

ALGOL STARSHIP

WINTER 1978-79

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THE MAGAZINE ABOUT SCIENCE FICTION

WOMEN And SF by SUSAN WOOD

SUZY McKEE CHARNAS

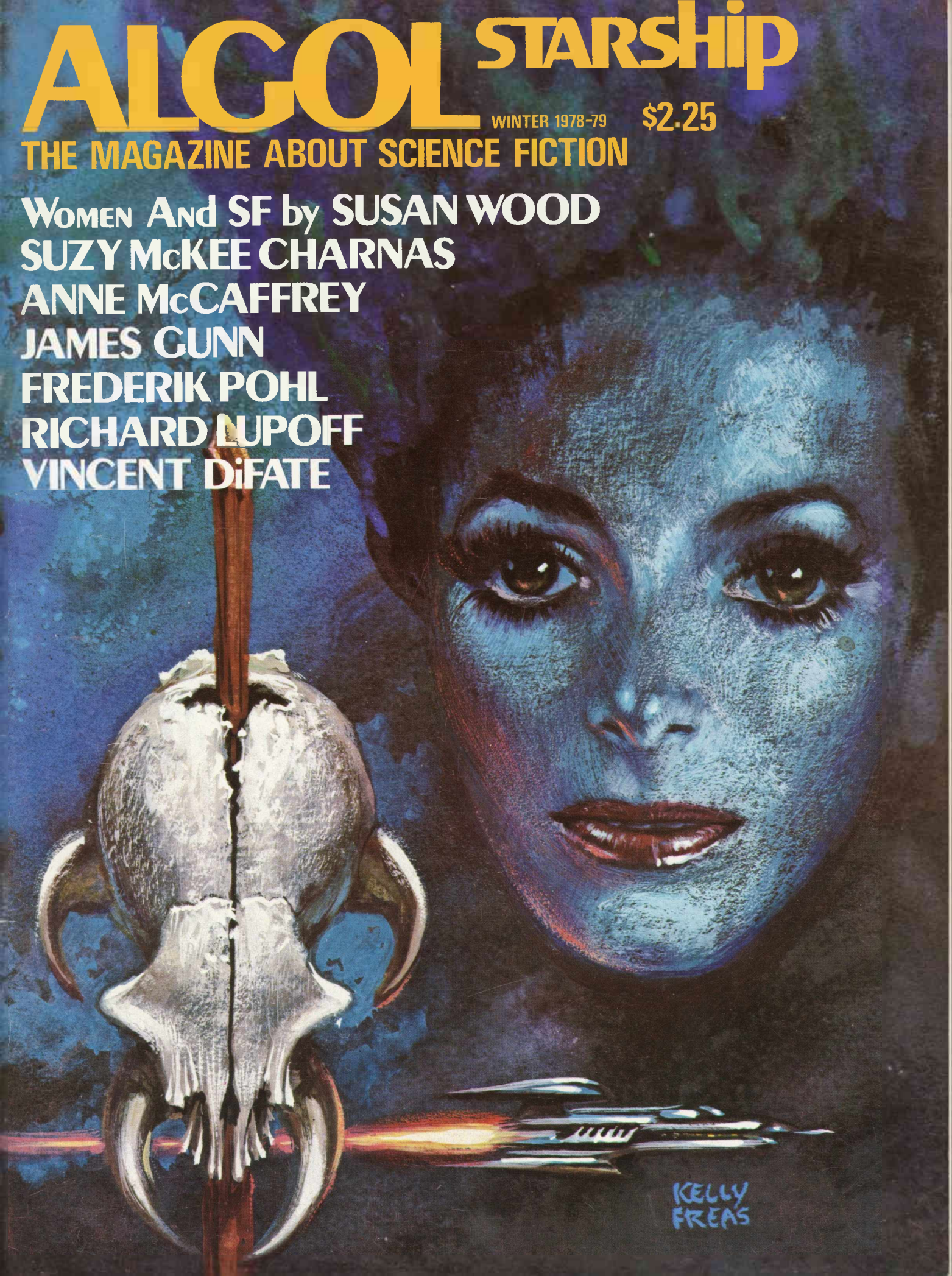
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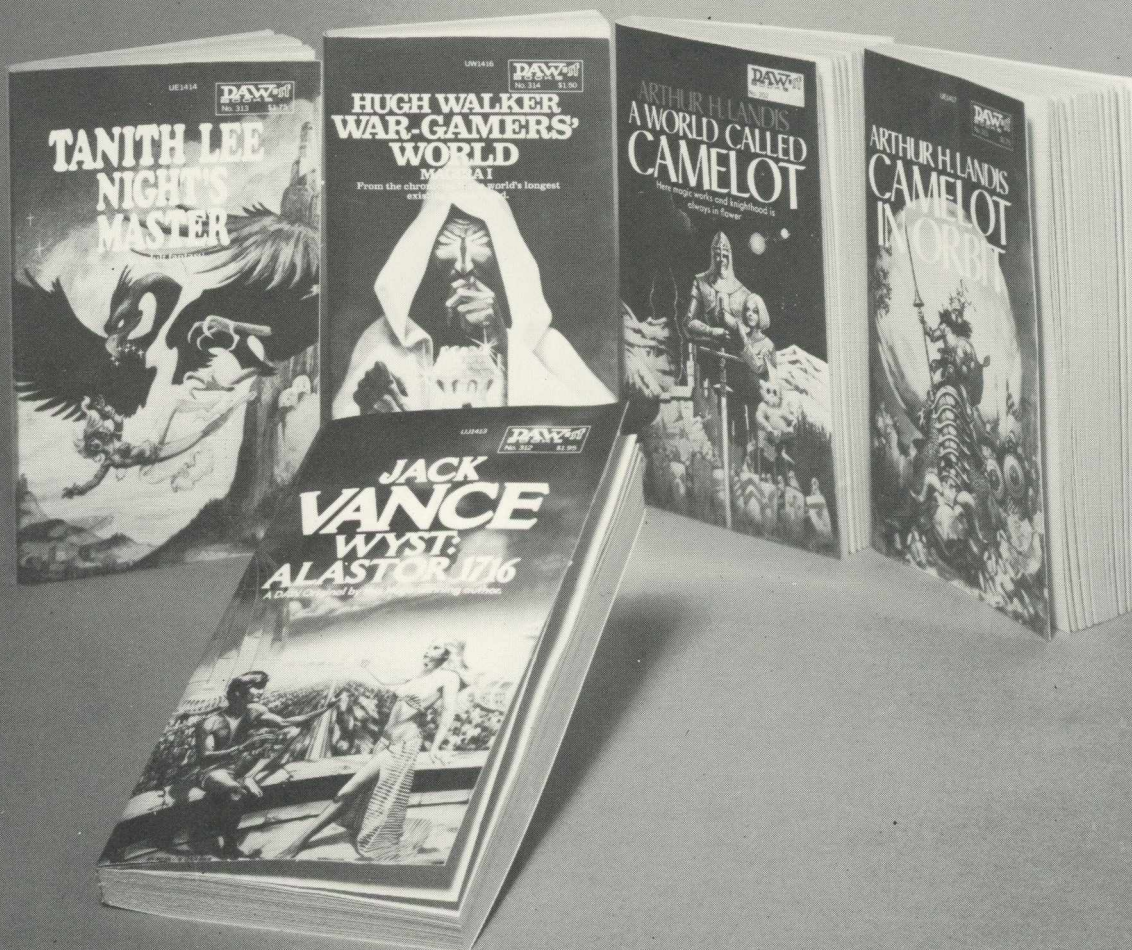


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ALGOL

**THE MAGAZINE ABOUT
SCIENCE FICTION**

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JOE HALDEMAN

THE NAME CHANGE: There's been a lot of comment about the change of name from ALGOL to STARSHIP—see the letter column—but most of the comments I've had in letters or in person say STARSHIP is a bad idea. Then when I ask for other names they can't think of any other, or else the other names suggested have already been used. The consensus seems to be that anything with the word "Star" in it is bad; I guess Fred Pohl and Ballantine Books' use of the names *Star SF* and *Stellar* are poor choices . . . Or Maybe Not. In fact, definitely not.

I continue to be amazed that people think I will change the magazine. Everything will remain as is save the name! There will be no reviews of Marvel Comics, no lowering of standards, nothing to appeal to the under-10 market. No pictures of Luke Skywalker on the covers, no ads for Superman, no appeals to the lollypop set. Just a change of name so that people to whom ALGOL is a combination of nonsensical syllables will know what field the magazine is talking about.

