came out of the same thought -- Harry Harrison did BILL, THE GALACTIC HERO and James Blish did A CASE OF CONSCIENCE in

are necessary qualities that are in danger of being swept under the rug. The business of how civilised we are is often argued; on one hand you have the point of view that we aren't civilised -- we're still cavemen and we've got that much of a veneer over us; and the other says we have forgotten what our ancestors knew: we're weak present day descendants of what was -- we can't smell well and so on. Well, our sense of smell actually recovers tremendously if you go out and stay by yourself in the brush for a while. It's amazing. Your sense of hearing improves too, particularly if you think grizzlies are around and they might be walking up behind you. In other words, it's amazing what we can do and underneath us, in emergencies, these million year old reflexes are still there and very useful. And they tend to operate very strongly through three institutions that have been part of human culture ever since caveman days: the Warleader, the Priest and the Shaman. (I deliberately am divorcing the Shaman from his religious connotations and making him just the thinker of the tribe.) They were the three strongest pegs I could find to do this sort of thing.

HERMAN: As a result of Formain's activities, there is a spread of Man to planets that represent different aspects of humanity: Mara and Kultis, "Philosopher" planets; Harmony and Association, which are "religious" planets and Dorsai, a warrior planet. There are others like the "mining" planet, the "trading" planets and Ste Marie, the Catholic planet. Were you influenced by other SF stories which had been published that presented this sort of spread of mankind (SEARCH THE SKY for example) to discrete planets where people of common interests move?

GRD: Not really, because the Cycle roots went way back before I'd read any of those other things, even before I'd started reading SF, in general. They were picked for their historical viability rather than drawing from other areas. I think I would have been a little suspicious if I found myself leaning heavily on something I had read from some other author, at this stage of the game. I should explain that each novel is supposed to be a showcase for one of the archetypes. This will be true right through the historical and 20th century novels as well. This occasionally confuses people. Here's another confusion I should go through first: Although chronologically, the order is NECROMANCER, TACTICS OF MISTAKE, and DORSAI! and SOLDIER ASK NOT, which are contemporaneous -- they share one scene in common from different points of view -- and FINAL ENCYCLOPEDIA and CHILDE after them, the actual working order of the future leg begins with Donal Graeme's birth. He, essentially, ends up as a young adult, not physically, but in terms of his own growth, by the end of DORSAI! He has achieved a great deal politically. He has achieved it by use of brute force. If you read "brute force" to be equivalent to these intuitional qualities of his. He's literally forced this situation to happen. He has jammed the human race into one blinking unit. He's now ready to develop a trifle farther. Now, one of the ground rules that had to be was you couldn't travel in time -- if you did the Cycle would simply fall apart. Nonetheless, there was no reason why, psychically, you could not travel in time. What Donal does is go back and animate a dead body. The hero of NECROMANCER is a dead man, Paul Formain, and Donal goes through his second incarnation, his second stage of development, in which he graduates from late teenager into the mid-twenties, developing, in a way, the tool of empathy which you'll remember is what he operates there. At the same time, he does something that is going to affect the rest of the future cycle. For the first time since HAWK WOOD, something directly is done with the basic problem that the Human Race is dealing with: The Cycle deals with a conflict in the Human spirit which goes right back to the time when life began.

It's the argument of the amphibian lying in the nice warm shore-side shallows of the Permian Sea and part of him is saying, "This is just lovely here; this nive, warm puddle and I'd be a damn fool to crawl up on the land". Another part of him is saying: "Yes, but wouldn't it be a great adventure -- just imagine what's up there?"

And these two things pulley haul. All the way through the Cycle, when the earlier novels are written, you'll see this conflict but it's internalized. What Donal does as Paul Formain in NECROMANCER is to split the human "id" in this area, so that the adventurous side of the Human Race can find its residence in certain members of that Race and the conservative can stay here and make the best of what we have. So that the whole struggle can come out in the open.

Now the ground rule I set was that Donal, as Paul Formain, could not change history, but he could change the implications of history after the time in which he went back to do this. And that's what he does. Those

of you who've read it will remember the scene in which he goes through the initiation ceremony and the whole business about the "tower" and the "rubble plain" and the things like that refer to the Alternate Universe, and, when he splits it, he makes real the Alternate Universe, and one of the things that happily makes my ears wriggle is I'm going back and substantiate the Alternate Universe right back to Hawkwood's time, out of historical materials.

He makes this split and from then on, the two things can take different sides. This is what moves the Chantry Guild from its "destruct" point of view to the other. The struggle has been internalized in the group known as the Chantry Guild up to that time. As Mara and Kultis develop, a hundred years later, we get them off in separate compartments. Now you can look at the present day and see the same attitudes pulley-hauling back and forth just in the SF area. We have people, like ourselves, who go around saying: "Wouldn't it be nice to think there are aliens? Imagine what other planets must be like." Then there are people represented by well-worn movie makers who say: "There are things man was not meant to know." They picture everything beyond the Earth as dangerous and horrible and so on.

It gets split in half. I honestly do believe, if we do get an FTL drive, something like this is going to happen. There is a continual push within the Human Race for each small section or point of view to go off and find a place by itself. This is what happens. The Friendlies, the Exotics and the Dorsai just happen to be the three that emerge particularly, both in terms of the Cycle and in terms of history. Mainly because I pulled them from historical archetypes and the Warrior is written large on the pages of history. So is the Philosopher and so is the Faith-Holder (both as faith-holder and as fanatic, these being two sides of a coin).

HERMAN: One of the major criticisms of the Cycle so far, has been the relative weakness of the female characters. They seem more plot devices than people. What are your feelings now, about the female characters in the Childe Cycle so far.

GRD: As a writer of commercial fiction, I came out of the pulp era. We deliberately had our nose rubbed in the fact that you didn't have characters, male or female, and more than that, your female characters were a set of reflexes. There was reflex A, B, C, and D and you might use E, if it was a special situation, but otherwise not. As most of my craft grew up around these things and it was only later on, when I began to wake up to what was going on that I realised that I had to fight my way back. It's intensely interesting because I discovered there was a whole area of my palette that was not being used. There was a whole set of colors altogether that weren't being used at all. What I'm doing now ... You'll find more human females, for example in TIME STORM. You'll see me working toward them in THE FAR CALL.

