

CURRENT REFLECTIONS

In contrast to the hyperfannish last issue, Clear Ether is going to pause for some thoughtful considerations. (Well, the song on the previous page does not count.) Now as I said in the overleaf, it may be time to count the blessings (or bhlessings, as you wish) we can find.

First, the revival of Romantic SF is something to be grateful for. True, Worlds of If may have folded, but one assumes that this means Galaxy/Worlds of If will have a sounder economic footing. Furthermore, there is less likelihood of the charge of certain fen that Baen is merely skimming off the best stories to rack in subs and then publish the slush to fill up the future issues. If nothing else, that would kill newstand sales, and of course the rest of us would cancel quicker than a hyperdrive. No, Baen's editing and all's well there.

Second, Fantastic still survives, and until a recent decline in their stories and the rise of Galaxy, it had the only stories worth buying the zine regularly for. I wish Ted White a speedy recovery from the momentary lapse, and I assume we all wish him hope from the prolonged economic convalescence.

Third, Worldcons are getting bigger and better than ever. Now some fen are carping about this. Linda Bushyager wants to fret like a liberal over the United Nations about this situation. Do we need controls? Has the market failed us? Well, first of all, Don Markstein has decided to throw a world Faan Con. Secondly, Harry Warner suggests fans getting to the Worldcon early so they can find all those people they want to. My feelings are that if you really want to, you can find someone. More importantly, let us remember that the original purpose of fandom was to promote SF. To put it mildly, I find this misplaced elitism a pile of Rull turd.

Fourth, and this follows really from 3, fandom is growing and SF readership is as well. Granted, a large part of the increase are Trekkies (but some grow up--I have incontrovertible evidence) and those who wish to Ape Apes (second-level social metaphysicians, as Brandon might say were he fannish). But the real reason, I am convinced, that so many people are turning to SF is because of the fifth and last blessing I have room for.

The "world" is psychologically "down." Call it decadence, angst, sickness, bad premises or mass indigestion from non-organic foods. But it is there and we know it. The literature, the movies, the songs in general reflect it.

But not SF. We beat off the New Wave and with them, their view of Man. When all is said and done about writing technique, style, trendiness, and repression, the reason that the New Wave was rejected by the reading and paying public and fandom alike is that it subscribed to the current view of Man as worse than animals, who has robbed cockroaches of their land and practiced unconsonable genocide on stalks of wheat. No hopes for us, technology was just going to give us a spectacular dead end on the evolutionary scale, if a crystal forest didn't grab us first or we weren't silent in Gehenna. Boy meets dog and meats girl.

The SF pros which sell and are still most loved are the ones who show us that man is great, that "The Stars Are Ours!" "The Moon is a Harsh Mistress" but we can lick her. The Stars are our Destination, and on the way we will struggle with our hangups and cultural problems. But we will lick them, and do lick them in the stories we love, and go on to others. Does ennui lurk at the end of the Glory Road. Well, I shall fear no evil and have Time Enough For Love.

So I thank Ghu that it is 1974 and I am a fan, in a world I never made, but am in the process of making. FIAWOL!