One reader commented that ALGOL is so well-known in SF fandom, that I shouldn't change it. Okay, let's take the most recent World SF Convention. It was a mammoth convention—somewhere over 4,000 in attendance, a total registration of more than 6,000. A tremendous number of people for an SF convention. Perhaps the biggest World SF Convention to date. Thousands of people, not all of whom were fans. A lot of strictly reader-types, local people, people who'd read about the convention or seen it on TV. Thousands . . .

. . . and my circulation is *more* than all those people. *More* than 6,000. Look at *Analogue*: a circulation of over 100,000. How many of those people are "fans"—fans who go to conventions, who read fanzines, who know what the letters G.A.F.I.A. mean? Less than 10%. Probably a lot less.

That's where the market lies. *Not* among the fans. Those are the people to whom STARSHIP means Science Fiction, and to whom ALGOL is a meaningless name. The publishers of science fiction know that, and have known it all along. To publishers of SF magazines and books, fans mean feedback and awards, letters to the editor and conventions. But any publisher who caters to this small minority is not catering to the vast majority of readers, to the majority who really count. I want to reach that majority. It's as simple as that.

SUBSCRIPTIONS: A couple of people (Bob Soderberg, etc.) have commented on my decision not to go all out for subscriptions. They ask where the magazine would be without them. The

unfortunate facts are that postal rates are now so high that the money received from a single copy sold through a subscription is not much more than the money from a copy sold by a bookstore. And the bookstore sale means I don't have to bother with address files, addressograph listings, etc. So while subscriptions are keeping fairly steady, bookstore sales have soared. Also, a lot of subscribers mention they see their copies weeks after their local bookstore gets the new issue in. The August issue was bulk mailed from Ephrata, PA, on August 10th; the bookstore copies went out a couple of days earlier by UPS from F&SF Book Company in Staten Island, NY. Because of impending possibilities of a postal strike, bulk mail was even more delayed than usual in getting out, and as of Labor Day weekend many subscribers still hadn't received their copies. However, the UPS shipments to bookstores had all reached their destinations no later than August 15th. I've said all this before—word for word, in fact, a year ago—and I don't want to say it again. The post office continues to screw small publications, and there is nothing I can do about it. And it will continue to get worse all the time.

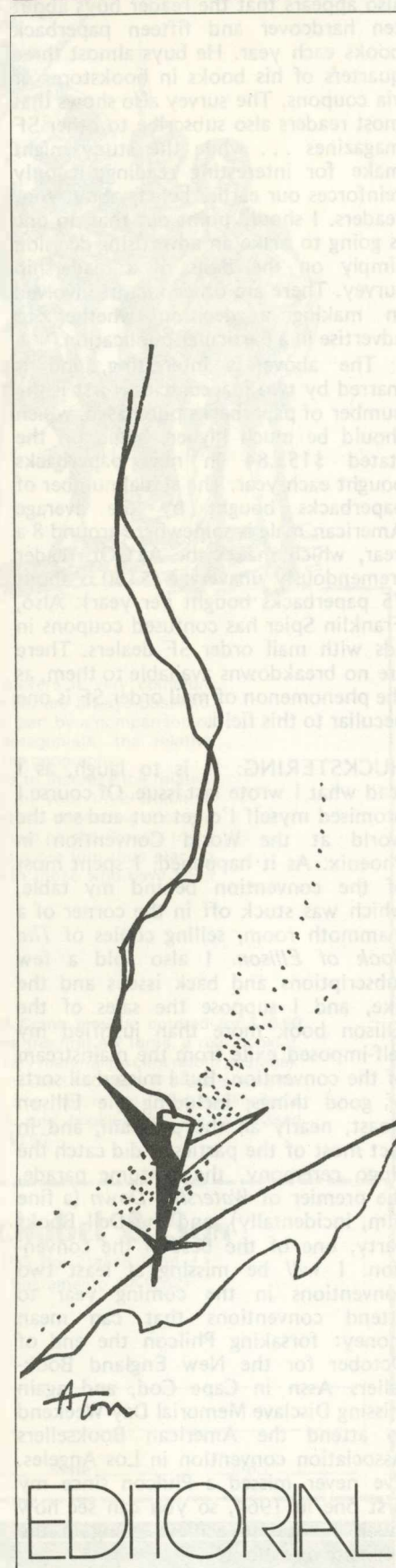
Incidentally, this issue I got literally dozens of copies of ALGOL back from subscribers who've moved. To get one issue back costs 66 cents return postage plus 25 cents address correction plus 66 cents single copy remailing costs. So I deduct one issue from your subscription. I remain the slightly bent copies of the magazine. Sometimes the post office doesn't bother to send the magazine back, even though "Return Postage Guaranteed" is printed on the envelope. They cut the address square off and throw away the magazine. I curse the post office . . . and still deduct one issue.

And some of you keep insisting that subscribers are God's Chosen . . . something like 25% of my time goes for wonderful things like this. It really isn't worth it.

Right now it's coming up on 1:00 a.m. as I type these words. I've spent all this afternoon working on changes of address; I have a cold which means I have to stop every few minutes to blow my nose. There's gotta be more to life than this.

SON OF READER SURVEY: As promised last issue, I've received a response from the folks at Franklin Spier on the results of the reader survey, as interpreted through their eyes. They say that the main problem with the results is the small number of respondents: "The best we can say is that the survey might give us an indication of the typical ALGOL reader." In market

BEATLEJUICE BEATLEJUICE



research terms, this is known as Hedging Your Bets.

"From this survey, it appears that the reader is a single male about 30 years old with a low-middle income. It also appears that the reader buys about ten hardcover and fifteen paperback books each year. He buys almost three quarters of his books in bookstores or via coupons. The survey also shows that most readers also subscribe to other SF magazines ... while the study might make for interesting reading, it only reinforces our earlier beliefs about your readers. I should point out that no one is going to make an advertising decision simply on the basis of a readership survey. There are other factors involved in making a decision whether to advertise in a particular publication."

The above is interesting, and is marred by two inaccuracies. First is the number of paperbacks purchased, which should be much higher, based on the stated \$153.84 in new paperbacks bought each year. The actual number of paperbacks bought by the average American male is somewhere around 8 a year, which makes the ALGOL reader tremendously unaverage (\$150 is about 75 paperbacks bought per year). Also, Franklin Spier has confused coupons in ads with mail order SF dealers. There are no breakdowns available to them, as the phenomenon of mail order SF is one peculiar to this field.

HUCKSTERING: It is to laugh, as I read what I wrote last issue. Of course I promised myself I'd get out and see the world at the World Convention in Phoenix. As it happened, I spent most of the convention behind my table, which was stuck off in the corner of a mammoth room, selling copies of *The Book of Ellison*. I also sold a few subscriptions and back issues and the like, and I suppose the sales of the Ellison book more than justified my self-imposed exile from the mainstream of the convention. But I missed all sorts of good things, including the Ellison Roast, nearly all the program, and in fact most of the parties. I did catch the Hugo ceremony, the costume parade, the premier of *Watership Down* (a fine film, incidentally), and the Dell Books party, one of the best of the convention. I *will* be missing at least two conventions in the coming year to attend conventions that can mean money: forsaking Philcon the end of October for the New England Booksellers Assn in Cape Cod, and again missing Disclave Memorial Day Weekend to attend the American Booksellers Association convention in Los Angeles. I've never missed a Philcon since my first one in 1964, so you can see how much I hope to achieve going in the opposite direction.

ALL THE NEWS THAT FITS: Way back in 1964 I started a weekly fanzine that taught me a lot about writing and schedules and all sorts of other things. Slowly it changed into a news magazine and by 1966 I'd even changed the name, to S.F. WEEKLY. The genesis of S.F. WEEKLY is a long and boring story which I think I talked about in these pages 10 years ago. Go back and look it up ... S.F. WEEKLY passed from mortal ken in April 1968, having served a couple hundred subscribers—this was in the days before the semiprozine had blurred the barriers between newszine and SF newspaper—fairly well.

For a long time I've been toying with the idea of reviving SFW in another form. Those thoughts took a more concrete form last spring when I actively thought about starting another news magazine in the SF field. I have very definite ideas of what a monthly newsmagazine should be (I had definite ideas of what a magazine about SF should be, and you're holding them in your hands). But the time considerations are such that ALGOL takes too much of my time to actively advance those ideas beyond the talking stage. Unless, that is, I start the news magazine as a section in ALGOL, where it can change and evolve and grow free from the constraints of commercial marketing.