There'll be a Dorsai "Illumination" (things like "Warriors" and "Brothers", I call Illuminations because they are not necessary to the Cycle, just happy elaborations of it) coming out in October in the US called SPIRIT OF DORSAL which is not my title. I wanted to call it AMANDA MORGAN. It consists of two novelettes: one is "Brothers" and the other is a new novelette.

This new novelette is called "Amanda Morgan"- Right next to Foralie, the home of the Graeme's, the nearest household is the Ap Morgan household and this is founded by Amanda Morgan. There are three Amandas in the future leg of the Cycle. This first Amanda founded Dorsai and was there before Cletus. She's one of the first pioneers on Dorsai. The second Amanda is contemporaneous with DORSAL and is the woman that both Ian and Kensie fall in love with both neither one marries. Ian marries someone else and Kensie never marries at all. Her name is not really Amanda but she starts taking things over at an early age and her family starts calling her "Amanda" and the name sticks. The third Amanda has to do with Hal Mayne in FINAL ENCYCLOPEDIA and CHILDE.

Anyway this Illumination deals with the first Amanda Morgan when she's 97. You'll remember, at the end of TACTICS OF MISTAKE, Dow deCastries has very cleverly created so many situations that the Dorsai are spread thin; they're hired out all over the place. The planet is practically unprotected. He's arranged things this way (he's no mean tactician himself), and he drops in on the Dorsai with a bunch of picked troops to take over the heartland of his enemy, Cletus. Cletus has foreseen this and he's dropped off two people to, more or less, organize, actually, to act as liaison organizers. In the book, Dow deCastries drops his men in and lasts about two weeks and, then they're all defeated or captured.

Several reviewers came out and said it couldn't happen. "You're telling me a bunch of women, old men and children could defeat elite troops. Couldn't be done! Absolutely! Pretty smart. You went past so fast, I almost believed it."

Well, "Amanda Morgan" shows how it was done, at least in the Foralie district. It's hard science. No "now you see it; now you don't". It's all there. Perfectly human. She's the war leader. She doesn't want to be the war leader. Bear in mind (she's a lovely character from my viewpoint, because she's never worn a uniform in her life. But she's one of the Dorsais that existed before the Dorsai existed. She is drafted as a war leader because she's the best person to haul everyone together) the organization on Dorsai is very loose; it's really family to family. You have cantons later on as a sort of political organisation. But people, household to household and individual by individual are almost fiercely independent. So it's hard to find someone everyone else will follow and Amanda is this.

Take a look at her; see how you like her as a fully three dimensional woman character and let me know.

This is a whole area of my palette that I'm striving to get on canvas but it's a matter of retraining myself and doing a lot of things in order to do it. You have to get over the reflexes that cause you to do things without thinking. Back in the early days of pulps, if you attempted to make a real character, male or female, you might get the story bounced back from an editor, who'd say: "Don't go fancy on me. I want, 'A shot rang out in the night and another body hit the floor' type of thing".

HERMAN: How important to the argument you are developing about the evolution of Man is the development of the pattern, in your protagonists, that amounts almost to prescience; is an intuition that amounts almost to prescience? You see it most especially in Cletus and Donal Graeme but also in Tam Olyn, in his ability to involve himself in events.

GRD: What Donal does is a freakish talent. What the other two do is pure human, just very bright human, stopping and thinking things through and doing them. You can find other fictional characters who do the same thing -- Cletus doesn't pull anything out of the hat that Hornblower doesn't.

Donal is something different; Donal is literally using intuitional logic; he's jumping to the end result of a very complicated mathematical figuring (or its equivalent) without having to go through the intermediate stages. There's some justification for this in the Cycle. This will be back in at the end with the whole area of creativity which is one of the things that's going to be freed at the end of CHILDE when responsible Man is developed.

I should say one more thing. Pardon me for going back to pick up a loose thread. But, as I said, each book in the Cycle, as well as outside, has been a laboratory experiment and I think I would have made some minor changes in SOLDIER ASK NOT because I didn't intend people to jump as wholeheartedly to the idea that Tam Olyn was the hero. Tam Olyn is the viewpoint character. Tam Olyn is not the hero; Jamethon Black is the hero, though Tam Olyn is much more important to the Cycle than Jamethon Black. Tam Olyn is sort of a hidden high card in a sense because he is the voice of "full-spectrum" human beings still here on Earth. Remember I make the point that "splinter" cultures are not viable on their own. The Dorsai, by themselves, would die off -- if there were nothing but Dorsai. Same with the Exotics; same way with the Friendlies.

((There is a bit more to this interview -- a summary of the non future Cycle novels which I may run in a future issue. I am out of room right now. How many people would be interested in reading this? I have also read THE SPIRIT OF DORSAI and found "Amanda Morgan" very interesting and certainly as plausible as the campaigns of Cletus Graeme. I will certainly admit that I am no military strategist and am about as far from the Man of War as one could imagine. I sympathize more with the Shaman type than any of the others. I also wish the two final future novels would be out soon. I really want to read them.))

Letters

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I'm very glad to see that Donald Franson doesn't condemn the "deadwood" for merely paying and reading. Makes me feel far less guilty about LOC-ing only twice a year instead of every two months. I like TB with lettercol, reviews and articles.

Now, about that STAR TREK MOVIE review, everything Sally Syrjala said was undoubtedly true and I don't argue with a word of it. However, I'd like to add a few things. First, the score may have resembled that of SUPERMAN (I'm not arguing, I just didn't see SUPERMAN, or hear it either) but it also bore a strong likeness to STAR WARS' music. Perhaps Hollywood is cloning film composers nowadays instead of starlets. Is this an advance? It all depends on your priorities, I guess.

Second, Syrjala has limited herself mostly to comparing the Movie with the Television Episodes. This is certainly not invalid, but perhaps the movie can be criticized on its own as well, as STAR TREK: THE MYSTERY (Without the Book). Those who see the movie without reading the book are under a handicap.