So, this issue sees S.F. CHRONICLE born as a segment of ALGOL/STARSHIP under the supervision of Larry Carmody. Carmody, who gets his name listed on the masthead as News Editor, works fulltime as a writer/reporter for *Newsday*, the Long Island, NY afternoon newspaper with the largest circulation of any in the US. Carmody also moonlights as co-editor of *Raffles*, a major metropolitan fanzine, with Stu Shiffman, well-known fan artist who's beginning to sell professionally. S.F. CHRONICLE will hopefully evolve toward something that can stand on its own. It will have news, market reports, commentary, and all the things that any major news magazine contains. And because I'll be overseeing it, it will look good as well.

THE ISSUE: The underlying theme of this issue is "Women and SF," stressed in the major article by Susan Wood. To continue the emphasis, there's an interview with Suzy McKee Charnas, author of *Walk to the End of the World*, which came out several years ago, and the much more recent *Motherlines*, a Berkley/Putnam hardcover in bookstores now. The interviewer is Neal Wilgus, an exception in SF in having just as firm a foundation in the small press field. Both live in Albuquerque, a city I got a good look at from 34,000 feet on my way to the World SF Convention in

Phoenix. The exploration of women in SF ends with the reprint of "On Pornography" by Anne McCaffrey from ALGOL's September 1968 issue. As promised last issue, the oft-delayed "SF and the Future" by Jim Gunn also appears this issue.

Fred Pohl's "Pohlemic" is a glimpse at the harried life of an author on the publicity tour. We haven't had too many of those in SF—Frank Herbert's recent tour for *Children of Dune* is one of the few others that comes to mind—and Fred took notes as he went along. It's a fascinating look at the publishing world's equivalent of "if it's Tuesday, we must be in Los Angeles ..." Vincent DiFate begins his explanation of the evolution of a cover painting, a subject that is long and complicated. The explanation, copiously illustrated, continues at least through next issue. By the time he's finished you'll not only know who the SF editors are at all the major publishing houses, but the art directors as well. And the sales managers, the publicity directors, the commissioned reps, the ... Dick Lupoff continues his scintillating reviews of the best and worst in current SF. Let Lupoff's Book Week be your ark of refuge as the flood of new titles (somewhere around a hundred SF titles got advertised in the Fall Announcement Issue of *Publishers Weekly*) threatens to sweep us all away. Watch out there, behind you! it's a tentacle from the *Best of Vargo Statten!* Quick, get the axe!

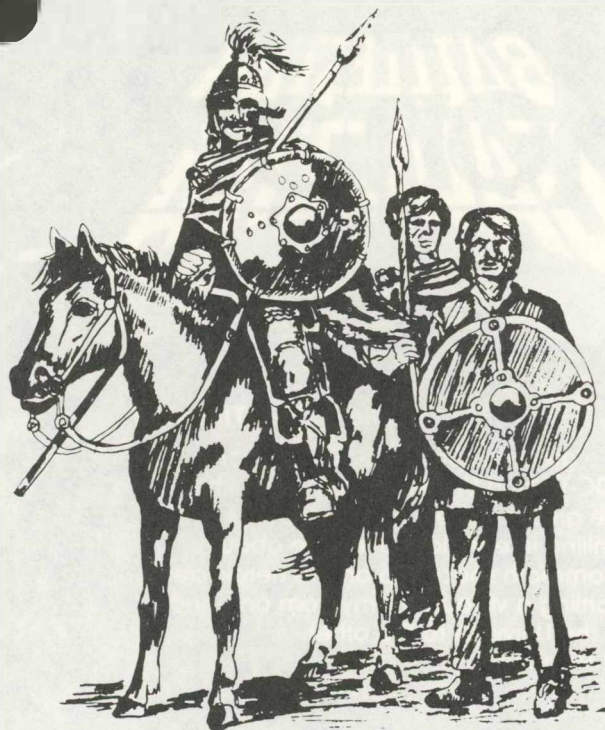
The letter column this issue is less than overwhelming. In fact, it's pretty underwhelming. I guess the early deadline for letters, coupled with the wonderful service the post office didn't give last issue, combined to prevent most of the tried and true letterhacks from exercising their collective typewriter keys. To make the letter column a little less devastated, I'm printing some letters of comment on the last-but-one issue, which came in after the deadline for letters last issue.

NEXT ISSUE: Vincent DiFate continues his look at the evolution of a cover painting. Dick Lupoff comes one issue closer to his own special issue. Terry Carr's been lined up to do an interview with Dick, and there's a good possibility of an original story by Dick. Right now, though, there are some good articles in the file for February. Patrick McGuire will be in the issue with "Water Into Wine: The Novels of C.J. Cherryh"; also, there's an interview with Vonda McIntyre by Paul Novitsky; and there's also a strong probability of an article by Jack Williamson. Deadline for letters on this issue is December 15th.

—Andrew Porter, Editor/Publisher

THE TRIBES OF CRANE

*You, task chief of the Leopard people wandering tribe of Crane, sit in your great wagon awaiting news from your swift searching outriders. Suddenly hoof beats approach. The outriders leap from their mounts to your wagon flushed with excitement for they know full well the meaning of their news. But one sector to the North the great merchant caravan of the Impala people has been spotted. The order is given "To arms . . . to arms!" You snap your orders, "Gather my captains of hundreds. Let all know the tactic will be enfilade right. Now my arms, my mount." You heard that Kate, chief of the Impala people, has chosen a stand and defend tactic twice before; will he again? You know also that the Impala people are fine warriors as are all the people of the many tribes. This will be no raid of the strong on the weak, but rather a mighty clash of the **TRIBES OF CRANE** . . .*



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The creatures of Crane are as varied as its geography. Cattle goats and the caribou are the mainstay of the tribes, depending on the geography. But horses and the great mancarrying war hawks are important to the fierce warriors. Many undomesticated creatures also inhabit Crane such as the Euparkeria, a huge bipedal lizard that feeds on cattle in the grasslands of Crane.

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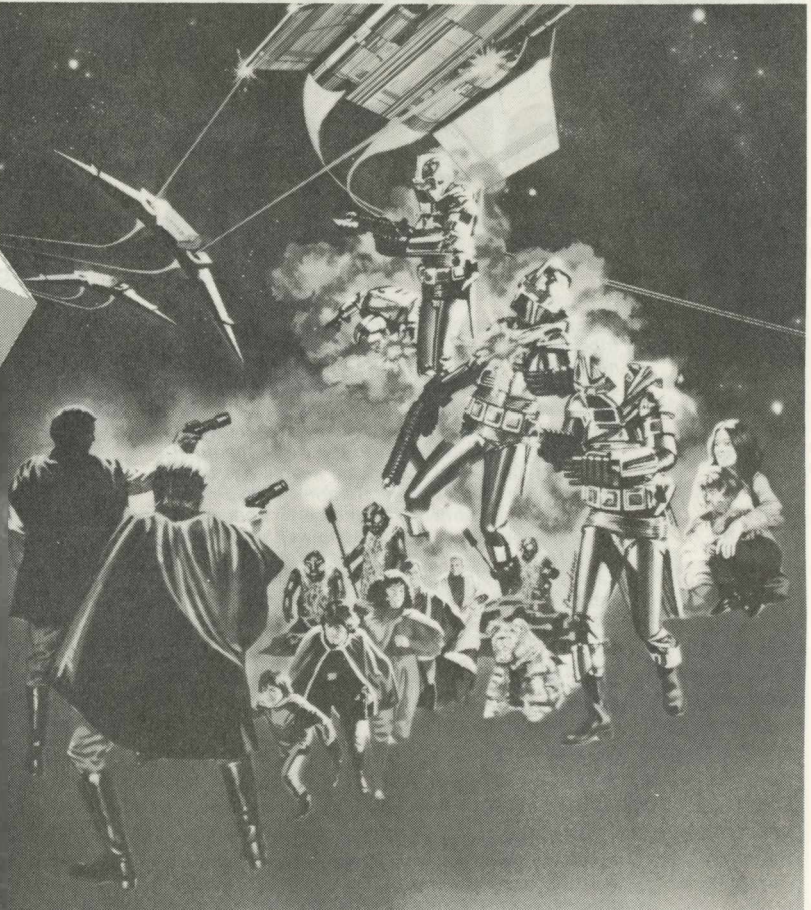
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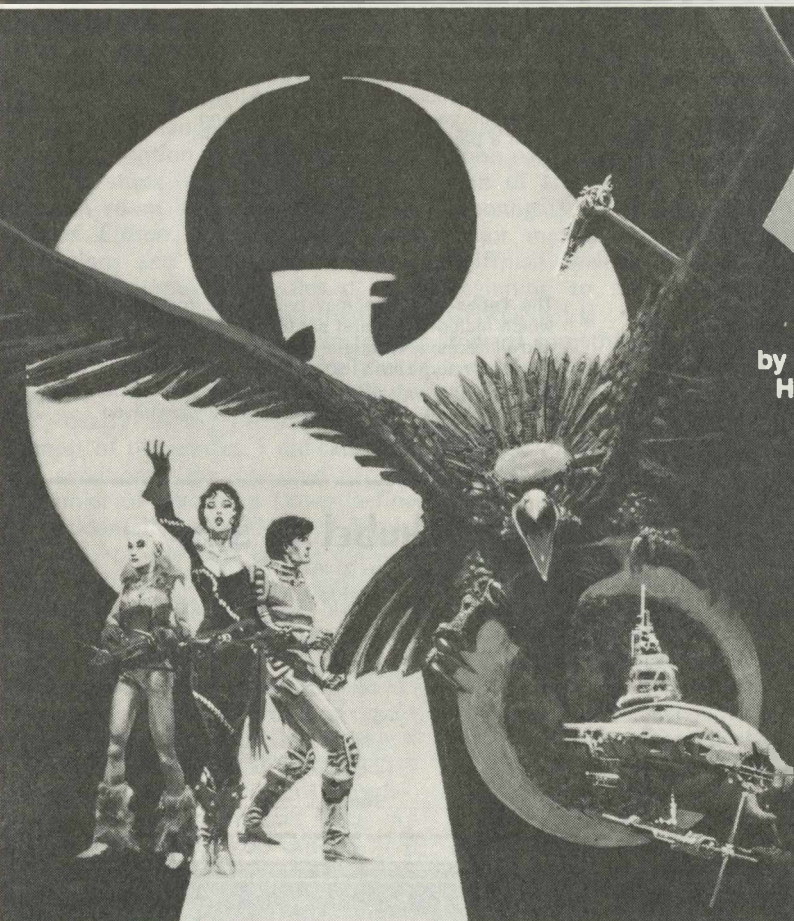
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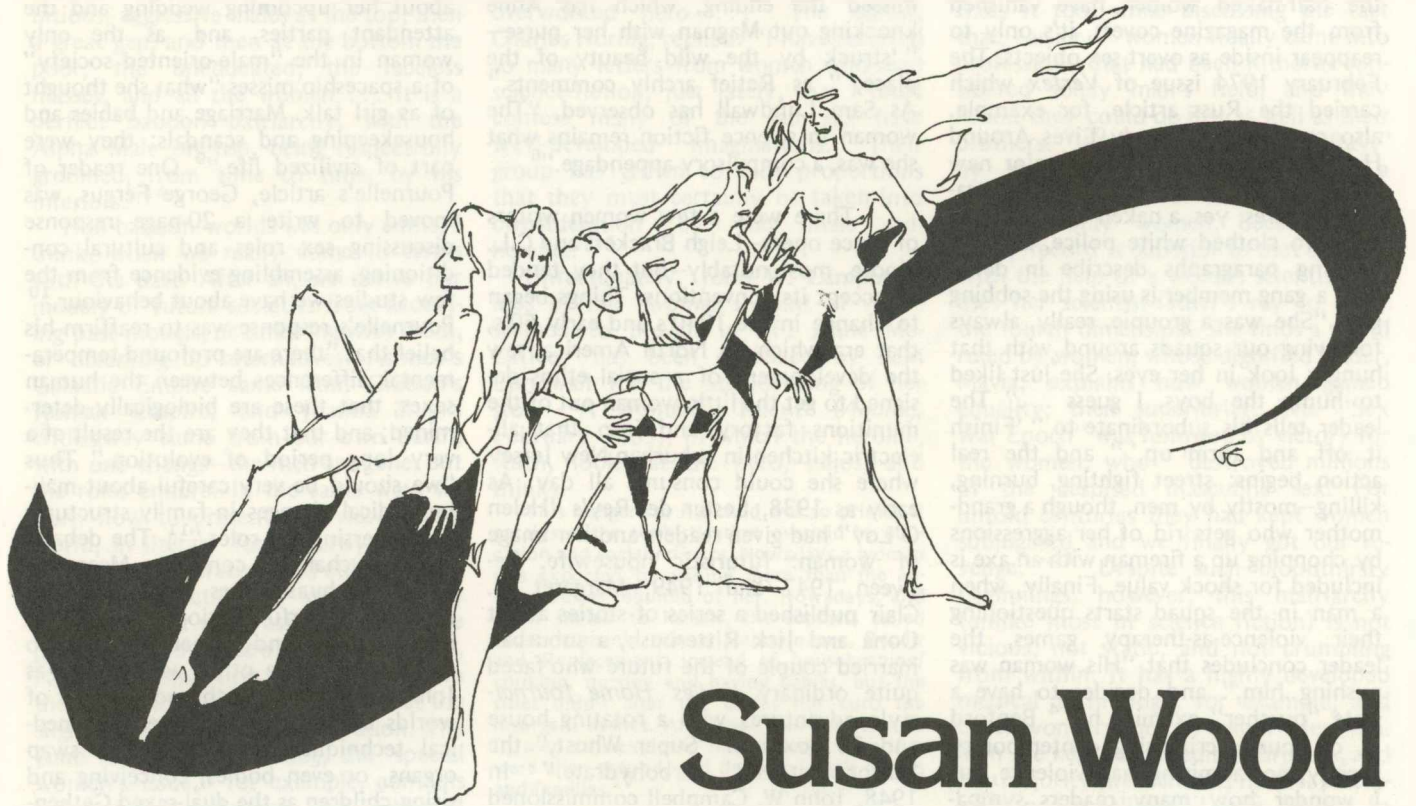
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WOMEN and SCIENCE FICTION



Susan Wood

"Women have their great and proper place, even in a man's universe," conceded the crusty old spaceship captain who narrated "Priestess of the Flame" by Sewell Peaslee Wright (*Astounding*, June 1932).

"Women, when handled in moderation and with extreme decency, fit nicely into scientifiction *at times*," wrote Isaac Asimov in the lettercolumn of the November 1939 issue of *Startling Stories*. He was nineteen.

"There are plenty of images of women in science fiction.

"There are almost no women," observed Joanna Russ in "The Image of Women in Science Fiction,"¹ an article first published in 1971, which stimulated much discussion when it was reprinted in *Vertex* in 1974. Russ was criticizing SF on what are, by now, familiar grounds: its failure to develop characterization, and its failure to provide genuine social extrapolation, notably of changes in human relationships and sex roles. Russ and other critics

have, in turn, been attacked on everything from their examples to their premises that men and women should not only be legally equal, but should have equivalent roles in society. Nevertheless, people are starting to question the stereotypes of a popular literature which has always been male-oriented and male-dominated. As a result, there are more stories about real women, and real men, emerging in the SF field. And there are plenty of articles about their absence.

Most of these articles follow a pattern typified by Russ's discussion, and by Pamela Sargent's excellent long introduction to *Women of Wonder* (Vintage, 1975), a landmark collection of SF stories by women, about women, and the place to start looking for those elusive creatures.² The typical article begins by identifying SF as a man's universe, or an adolescent male universe, in which woman's great and proper place was on the cover of a pulp magazine, dressed in as little as possible

and being menaced by a bug-eyed monster. Inside, the lovely woman was much less visible for, as Anne McCaffrey so succinctly puts it, "Science fiction . . . is more cerebral than gonadal."³ In the pulp era (roughly from the birth of *Amazing Stories* in 1926 through to the mid-'40's), gadget stories of pseudoscience sometimes featured a rare female, usually a scientist's daughter to whom scientific principles could be explained in simple terms, and with whom the steely-jawed young hero could exchange a closing kiss if "love interest" were deemed necessary to liven up the jargon. Hugo Gernsback's novel *Ralph 124C41+* contains interminable examples of woman-as-recipient-of-expository-lump, a technique brought to its highest pitch, of course, by Heinlein. More numerous, however, and rather more fun (if only for the horrible examples) were the science fiction adventures, or "space operas." Women in these got to fill two roles. They could either be blonde Victims, shrieking

"eek" at monsters and being rescued by the hero; or they could be dark, sultry Temptresses, eternally trying to seduce the hero away from his rescue mission. The latter had rather more fun, but ended up heartbroken when the hero abandoned them—and usually dead, as well. It is tempting to feel superior to such formula fiction, only until we realize that the stereotypes haven't changed since the Priestess of the Flame vamped around over forty years ago. If the half-naked women have vanished from the magazine covers, it's only to reappear inside as overt sex objects. The February 1974 issue of *Vertex* which carried the Russ article, for example, also contained "Nobody Lives Around Here," a minor effort by a major new author, Gregory Benford. The illustration features, yes, a naked black woman and two clothed white police, and the opening paragraphs describe in detail how a gang member is using the sobbing girl: "She was a groupie, really, always following our squads around with that hungry look in her eyes. She just liked to hump the boys, I guess..." The leader tells his subordinate to "'Finish it off and form up,'" and the real action begins: street fighting, burning, killing—mostly by men, though a grandmother who gets rid of her aggressions by chopping up a fireman with an axe is included for shock value. Finally, when a man in the squad starts questioning their violence-as-therapy games, the leader concludes that "His woman was pushing him," and decides to have a state "psyche" examine her.⁴ Benford is, of course, criticising contemporary society, not admiring male violence, but I wonder how many readers sympathized with his satisfied narrator? And those stereotypes of young victim/sex object, nagging wife and death-dealing old lady are remarkably persistent.