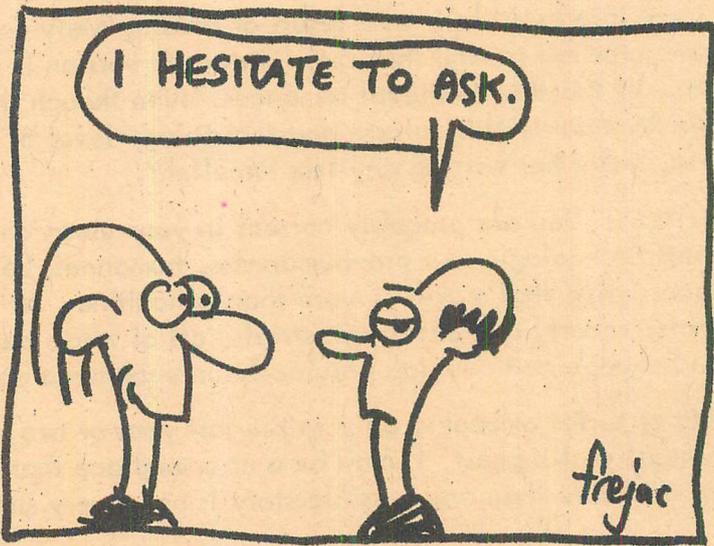
For instance, they know nothing of the Deltans except that Ilia is bald, beautiful, stacked, and publically celibate. This is a little mysterious, since she is obviously a previous (and possibly intimate) acquaintance of the Bright Young Hero, Decker. This is never really cleared up since Ilia suffers from Movie Heroine Disease -- an early, dramatic death. Ilia, in fact, manages this feat twice in one picture, and her reincarnation (we'll get to cloning proper in a moment) suffers the further Movie Heroine Affliction of having to wear a revealing costume. (Oops. Hollywood is still cloning starlets too. Sorry, my mistake.) Ilia-the-probe is content to let Decker handle all the characterization for both of them, a task he is patently unqualified for. Maybe they didn't teach acting at Starfleet Academy.

How did vaporizing Ilia in a flash of lightning give Vegur her precise body blueprint? ST is not alone in this mystery; there are precedents in Fred Hoyle's ANDROMEDA and probably other works. Comparisons aside, if Ilia came back, where did the also-vaporized Security man go? Perhaps Hollywood stopped cloning Security men when the TV series went off the air and didn't have any extras for the movie. Why didn't Vegur reconstruct her clothes with her? After all, it burned them up too. Was the fantastically short white costume functional in any way except to show off Ilia's legs? Perhaps the producers were trying to make up for putting the rest of the female crew in pantsuits, all in one place?

Frejac Funnies ⑦



I HEAR MASTERS &
JOHNSON ARE GOING
TO START A TOURNAMENT
CENTERED AROUND
THEIR FAVORITE SPORT.



I HESITATE TO ASK.

Frejac

There's another mystery or two connected with Ilia's footwear. 1) Does anyone believe stilt heels are going to survive three centuries of fashion changes, let alone three centuries of practical development in space going footwear? 2) How does Ilia climb over the hexagonal cobblestones to get to Vejur Central without ever catching a heel? This was the one detail that actually unsuspected my disbelief while the movie was going on; everything else was at least superficially acceptable at screening speeds.

Before leaving Ilia for the delicious possibilities of the Vejur Creature Feature, I'd like to ask another question, applicable to many bad SF movies and even to some ST TV episodes: If an alien robot/computer entity appears in the script, and magically acquires English (through Ilia?) in no time at all, why must it invariably persist in misusing some small, noticeable element of the language? (carbon units!) I thought only smart machines could learn languages that fast.

Now to the Creature Feature, especially Vejur (sorry, I'm getting baroque; I did mean the special effects and animation), well, it was gorgeous, but what did it all mean? One hardly expects to understand a telepathic macro-computer cloud at first sight, perhaps. When, goddesses and gods, oh when, will a multi-million dollar special effects budget bring us an FTL drive that shows the Doppler Effect? Flashing red and blue lights at random is not the Doppler Effect.

Sally Syrjala said exactly what I thought about the transporter. It obviously has no business on a non experimental ship.

Mr. Spock goes out to commune with Vejur without even asking permission -- okay, Vulcans are like that. Why was Kirk there in person, abandoning the hard-won Enterprise, to do a rescue job any security man would be better qualified for? Oh, yes, Hollywood was out of security men by then. Why not Scotty or Decker? They'd be better up on the thruster suit gadgetry than an ex-deskbound admiral.

Those, of course, are the bad points. Let me say that the movie was beautiful, nostalgic, and occasionally even active. If you don't expect a wide screen and an oversized budget to automatically improve the original Star Trek's program's content level, the Movie will not be disappointing and may be very pleasant. If you read STAR TREK: THE BOOK OF THE MOVIE, it will also be vastly more comprehensible; most of the points I brought up are given some sort of answer, though some of the explanations are worse than the questions. You'll have to judge for yourself.

LISA COWAN: I've heard of the Mythopoetic Society, yes (I'll write you separately about that)- I've recently done some investigation into the background of the Arthurian stories, focusing on Morgan le Fay. I got interested in it as a result of reading Mary Stewart's CRYSTAL CAVE and HOLLOW HILLS- I am now surprised to find that Mary Stewart's version is no more true to the original Celtic myths than many of the late medieval romances, even though she has done a lot of careful research into the probable Romano-British culture and technology level of the historical Arthur (if any). This doesn't, of course, make her writing any less excellent.

GREG HILLS: You are probably correct in your views on Simak. I'd restate it a little to say that he is not anti technology, but pro-humanness, humanness being the quality (creativity? soul?) of an intelligent being that makes it more than a machine. In Simak's work, this quality is frequently found in animals, robots, and extra terrestrials, all of whom can be portrayed as characters whose spirits grow and change and develop previously unrecognized potentials.

Speaking of series of books, only in the last year or two have I seen much discussion of series works, but eventually, I suggest, it may be a commonplace that any SF, fantasy, or alternate universe that doesn't hold more than one possible story is not a very strong creation. Of course we can all argue

whether the author hasn't re-used a setting because s/he has said everything there is to say about it, or whether s/he is just exploring different territory at the moment. Does a "future history" have to be completely consistent? Niven's Known Space got "filled up" with events within his time table, for instance. I was sorry to see it closed. ((So was I, though RINGWORLD ENGINEERS is a Known Space story.)) I'd have happily accepted a Known Space II in which developments, discrepancies and anachronisms allowed different sets of technological development. Of course, Niven himself may have been glad to drop it for greener universes after a decade or more of writing there. Niven's books, incidentally, all stand well by themselves. So do LeGuin's Hainish novels, though the links between them are very tenuous. When is a series a series?