In fact, SF continually confronts us with evidence that it has advanced very little in characterization and social extrapolation, as evident in the portrayal of women, in the 51 years since Gernsback founded *Amazing Stories*. My own *click* of consciousness came in 1972, after I had been reading what the library clerk coldly informed me were "boys' books" for some 15 years, happily substituting my female self for their male protagonists. In the December 1972 issue of *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction*, I read "The Garbage Invasion," a Retief novelette by Keith Laumer. This one, unusually enough, featured a woman, "Anne Taylor, who was tall and beautiful and held the title: Field Curator of Flora and Fauna, assigned to the unpopulated world, Delicia." She is *in charge* of the world; Retief is assisting her as "Acting Wildlife Officer" during a crisis. So what happens? She spends all her time calling the crisis "perfectly horrid," and worry-

ing that an arriving shuttlecraft may "tear up the lawn and mash my flowerbeds." When Retief's superior arrives, this woman, who is described by Retief himself as filling "a position ... of considerable responsibility" with "commendable efficiency" is summarily dismissed with an order to "'mix us a couple of tall cool ones and ... punch in a nice dinner to celebrate Mr. Magnan's visit.'" At this point, I threw the magazine across the room, and so missed the ending, which has Anne knocking out Magnan with her purse—"struck by the wild beauty of the place," as Retief archly comments.⁵ As Sam Lundwall has observed, "The woman in science fiction remains what she was, a compulsory appendage."⁶

There were a few women writers of space opera—Leigh Brackett and C.L. Moore, most notably—but they tended to accept its conventions. Things began to change in the 1940's and early 50's, that era which, in North America, saw the development of a social ethos designed to get the little woman out of the munitions factory and into that all-electric kitchen in suburban New Jersey where she could consume all day. As early as 1938, Lester del Rey's "Helen O'Loy" had given readers another image of woman: futuristic housewife. Between 1947 and 1949, Margaret St. Clair published a series of stories about Oona and Jick Ritterbush, a suburban married couple of the future who faced quite ordinary *Ladies' Home Journal*-style adventures with a rotating house and 30 boxes of "Super Whost," the "chronometrized carbohydrate." In 1948, John W. Campbell commissioned Judith Merrill's first science fiction story, asking her to provide "the woman's point of view" on scientific developments. The story, "That Only a Mother," deals with the effects of radiation in terms of a mother's blind love for her mutant daughter. The galactic housewives of 2050, happily dusting the robochef in the living unit while hubby tends the yeast farms, might represent a failure of social extrapolation, but they were, perhaps, a little more believable as human beings than all the princesses and priestesses. Perhaps.

A number of women writers entered the field during the 1950's and early '60's. Joanna Russ notes, however, that while they tended to place more emphasis on character development than had the earlier, mostly male writers, they still tended to "see the relations between the sexes as those of present-day, white, middle-class suburbia," a world which might be satirized but which was rarely questioned.⁷ But how can we know the future? How can we make guesses about it, except on the basis of our life today? Thus, for example, Jerry Pournelle assumes "that there is a na-

ture of man, that part of that nature consists of innate differences between the sexes, and that social orders which conform with that nature and those assumptions survive better than those that do not."⁸ On these assumptions, and on the basis of his observations of women, he defends such portraits as that of Lady Sally in *The Mote in God's Eye*, a blonde doctoral student in anthropology who doesn't understand the alien Moties, is concerned mostly about her upcoming wedding and the attendant parties, and, as the only woman in the "male-oriented society" of a spaceship misses "what she thought of as girl talk. Marriage and babies and housekeeping and scandals: they were part of civilized life."⁹ One reader of Pournelle's article, George Fergus, was moved to write a 20-page response discussing sex roles and cultural conditioning, assembling evidence from the few studies we have about behaviour.¹⁰ Pournelle's response was to reaffirm his belief that "there are profound temperamental differences between the human sexes; that these are biologically determined; and that they are the result of a very long period of evolution." Thus "we should be very careful about making radical changes in family structures and reversing sex roles."¹¹ The debate, and the changes, continue. Meantime writers such as James Tiptree, Jr. are creating powerful fictions out of the idea that men and women are aliens to each other, while other writers such as John Varley explore the possibilities of worlds in which highly-developed medical techniques allow people to swap organs, or even bodies, conceiving and siring children as the dual-sexed Gethenians of *The Left Hand of Darkness* can do. In the meantime, too, women such as Ursula Le Guin, Joanna Russ, Kate Wilhelm, Vonda McIntyre, Pamela Sargent and Suzy McKee Charnas, to name a few, are creating a few new imaginative roles for the woman who rebels against being told, like the brilliant engineer in *Podkayne of Mars*, that she's failing in her duty if she doesn't stay home with the children: "'building bridges and space stations and such gadgets is all very well ... but ... a woman has more important work to do.'"¹² In the process, they're creating a few new roles for men, too.

Thus any criticism of science fiction's failure to depict believable woman characters really brings up two points. One is primarily literary: the need for science fiction to replace all the cardboard characters, he-men as well as she-devils, with functioning people. (It is interesting to note that Gordon R. Dickson, in an essay on "Plausibility in SF," deals with how to establish setting, background and scientific facts but never mentions the development of plausible characters.)¹³ The other is

primarily social: the need for SF to actually do what it pretends to do, that is, envision genuinely new cultures and societies. This need is explicit in Russ's appeal for SF which will at least show men and women participating in everyday work life (as they do now) with some suggestion of sexual equality. We find it, especially, in Ursula Le Guin's criticism that: "In general, American SF has assumed a permanent hierarchy of superiors and inferiors, with rich, ambitious, aggressive males at the top, then a great gap, and then at the bottom the poor, the uneducated, the faceless masses, and all the women. . . . It is a perfect baboon patriarchy, with the Alpha Male on top, being respectfully groomed, from time to time, by his inferiors."¹⁴

Non-baboon worlds will only come, I think, when we really come to terms with the past. After all, we derive our models of future societies from accepting past models, or tinkering with them, or dreaming up alternatives: Asimov's Galactic Empire came from Gibbon's Roman Empire, and Joanna Russ's *Whileaway* came from our own Earth, with one change—the men are gone, but the roles endure. In the same way, we learn how to present our view of the world, in literary form, partly through reading past literature and either assimilating or rejecting it. We should be aware of what we're assimilating. Those princesses and housewives, for example, have a disconcerting way of lurking in the typewriter, ready to leap out at the slightest failure of the imagination. The June 1977 issue of *Analog*, the "special women's issue," for example, contains "The Ax" by Jaygee Carr, whom I assume from context to be female. The story concerns a futuristic murder trial, and contains various lawyers, scientists and witnesses. A woman is reported to have found the victim's body and sounded an alarm, "screaming at the top of her lungs." There is only one other woman in the story, a lie-detector operator, "a slender, willowy woman" that the central character "would have liked to have met socially." Are we to assume that in this future North America, all the women judges, lawyers, clerks and laboratory workers have gone on strike?¹⁵

We should also be aware of the positive images that the past offers us. The view of science fiction as a male preserve is a stereotype fostered by people such as John W. Campbell, who tended to address his readers as "Gentlemen" and his authors as "the guys." Women have always read SF—like Naomi D. Slimmer of Russell, Kansas, who responded to the first issue of *Science Fiction* in 1939 with a letter saying she, and her four sisters, "read *Science Fiction* to help us picture what the world will be in years to come, or to

get someone's idea of life in a different world. We know what present-day life is like on this earth. (It's a mess! And *Science Fiction* is about the only way we can forget that fact for a few minutes.)" She went on to say: "If you have to have a female in the picture, make her sensible. Let her know a few things about space-ships, heat-guns and such. Phooey on the huzzies who are always getting their clothes torn off and walling an amorous eye at the poor overworked hero . . ." The editor, Charles Hornig, replied: "I have received so many letters from women who read science-fiction, just lately, that I must confess many of the fair sex have well-developed imaginations. Their group has grown to such proportions that they must certainly be taken into consideration by the male adherents."¹⁶

Unfortunately, John W. Campbell's idea of the "woman's point of view" seemed to prevail in SF. Anne McCaffrey has been criticized by Sam Lundwall for the stereotyping of her story "A Womanly Talent" (*Analog*, February 1969), in which the heroine, Ruth, looks at the hero, Lajos, and thinks:

This hunger for his child was so primal, it paralysed the sophistication overlaid by education and social reflexes. Nowadays a woman was expected to assume more than the ancient duties required of her. Nowadays, and Ruth smiled to herself, the sophists called those womanly talents Maintenance, Repair and Replacement, instead of housekeeping/cooking, nursing and having babies, but the titles didn't alter the duties nor curb the resurgent desires. And when you got down to it, men still explored new ground, even if it were alien ground, and defended their homes and families.¹⁷

McCaffrey, however, in her essay "Romance and Glamour in Science Fiction," the only entry under the index heading "women" in Reginald Bretnor's *Science Fiction Today and Tomorrow*, explains that she wanted Ruth to be a "liberated woman" (her quotation marks). However, "John Campbell asked me to define Ruth in terms of a customary womanly role to cater to his readership. Essentially, he told me, man still explores new territory and guards the hearth; woman minds that hearth whether or not she programs a computer to dust, cook, and rock the cradle."¹⁸ The July 1941 *Astounding* had published "Brown" by Frank Belknap Long, in which an explorer stated: "The urge to reach out, to cross new frontiers, is a biological constant." His fiancée replied: "It isn't in me A woman seeks new frontiers in a man's arms. . . ." ¹⁹ Campbell was, at least, consistent in his views, and McCaffrey argues that she played on this, treating the stereotype facetiously and allowing Ruth to succeed in the story where the men fail, while acting in the "traditional" mother-mistress-healer role.

Back in the pulp era, Hugo Gernsback's magazines tended to print sedater stories than the competing pulps; and the liberated women within society found some place within their pages. *Science Wonder Quarterly* for Spring 1930 contains two stories by women, featuring competent women. In "The Ape Cycle" by Clare Winger Harris, a well-known SF writer, Sylvia Danforth helps her fiancé to destroy the rule of intelligent apes. She flies his plane, and fixes it too, while discussing the fact that, earlier, "women finally came into professions that had been hitherto considered solely man's field, and they found they could do just as well as their brothers."²⁰ In "Via the Hewitt Ray," by M.F. Rupert, Lucile Harris is a commercial pilot for an airline which employs only women, because their safety record is superior to that of men. With the help of a woman scientist, she uses her scientist-father's ray to enter the fourth dimension. She finds a world ruled by women, whose dignified leader, Mavia, explains how women gained equality, then superiority. The "Sex War Epoch" was followed by victory for the women, who "destroyed millions of the despised masculine sex. For untold centuries they had kept women subjugated and we finally got our revenge."²¹ Despite such bloodthirsty beginnings, however, this matriarchy (unlike most in science fiction) is not vicious, not static, and not crumbling from within. It has a highly developed medical technology, for example, and other wonders such as colour television. Men are kept for breeding purposes, and the majority are content, neither effeminate nor rebellious. Lucile returns to her own world with one rebellious male, whom she names John. He remains cowed until she scolds him: "'Why, don't you know that you are in every way superior to a woman?'" Then she adds, in an aside, "May my sisters in feminism forgive the lies. I had to be drastic" (p.420). "Dad," the scientist who has to be rescued by Lucile and the women rulers, makes various jocularly derogatory remarks about "a group of pretty ladies playing at politics," (p.381), but these are contrasted with the women's real competence, to underscore the fact that women deserve equality. Or, as Lucile tells Mavia, "'For a long time we, too, were held back, but now we stand shoulder to shoulder with the men. I hope we won't have any sex war. That would be horrible'" (p.377).

Science fiction's past certainly offers us more Ruths than Luciles. Nevertheless, we need to consider the nature of stereotypes and archetypes before blithely setting out to create anew. Social stereotypes are, or were, "true" in some sense; there really were housewives like Oona trying to impress the

other "girls" in 1949. More generally, there were, are and will continue to be women whose primary concern is the family—women like the heroine of Zenna Henderson's "Subcommittee" (*F&SF*, July 1962). In this story, male delegates from a hostile alien race are conferring with male military leaders from earth. War seems inevitable. However, through two children, an Earth woman and a pink-furred alien woman become friends. They exchange knitting patterns and conversation; then, over a picnic lunch, the Earth woman learns the aliens' real purpose. They don't want war; they just want to borrow some salt. The heroine is desperate enough to forget her place as a mere woman, a spectator of power games. She breaks in on the men's conference, flourishing her pink slip to prove to the alien leader that she really is a friend of his wife. Galactic harmony is restored, and everyone plays with the children's marbles. "Subcommittee" is a silly, sentimental story, but it makes an important point. The men are automatically suspicious and hostile, thinking only of gaining power over each other. The women, with their shared concern for the nurture of life, quickly establish communication and trust. Beyond the social stereotypes of the army general and housewife are the archetypes of the warrior and the Mother Goddess, too powerful and too rich in their implications to ignore.

Many of the images of women in science fiction, as in any Western popular artform, seem to be distortions of archetypes we have barely begun to understand, much less reject. Robert Graves and others, for example, have traced three main aspects of the woman in mythology: the Triple Goddess who is Diana/Venus/Hecate, virgin/matron/hag, mistress of birth, sexuality and death, and the Muse whose presence inspires "mixed exultation and horror."²² Samuel Delany's story "We, in Some Strange Power's Employ, Move on a Rigorous Line" (*F&SF*, May 1968) derives its power from the manipulation of resonant symbols and archetypes, notably the three aspects of women: Sue, the young silverclad power "demon" who is almost raped by a monstrous "Angel"; the ironically-named Fidessa, the beautiful woman who belongs to the man with power, and who flies "like ageless Mab, like an airborne Witch of Endor";²³ and Mabel, the old woman whose hand deals the final death to a man and a culture. Poul Anderson's "The Queen of Air and Darkness" (*F&SF*, April 1971) also makes memorable use of these images as found in folklore.

Leslie Fiedler in *Love and Death in the American Novel* and Germaine Greer in *The Female Eunuch* both discuss the degeneration of these im-

ages, in Western popular culture, into the stereotypes of the pale, sexless Good Woman, often associated with virtue and otherworldly salvation, and the dark, voluptuous Bad Woman, associated with original sin and death through sexuality. The former became, in science fiction, the vapid blonde princess or scientist's daughter, the passive virgin whose love can be won only through pain and trial. She is woman as ideal, always in danger of assault by evil forces, but always rescued; and woman as precious possession, rewarding the rescuer with a story-closing kiss. Randall Garrett's "The Man Who Collected Women" (*Amazing*, April 1957) offers an excellent example of this theme. Beautiful women are being plucked into the sky by blue-skinned aliens, who intend to use them for breeding purposes. They are fooled by a he-man who just happens to be a female impersonator; the aliens have assumed that the women are simply animals, without the intelligence to revolt, and are thus overpowered when a man arrives to lead the women to freedom. The story can easily be seen as a comment on the social stereotypes of women in 1957.

At the opposite extreme in temperament, though not in supernatural beauty, is the dark woman, often an alien, sexually arousing and deadly. C.L. Moore's famous "Shamblau" (*Weird Tales*, Nov. 1933) in which rugged adventurer Northwest Smith thinks he is rescuing a lovely girl from a mob, only to fall under the spell of a Medusa, shows the power of the original archetype. Leigh Brackett's "The Halfling" (*Astonishing Stories*, Feb. 1943), also contains a cynical he-man who quickly succumbs to the lures of the exotic Laura with her tilted purple eyes. It's not until she kills three of his carnival crew, destroys his business and tries to kill him that he finally recognizes her for what she is: a cat-creature from Callisto, seeking vengeance on the humans who have degraded her people. She confesses she loves the hero, then sets his own wild cats on him; he kills them, and her, before succumbing to a romantic hero's despair. The theme of the woman as seductress, often threatened in her mission of revenge by her love for the hero, is well-developed, as is the presentation of woman as alien and as cat-creature. Graves traces this association back to early worship of the White Goddess; certainly it features prominently in medieval lore of witches and their familiars. It is common in pulp SF, often with an added racial threat as the woman's exotic feline eyes are associated with the stereotype of the evil slant-eyed Chinese. The evil priestess Nirvor in Henry Kuttner's "The Time Trap" has black hair and "a cold, cruel, distant something" in her feline eyes.²⁴ She wanders about in a revealing black

robe, accompanied by a black leopard and a white leopard, uttering such smouldering lines as "'You fear my eyes. . . . But you do not fear my body'" to the cleancut hero (p.117). (*Marvel Science Stories*, later *Marvel Tales*, in which the story appeared, tried for three issues to offer the fans sex and sadomasochism with their SF, but this proved unpopular back in 1938.) Nirvor turns out to be a leopard herself. Here she is, torturing the Princess Alasa: "In her jet eyes was torture-lust; on her face was stamped the cruelty of the beast. Her heritage, the leopard stigmata, was ruling now" (p.118). Naturally, the hero shoots her and her leopard-sisters, then takes the Princess back to the United States, where, one assumes, she'll become a housewife.