I suppose everyone has a list of things s/he couldn't do without, which are not available in the medieval period. My own favorites are indoor plumbing, anesthetics, and cheap printing. What happened before xerox machines? You can't do everything with carbon paper!

A-D. Wallace: You have explained a great mystery. I couldn't get through DREAMSNAKE at all and couldn't imagine what all the reviewers were burbling about. It's boring, due, as you pointed out, to the unreleived virtue of the heroine.

Tom Staicar: So far, computers have made more paper, not less. They don't seem to eliminate any, and it's all too easy to order bales of printout that are only marginally useful. Right now, though, microfiche readers are excellent library catalog tools. Would you like to read a book on one of them?

* * * * *

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While cleaning out the car, I came across the TIGHTBEAM before last, and Sydney Davis' comment to something or other else that to vaporize an atomic warhead with a laser would spread it around, but would not diminish the radioactivity.

Interesting. Were this so, they wouldn't blow up!

I had reason of late to read up on nuclear engineering. The way fission works is that a certain number of atoms of fissionable material fission on their own and give off neutrons. If one of the neutrons hits another atom in the right way, that one splits, and gives off more neutrons. Given the limited life of a neutron, the tighter you pack the stuff, the faster the reaction. Scrunch it up real tight and you have a bomb. Spread it all over a cubic mile, and you get nothing. Somewhere in between, you get a reactor.

So, in the special case of fissionable materials, spreading them out by vaporizing them will reduce radioactivity.

An objection might be made that this would merely spread it out through time. Not so.

These elements are also prone to alpha-beta decay to lead. This involves both lower energies than fission, and processes which stabilize more readily, for fission usually produces two or more new radioactive atoms.

While this would not work with say, radium, with Plutonium, U 233, and U 235, radioactivity is proportional to density. ((You wanted to know.))

#

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With due respect, I disagree with Dennis Jarog's commentary on THE ROAD TO CORLAY and brashly assert that there are some novels that -- given a long introduction -- simply cannot be successfully completed. ROAD is one such. The Prologue is a pleasantly written short story and

(I have heard) appeared as such in a prozine. ((F&SF-)) It is a refraction of Christian theology, in which a dove descends representing the Holy Ghost (or Spirit), the third person of the Trinity. Here the Boy is killed as Jesus was in the Christian mythos. The magic flute is stolen by Gyre who probably represents Judas. The Church Militant already exists in the Prologue, prior to the Boy's death. The part following the Prologue is merely another, more detailed and elaborate, account of the villainy of the Church Militant and its henchmen. But this has already been given in the Prologue. So Cowper must repeat himself. The insertion of the psychic-electronic business merely fills space. I recommend ROAD TO CORLAY as a splendid example of a non novel.

Gallons of gratitude to Linda Frankel for her review of Suzy McKee Charnas' MOTHERLINES, a book which I shall not read.

Comparing Simak's "country people" with Jack Vance's, the latter displays an affection for the bucolic in BLUE WORLD, GREY PRINCE and TRULLION: ALASTOR 2262.

Hills argues that survival is the true touchstone of goodness and greatness. The difficulty with this criterion is that few of us will be around a millenium hence to see if Asimov and Heinlein are still read.

What we all want is a slave economy without slaves.

Anent William West and cloth making: the great unsolved problem of today is felting, otherwise making non woven cloth. Paper making is a form of felting. The difficulty with felted fabric is that it does not breathe and thus is uncomfortable to wear. Irrelevancy: many words that are used in cloth making begin with the letter "w": woof, wool, warp, weave, web, weft, and probably others.

About LeGuin's VERY FAR AWAY..., I have seen it listed among her novels but I defer to experts on this.

Returning to LeGuin, I look forward to reviews of MALAFRENA and BEGINNING PLACE. In neither of these does she pay attention to humor, comedy, fun.... Perhaps some of our more astute critics will conjecture why this is so. I believe that this omission detracts from her novels. By all accounts of her that I have read, she is a clever, intelligent woman with a broad literary background. Surely she knows the role that wit can and does play in fiction. It may be, of course, that it is there, but at a level of subtlety so I fail to discern it. ((I never noticed any either.)) Now Brian W. Aldiss' rollicking, picaresque MALACIA TAPESTRY is at the opposite end of the spectrum from almost any book of LeGuin's. ((I suggest you read ARIOSTO by Chelsea Quinn Yarbro.))

As outpointed severally, TB is that rare zine that pays some attention to SF&F. Few prozines have much to offer beyond a column of reviews. Attention is generally uptaken by pleas to save the world for NASA, or how to save energy by using cockroach dung, or exploring the eternal verities of human occupation of space. What is wrong with Mother Earth that we need so badly to escape her? ((You must not have been watching the news lately.)) The letter cols are devoted to technological punditry and scientific pilpuls.

* * * * *

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It's good to return to fandom after semi-fafiating for almost a year. I just did not have time to participate.

TB seems to be more controversial than before, and this is not bad. Controversy means a more lively exchange of views and a higher renewal rate. (Am I right about this?) ((Yes, but I like to think it's also because of TBs improved format and editing.))

Tom Sticar, in his letter in the January TB, is mistaken about computers increasing unemployment,

eliminating entire job groups, and being an adversary to people and their jobs. While it is true that some jobs may have been made redundant by computers, these have been isolated incidents-- in the main, computers have increased employment, decreased stultifying, boring work, and increased personal satisfaction.

Consider these facts: in virtually every quarter since the mid-sixties, the number of people employed has been greater than in the previous quarter. Yes, the unemployment rate is around 7%, but remember that within the past 10-15 years many women have entered the job market, the baby boom is only now starting to slow, and people are not so willing to take what they consider to be menial jobs.

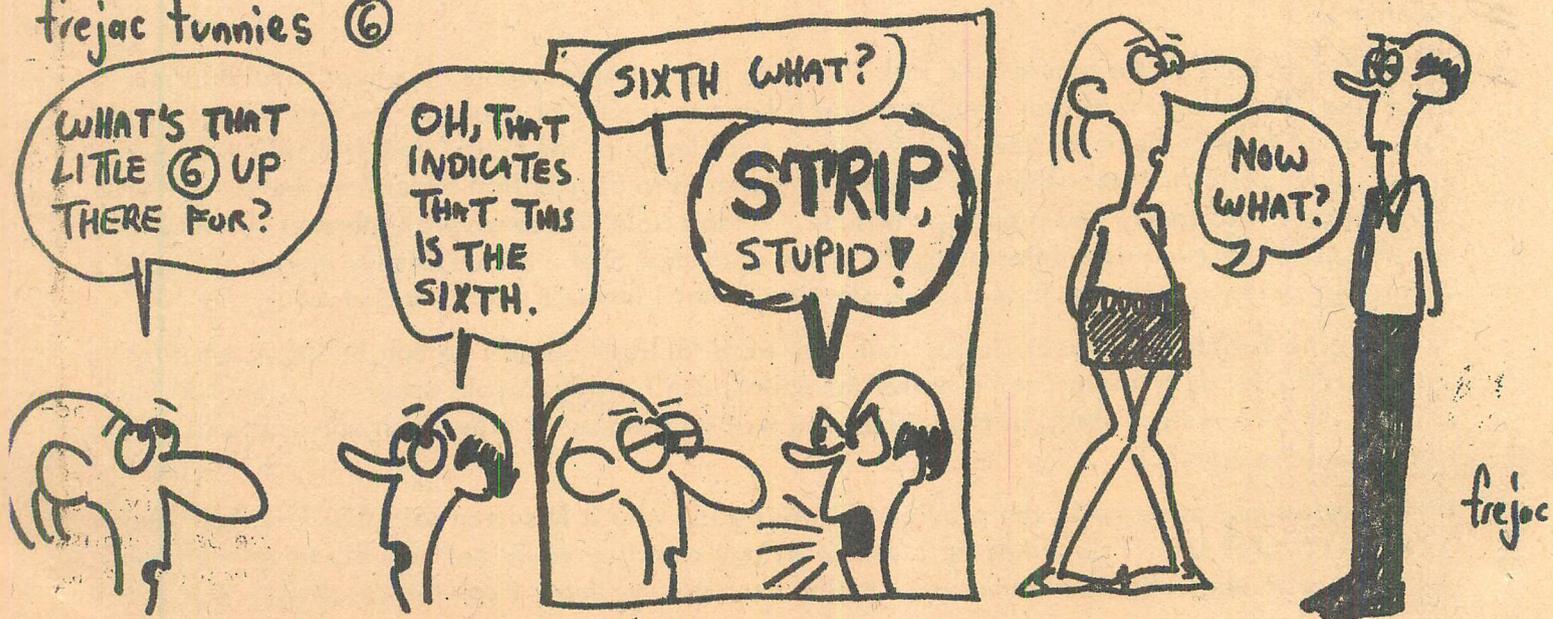
Consider also that the US Immigration Service estimates that one million illegal immigrants enter the USA each year, hoping to find a better life than they had in the home country. Estimates of the total number of illegal aliens in the USA range from 10-15 million, most of them productive workers.

As a third point, countries experiencing a large degree of un and under-employment are not the more developed countries of the West which use computers to a great extent, but are the less developed countries of the South.

The USA, as any other capitalist country, responds to significant changes in the number of people wanting to work by utilizing the market system, letting supply and demand increase the number of jobs. This increase is a gradual, protracted affair, and people suffer while this transition is made. Unfortunately, governmental interference does not seem to increase significantly the number of jobs unless an exorbitant amount of cash is spent to create each job; in addition the governmental created jobs do not generate any beneficial spinoffs with the exception of jobs created in NASA and the Department of Defense, Research and Development Branch. However, these jobs are the most expensive to create and maintain, and they are somewhat divisive politically. Something gained; something lost.

Enough of that. Turning to SF, it is rare when I read a story and am impressed by the imagination displayed, but after finishing "Silver Shoes for a Princess" by James P. Hogan in Vol 1, Number 5, ((Of what?)) I felt, and still feel, that this is by far the best novella that was published in 1979, and it deserves to win both the Hugo and the Nebula. The story's major flaw is characterization, but the imagination, the concept, the idea, is so overpowering that the flaw of characterization is unimportant. Does anyone else agree with me?

frejac funnies ⑥



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As a newcomer (actually returning after about a decade), I'm not entirely sure what's going on in the N3F, but since someone seems to have been objecting strongly to the nature of TB, I would like to mention that the two recent issues I've seen (both under your editorship) struck me as being Very Good Fanzines. The balance among obligatory N3F matters, Reviews and Columns, and Letters (with the Letters receiving substantial priority) is (to my taste) well-handled. You seem also to have struck on an excellent balance of Editorial Interjection -- not so much that you could be accused of having the club subsidize your own personal fanzine, but enough to give the publications a personality, and to stir things up enough to prevent blandness, or to let things stick to the bottom of the pan and scorch.) My own vote is for No Substantial Change. (Ever greedy, I'd welcome a TB containing a few more pages, but that's just a Wistful Désire -- I know full well the Costs involved in publishing a fanzine, and suspect that the N3F subsidy doesn't cover your full costs (not counting labor). ((No, it doesn't. The argument about TB was started by Donald Franson who doesn't like things done any way but The Way They Used to Be, and he was also concerned about costs. I have to do a zine the way I like or there's not much sense doing a zine at all.))

Don Franson's comments are (as usual) sensible, and I much appreciate his recognition of the value of Deadwood (just as I envy Andruschak's ability to answer mail and fanzines within a week)-- Probably I'll never be an active member, if only because of a Dreadful Habit -- setting letters and fanzines aside until "there's a time to respond adequately to them". Sigh.

Brian Earl Brown has a significant point in being pleased by the discussions on SF in the lettercol -- I don't participate much in such discussions any more, but still enjoy listening to/reading them, and they are of inestimable value in capturing the attention of neofans. James JJ Wilson (in a letter in TNFF) mentions having been disappointed in Windycon because it did not have much SF programming-- a characteristic of many/most of the smaller regional conventions, which tend to be a social getting-together of friends and acquaintances (much like many/most fanzines). ((The WindyCon I attended in 1978 was programmed for the hopeful SF writer to be and I really enjoyed it. I couldn't afford to go this year after attending SeaCon.)) This is fine for people who are In, but for newcomers, something like a Worldcon with much programming deliberately set up for them, concentrating on SF is far more satisfying, and so is a fanzine which (like the recent TIGHTBEAMS) contains considerable discussion of SF. The N3F, despite a large number of actives who have been here from the year dot, is also a major entry into fandom for a large number of neofans, and I applaud attempts to cater to their interest in Science-Fiction (which is, after all, a basic -- and the original -- bond holding us together.