My favorite early example of the dark woman, however, is Liane, Mother of Life, Giver of Death, Priestess of the Flame in Sewell Peaslee Wright's story, whose great and proper place is as a vamp in the man's universe of the Space Navy. Her aim, as ruler of the degenerate Lakonians, is to gain a seat on the Council which rules the Universe.

"'She is mad,' I said."

"'Crazy,' grunted Correy. 'Plain crazy. A woman—in the Council!'"²⁵ She tries to stir the Lakonians to revolt against their real masters, the earthmen for whom they toil in their planets' mines; then she tries to seduce a member of the Navy crew sent to subdue the populace. At this point, the story starts to sound like an African tribal adventure, and one's sympathies are all with Liane and the Lakonian liberation front. We next see her in her temple, "a goddess, terrifyingly beautiful" in her robe of "thin, shimmering stuff," (p.414) callously threatening people with death in *The Flame*. But she is also a woman in love, and at last she releases officer Hendrix, and dies by her own hand when the people rise up against her. Liane can expiate her sensuality by returning her lover to his crew and his duty; she cannot, however, go unpunished for the sin of wanting power.

The other aspect of the Triple Goddess, the Mother, has already been examined in her stereotype as suburban housewife. The prototype in many respects is the robot heroine of Lester del Rey's "Helen O'Loy." Described as "One part beauty, one part dream and one part science," she is a cook-appliance, adapted by two young men in their basement lab to have emotions and consciousness of self. Unfortunately, her "programming" accidentally includes a soap opera, so she becomes a "normal girl" who giggles while she tries on hats. She also falls madly in love with her creator, Dave, and pursues him with kisses and roast duck with spice stuffing, since she has "all the good points of a woman and a mech com-

bined.”²⁶ When Phil, the other scientist, tells her that Dave wants a real woman, not a creation of “metal and rubber,” she counters: “‘I can’t think of myself that way; to me, I’m a woman. And you know how perfectly I’m made to imitate a real woman . . . in all ways. I couldn’t give him sons, but in every other way. . . . I’d try so hard, I know I’d make him a good wife’” (pp.123-24). And she does.

The Science Fiction Writers of America chose “Helen” as one of the 26 short stories included in *The Science Fiction Hall of Fame* (a volume, incidentally, which contains one story by “Lewis Padgett” the pseudonym of C.L. Moore and Henry Kuttner, and only one other story by a woman, Judith Merrill’s “That Only a Mother.” It is thus as good an index as any of the absence of women, as writers and characters, in North American SF between 1926 and 1964). It also continues to be anthologized. Del Rey recently described it as “probably the most chauvinistic story ever written,” but said its popularity arises because it is “a perfect example of every young man’s wish-dream of the kind of woman he could get,” and a “dream woman” for women as well.²⁷ “Helen” also suggests, though it doesn’t begin to answer, important questions about the nature of the social role we call “woman”—is it all just programming of “the glands, secretions, hormones, and miscellanies that are the physical causes of emotions”? (p.119). Do scientists such as Phil, who cheerfully deprogrammes a wealthy young man who’s fallen in love with a servant girl, but doesn’t deprogramme Dave who’s fallen in love with a servant machine, have the right to tinker with emotions and create artificial life? I’d like to know more about Helen, too, who gains her role-models from soap operas but soon proves clever enough to convince the two men she is what she believes herself to be: a real woman, who gives up potential immortality to die with her husband. I’d like to see someone rewrite “Helen O’Loy”—from Helen’s point of view.

The pulp stories dealing with princesses and priestesses, and the somewhat later ones dealing with galactic suburbia, all present woman as heroine. As Joanna Russ comments, such stories offer several common themes. The women tend to be supernaturally beautiful. Usually they are weak. Often, they are kept offstage; thus the hero of Heinlein’s “The Roads Must Roll” occasionally calls his wife to let her know he’s still tied up at the office with a revolution, while the hero of “Space Jockey” longs to tell his estranged wife that:

I have to work to support us. You’ve got a job, too. It’s an old, old job that women have been doing for a long time—crossing the plains

in covered wagons, waiting for ships to come back from China, or waiting around a mine head after an explosion—kiss him goodbye with a smile, take care of him at home.²⁸ If the women do have powers, they tend to be the passive or involuntary ones of Judith Merrill’s telepathic heroines, Zenna Henderson’s empathetic teachers, all of fantasy’s witches and sorceresses. Russ comments that: “The power is somehow *in* the woman, but she does not really possess it.”²⁹

Another important group of stories, however, shows the woman as hero, either in a traditional male role, or as Amazon or rebel, rejecting male rule. In the pulps at least, the first group could only live their independent lives by sacrificing what their creators assumed was some of their femininity. The best

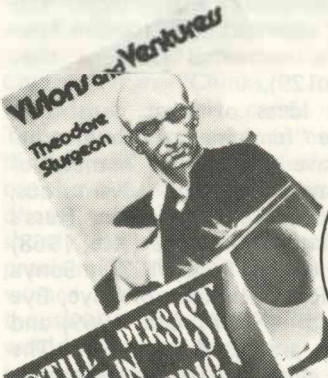
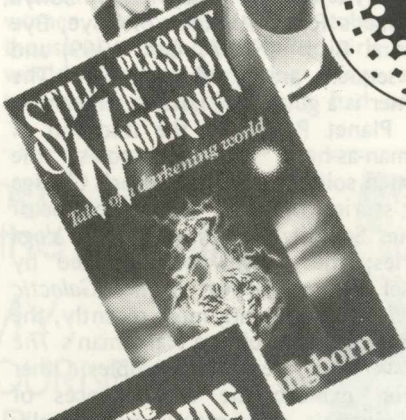
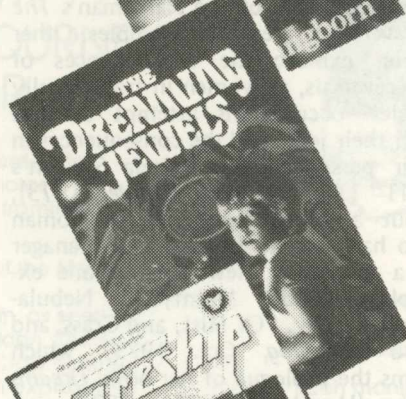
example of this ambiguous portrayal is Arthur Barnes’ treatment of Gerry Carlyle, in a series of stories originally published between 1937 and 1946, and later collected as *Interplanetary Hunter*. Gerry is a wealthy, successful businesswoman and adventurer, who roams the galaxy with a crew of highly disciplined male helpers, collecting extraterrestrial life forms for the London Zoo. Her main prize, though, is Tommy Strike, a he-man whose initial reaction is admiration:

No synthetic blonde baby-doll here but a natural beauty untouched by the surgeon’s knife—spun-gold hair, intelligence lighting dark eyes, a hint of passion and temper in the curve of mouth and arch of nostrils. In short, a woman.³⁰

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temper manifest themselves in a crisp reproof for his poor manners, though, he immediately resents her as an "arrogant female . . . wilful, selfish" (p.13). Surprised by a hint of emotion, he later comes to pity her:

She was a woman walking in a man's world, speaking man's language, using man's tools.

As a constant companion of men she had to train herself to live their life, meet them on their own terms. To command their respect she felt she had no right to use the natural endowments—her charm and beauty—that nature intended her to use for that purpose.

Indeed, she dared not use them, for fear of the consequences. To give way to feminine emotion would be, she feared, to lose her domination over her male subordinates. She was, in short, that most pathetic of beings—a woman who dared not be a woman (p.26). Like the stereotyped "career women"

of the era, Gerry fails in her job for the first time, and thereby gets her man and her closing kiss. In later stories, Tommy as her partner and fiancé rescues her from various perils while Gerry watches with shining eyes, experiencing "that strange emotion—a compound of awe, fright and admiration—that every woman knows when she sees the man she loves in two-fisted action" (p.239). Every time she acts independently and achieves success, Barnes seems to undercut her. Either Tommy will make a remark like "'How can anyone so lovely have such a bad temper?'" (p.82) while "taking a perverse delight in seeing her humbled by the opposite sex" (p.83); or Gerry herself, "trim and dapper" in jodphers, will sigh with longing for "'a dress—organdy—blue.'" Barnes comments that, from this speech, "it appears that Catch'em-Alive Carlyle was somewhat feminine after all. . . ." (p.129).