Of all the reviews of the Movie Star Trek I've seen in the LA area papers, the most favorable said something like "If you're a real Star Trek fan, you'll have to see it, of course." -- and the least favorable seemed to have been written on the basis of knowledge of the field, and disappointed hope. (In group Trade gossip indicates that the movie was rushed into distribution somewhere between 20 and 30 days before it was really and properly finished.) Black Hole was so severely panned by local fans/movie buffs ("an even-less-interesting story line than most of the recent Disney Studio pot-boilers" & Terrible Science -- worse than B.S. Galactica") that I haven't seen it and probably won't.

R Lorraine Tutihasi is correct, inmo, that "the word 'actress' doesn't belong in our vocabulary." -- but, regrettably, it is there, and a writer (or editor) can't always avoid using it. (One can, of course, Try -- and hope that, in time, the word will go the way of other such abominations as "Doctoress" and "Poetess".)

If memory serves, someone in the previous TB was asking why it has been said that Elizabeth Lynn's IN A DIFFERENT LIGHT &/or her more recent trilogy could or would not possibly have been published a decade or so ago. ((Linda Frankel--)) Having been around then, I can answer the question. A lot

with us, but it took a lot of suffering to get rid of them. That is the problem of technological unemployment -- THE PROBLEMS TAKE TOO LONG TO SHAKE DOWN. I read an interesting article in THE FUTURIST magazine; the answer to technological unemployment may lie in TOURISM.

The book reviews: I like to read book reviews for two reasons: 1) I want to know what SFAF books to read. I figure that other SFAF readers could give me a better idea about a book than mundane book reviewers of that "SFAF" staff. 2) I like to read discussions of SFAF above most of the drivel that appears in mundane papers and mags, or the sweet saccharrine stuff that appears in "pop" sci-fi magazines. So I want to know a few things: A. What is the author writing about. B. Why is the author writing. C. What is the basic plot. D. What is the point -- without giving away the ending. Maybe I am wrong but I bet a lot of other people feel the same way. How 'bout keeping this in mind when you take in book reviews? I also want to say that I have enjoyed the art and writing in N3F's magazines. Keep up the good work.

* * * * *

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I really am glad I joined N3F. (So far.) I enjoy TIGHTBEAM and I've gotten some interesting Welcommittee letters, plus some interesting info on other organizations I might be interested in. My only concern is that if I get too involved in all this; when will I have time to write The Great American Science-Fiction Novel?

Now on to the March TB. I enjoyed Fivaki's review of THE BLACK HOLE. I haven't seen it, and the more I hear about it, the happier that makes me. I'll just save my money for more SF&F books, thank you. (Personally after what Disney Productions did to JUNGLE BOOK, I don't expect anything worth while anyway.)

I enjoyed the book reviews. I hope the one I wrote was as good at encouraging people to read the book reviewed as the other reviews were. Especially Greg Hills' overview. (Even the review of THE DRAGON LORD made it sound like good reading -- I hope that doesn't make you feel bad, A. D.) My problem is I have more books to read than time to read them in.

On the computer eliminating jobs problem, it's all well and good to suggest that people learn a new skill, but as I'm sure William West could tell you, those people whose jobs are threatened in the garment industry have families to support while they learn this new skill and although it would be nice if the government would subsidize their educations, some people are still afraid to try anything new. I have run across many people whp have mental blocks about arithmetic, much less math (distinction: arithmetic is $+$ $-$ X \div ; math is all the rest) which is what my BA is in. How can such people even consider computer maintenance? (My master's is in Mechanical Engineering and I would want a lot of training before I tried to play with even a simple electric circuit board.) I'm all in favor of computers improving efficiency and productivity even with the cut this would make in employment, because I think it might inspire people to do something about the major stumbling block in retraining the laid off worker. I refer to the growing illiteracy rate.

To me this is one of the things that science-fiction is all about. People reaching up and out, wanting to learn, to know. ((That's my view of SF as well.)) I have taught school and I shudder to think about how many of my students couldn't have cared less about basics. They for the most part anticipated getting jobs their parents had had that did not require "good grades" (as evidence of education), jobs that will someday be replaced by computers because they are "simple-minded" enough to be learned by computers.

I loved STAR WARS and am eager about the sequel. STAR TREK was good as far as it went, which wasn't far given the scope of the movie vs the scope of the TV series (which was why I was disappointed,

but I did enjoy the old-home-week atmosphere. I just wish they'd told us more about where Dr McCoy had been and what he'd been doing. The book didn't even say, really. I haven't seen ALIEN either, mainly because I'm chicken. The excerpts from HALLOWEEN that I saw on sneak preview were enough to petrify me (I couldn't watch the Hockey goalies on the Olympics without shuddering), so I'm afraid to watch anything scary on a screen. I enjoy BUCK ROGERS because I like the humor in it. (~~My~~ Fivaki: what's wrong with a TV movie? It reminded me a little of James Bond.) I found LOST IN SPACE obnoxious and SPACE 1999 noxious, especially the acting (?) of Bain and Landau. (I think they've been Invaded by the Body Snatchers-) (Either that or they are simply androids.)

Did you know that BATTLESTAR GALACTICA was one big Mormon private joke? Well, not a joke really, but it was funny when something would come up that was part of the Mormon culture and get passed off as Galactican culture. Glen Larsen is a Mormon and I guess he put a lot of Mormon culture in because it is different enough to seem science-fictional. GALACTICA 1980 doesn't have very much that I can tell in it at all. ((Is this what is called religious inspiration? Seriously, I suspect that this just proves that Larsen would borrow from anything. See back issues of TB for other examples.))

I don't think SF movies or TV series should be compared any more than SF books should be. STAR TREK and STAR WARS just don't compare. I can see comparing STAR WARS to WIZARD OF OZ before I can see comparing it to STAR TREK.

One last comment: I hope no one else writes in to comment on a certain caustic individual's letter. If you will look back at the letter, you will note that the first thing he does is "riff through the pages and catch all of the references to me." The dude is on an ego trip and since nasty letters reap more "references" than nice ones, he writes nasty. Although this very paragraph is disobeying my own advice, I say ignore it. We only reinforce bad behaviour by reacting to it.

Speaking of bad behaviour, I am fascinated by Fivaki's Setamuri First Contactor. More! More! Please!

* * * * *

James Ridings Jr
1412 Ridge Rd. RR#3
Rockwall, TX 75087

I fail to see the point in debating whether or not ALIEN should be considered a SF movie. Everyone has their own opinion about what is "science-fiction". I personally like the more realistic SF. As a matter of fact, some of my friends call me "Mister Detail". I can't stand movies like STAR WARS very often, as I consider dogfights in space ridiculous. There is no up or down in space and all the fighting in STAR WARS is based on up and down. The fighters themselves are well designed (at least the rebel fighters), but the idea of attacking a ship which is at least four hundred times the size of yours, and the thought of trying to find and hit a target less than three meters in diameter at near light speeds absolutely makes me sick.

After the above, you might be surprised to learn that I read PERRY RHODAN. ((Yes.)) I thought that it was disgusting the way many people put the series down. If you have read one of the books and just didn't like it, that's fine. But those of you who criticize Perry Rhodan (or any other book) without reading it first, should consider yourself lucky you have any friends left (if you have any at all). ((I tried a Perry Rhodan book once and couldn't get through it. But better Perry Rhodan than John Norman any day.))

Hope to hear from some Neffers out there. Don't be afraid to write.

Robert McLain I am a new member of SF, having just received TIGHTBEAM #23 the other
R. D. #1, Box 211A day. I've read all the letters and have decided to comment on one of the
Hawley, PA 18428 points discussed and to raise a new one.

Computers are, in my opinion, a useful and valuable part of society. With the tremendous amount of facts known today and all the myriad data around, it is impossible to think of anyplace to store it but right in the company memory banks. For example, as I write this, the 1980 census is due to be completed. How in the world could all those millions of forms be analyzed except for a computer? For those who scoff at the thought of how a census could be useful, take our national defense system. Most of it is controlled by computers. Surely our defense must mean something?

As to the argument that computers rob people of jobs, I agree. But just think of the improvement, the reduced costs to produce the product, and the increase in efficiency.

I own a couple of the home microcomputer games and I must say that they are most entertaining. My Computer Chess set enables me to play a game of chess by myself and whenever I want. The computer is always ready. Besides no one else in my family plays chess.

I am currently looking into buying an APPLE or PET microcomputer so I can enjoy some wargames on my own. No one else in my town has any interest in wargames so a computer is my final hope.

There is my case for computers. I think it is a good and valid one. Now I come to the point I'd like to raise.

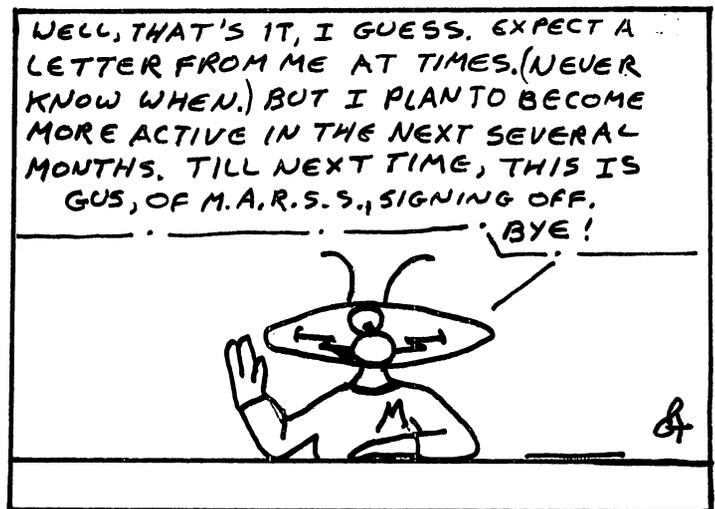
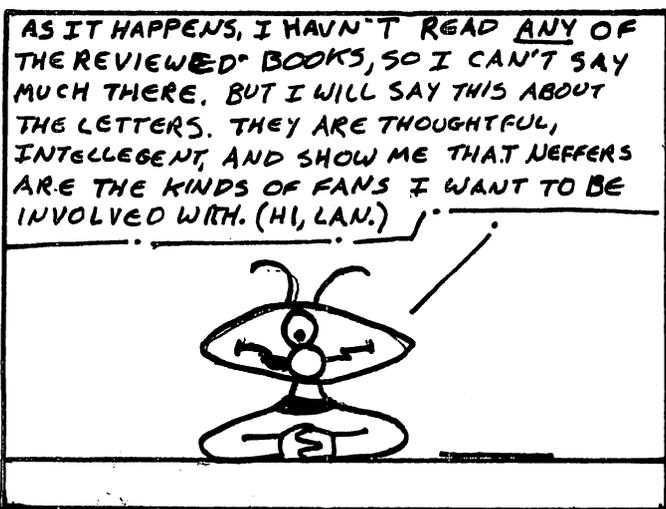
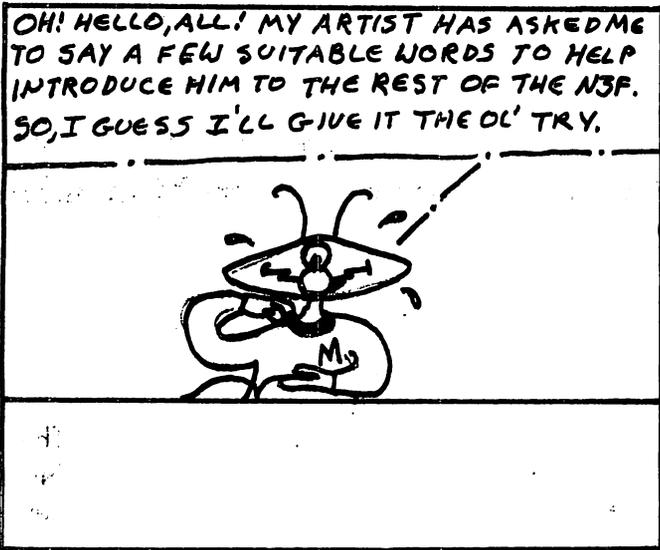
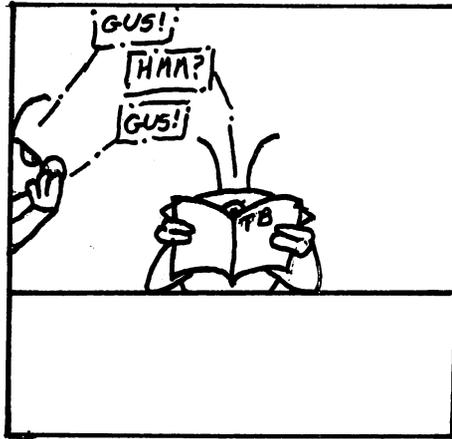
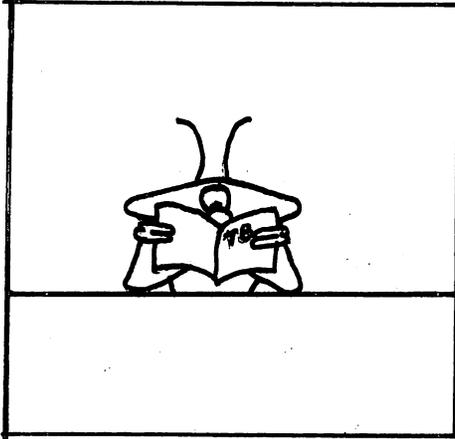
In my humble opinion, most of the science-fiction published today is pure trash. I am referring to some of the New Wave authors who devote pages or sometimes an entire story about why a character did this or why he is in a certain emotional mood. To me it's all excess wording that is as boring as a chapter in a psychology textbook. Now tell me, why do these "authors" write like they do? Is it all they know how to do? Whatever happened to the good SF/fantasy in the old pulp magazines? Robert E. Howard, my favorite author, and creator of Conan, Kull, Solomon Kane, and other immortals was a master storyteller who developed well-rounded characters and vivid descriptions of the environs of the story in a minimum of wordage which left plenty of room for the all-important action sequences. His strokes were far superior to the bilge water turned out today. When people read SF/fantasy, they want to escape from their dreary existence and live for a few hours in an exciting fantasy world. They want to BE the hero in the story, not just read about what he's thinking and why. The stories I write are in the tradition of men like Howard as I wish to provide an outlet for the imagination of my readers, not send them off to a dictionary or have them stop reading to ponder what they have read every few pages. I want to give them, as Howard did, a rousing good time.

((Okay, you asked for it. While I agree that some authors do carry the hand-wringing and agonizing far to far, I do like some insight into the characters' minds. When I think of New Wave, I think of the pointless and plotless stories of Ballard and some recent Delany and I do not like this either. However such authors write that way because they want to and there are those willing to pay to read it. Don't buy what you don't like. If enough people agree with you, the author will have to change his/her style or his/her job. And I have to admit that I am not overly fond of the Conan stories. But they, and Conan imitations, sell very well in the bookstore where I work so you're not alone in liking them.))

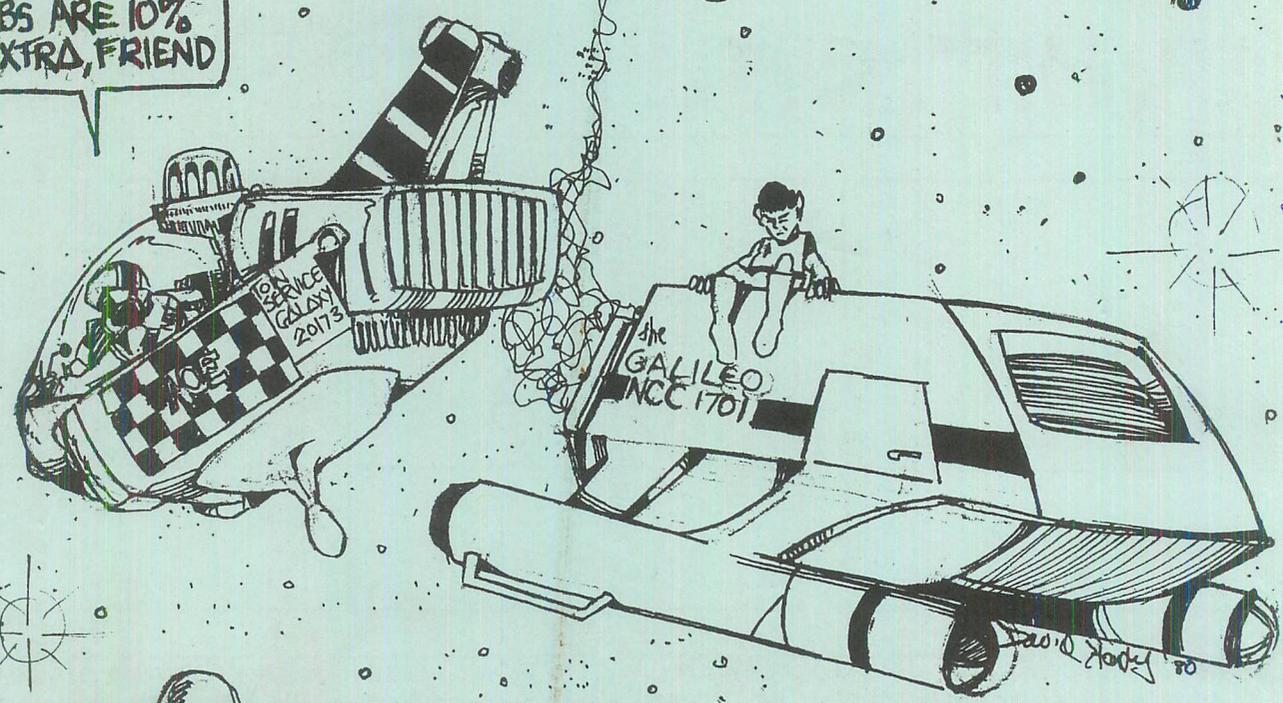
William Goodson One idea I wish had been explored in STTMP is what Dr Leonard McCoy has
Honolulu, HI 96848 been doing since he left the Service. Given his appearance and the change
 in his voice, I suspect that he had a job similar to Doc on Loveboat; some-
thing that gives him a chance to ogle the girls, eat well and drink too many Mint Juleps. You will
remember that his personal research project was finding something that tasted like mint on every
planet.

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