As our ideas of what constitutes appropriate "feminine" and human behaviour have changed, a number of writers have presented adventurous, strong-minded women: Joanna Russ's Alyx of *Picnic on Paradise* (Ace, 1968) and Alyx (Gregg Press, 1976); Sonya Dorman's Roxy Rimidon of "Bye, Bye Banana Bird" (*F&SF*, Dec. 1969) and its sequels are good examples. The former is a guide, the latter a sergeant in the Planet Patrol, in the tradition of woman-as-hero in male roles: the women soldiers in Fritz Leiber's *Change War* stories; the alien woman heroine of James Schmitz's *Lanni, Agent of Vega* stories; the policewoman created by Rosel George Brown in her *Galactic Sybil Sue Blue*; and, most recently, the women soldiers of Joe Haldeman's *The Forever War*, are other examples. Other stories explore the consequences of role-reversals, as women in traditionally "male" occupations attempt to deal with their jobs, and the consequences in their personal lives. Pamela Sargent's "IMT" (*Two Views of Wonder*, 1973), about a young Puerto Rican woman who has risen to become city manager of a crumbling New York is one example. Vonda McIntyre's Nebula-winning story, "Of Mist, and Grass, and Sand" (*Analog*, Oct. 1973), which forms the prologue of her novel *Dreamsnake* (Houghton Mifflin, 1978) presents a young woman healer who travels, loves, adopts a child, makes mistakes, and discovers her own nature within her vocation as a doctor. McIntyre's recent novella, "Aztecs," (2076: *The American Tricentennial*; Pyramid, 1977) shows a woman's attempt to adjust to the bioengineering necessary for her to become a spaceship pilot, an adjustment made more difficult by her relationship with a younger man.

Increasingly, too, writers are exper-

imenting with the separation of social role from gender, so that, in Marta Randall's *A City in the North* (Warner, 1976) or Vonda McIntyre's "Screwtop" (*The Crystal Ship*; Thomas Nelson, 1976) for example, the person who drives the truck or tries to kill the protagonist will just happen to be a woman. (It's not common to find that the person changing the diapers just happens to be a man, however.) Role-exchanges seem to be especially common in Utopian novels, such as Le Guin's *The Dispossessed* (Harper and Row, 1974) and the future-world sections of Marge Piercy's *Woman on the Edge of Time* (Knopf, 1976), which show societies which have made real attempts to eliminate sex stereotypes. A good early example is Heinlein's "'We Also Walk Dogs'" (*Astounding*, 1941), about a trouble-shooting agency with a top woman operative. As a contrast, of course, we have Heinlein's Wyoming Knott, girl revolutionary in *The Moon is a Harsh Mistress* (Putnam Berkley, 1966), who is supposed to be tough, smart and competent, but whose function seems to be to be stupid, so Prof can explain things to her; to be helpless, so Manny can rescue her; to be cutesy-feminine, so Mike the computer can become Michelle, and talk "girl talk" with her, thus providing comic relief; and to be sexy, so Heinlein can make remarks about breasts bouncing in low gravity. Once the real action begins, she virtually disappears, except to show her faith in the revolution by having her tubal ligation reversed.

The traditional role-reversal story, however, goes back to ancient history and the stories of the Amazons, warrior women who formed their own societies. Sam Moskowitz's collection, *When Women Rule* (Walker, 1972) provides background on this theme, some less-than-objective commentary by the editor, and a number of stories frightening in their implications. In the "traditional" Amazon romance, typified here by the sixteenth-century story "The Queen of California," the Amazon leader is eventually overcome by force. The prince who is the champion of the opposing forces initially scorns her; it is "dishonourable" that a woman, commanded by God to "be in subjection to a man," should try to rule men by force of arms. Besides, she is an infidel.³¹ However, when she is defeated, and agrees to give up her arms and change her religion, he rewards her with the hand of a handsome knight. In science fiction's early variations on this theme, most written by men, the basic assumption seems to be that women who gain power will not want equality, but will, rather, destroy men as revenge for thousands of years of male oppression. Typical is "World Without Sex" by "Richard Wentworth," identified by

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Moskowitz as a pseudonym for Edmond Hamilton, (*Marvel*, May 1940), which depicts a woman-ruled world in which most men have been exterminated, and children are produced in laboratories. Eight surviving men escape, taking four female guards with them. The story's illustration shows this scene, and features the caption: "Rann wrestled the atom-pistol from the girl's hand and clouted her with it." The men rape and beat the women, who gradually submit. When Ala bears a female child to Rann, he rejects it, but eventually all learn to love the traditional "animal" method of reproduction. Meantime, the matriarchy is crumbling, and the story ends with more women choosing to join the male-run society. Since this story appeared in *Marvel Tales*, it contains rather more overt sadistic sexuality than most woman-ruler stories; nevertheless, it is typical in its premises that male-dominated heterosexual societies are the only acceptable norm. The strong woman leader of Nelson S. Bond's "The Priestess Who Rebelled" (*Amazing*, October 1939) abandons her apparently-viable matriarchy when a man teaches her how to kiss, and the sight of Mt. Rushmore convinces her that the ancient gods were, indeed, men. The premise that any change in the male-dominance pattern will produce either a vicious and destructive matriarchy, or a

totally static one in which no progress takes place, is remarkably persistent. For example, in Alfred Coppel's "For Sacred San Francisco," (*If*, Nov. 1969), a woman fighter calmly kills the man who rapes her, while prophesying the day when men will end the wars caused by the "crazy dames"; but her society is shown as self-destructive. The underlying current of fear and hatred in most Amazon stories, however, is best illustrated by David Keller's "The Feminine Metamorphosis," (*Science Wonder Stories*, Aug. 1929), a story which is viciously racist as well as sexist. Women's legitimate grievances at being excluded from the business world are the trigger for a melodrama in which an international underground organization of women surgically alters superior women to pass as men and take over the world. They have, however, used hormones derived from unsuspecting Chinese men—"Chinks," in Keller's terms—and, as his comic detective, Taine (who takes cases to escape from his wife and daughters) gleefully points out, have thus contracted an unnamed disease, obviously syphilis, which will shortly drive them all insane. Taine, proclaiming himself "ashamed" of the women, announces: "You took five thousand of our best women, girls who would have made loving wives and wonderful mothers if they had been

well advised—you took the best that we have bred, and through your desire to rule, you have changed them into five thousand insane women."³² Women who want power must, it seems, be punished for such "unnatural" presumption.

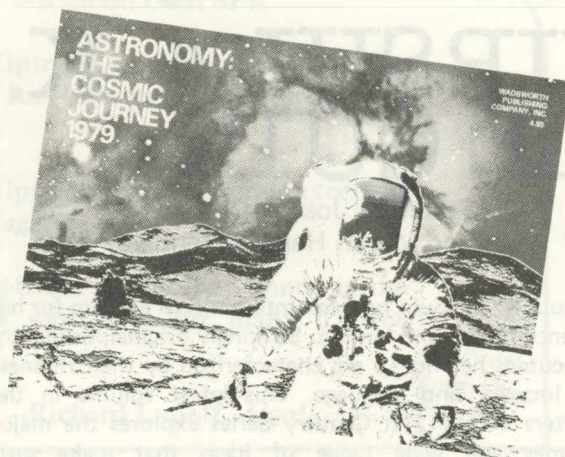
Again, contemporary women writers have sought to free the Amazon, the independent woman, from the Amazon stereotype. Jacinth, a young girl in Suzette Haden Elgin's "For the Sake of Grace" (*F&SF*, May 1969), rebels against her world's disdain for women in the only way possible—she becomes a poet, hence a ruler in her society. Aldera, an enslaved "fem" in Suzy McKee Charnas' *Walk to the End of the World* (Ballantine, 1974), gradually learns humanity and dignity in the free society of its sequel, *Motherlines* (Berkeley/Putnam, 1978). Marion Zimmer Bradley's Free Amazons of Darkover in *The Shattered Chain* (DAW, 1976) live independent lives outside the institutions of the planet's male-dominated society. The women of Joanna Russ's *Whileaway*, the setting of "When It Changed" (*Again, Dangerous Visions*, 1972) have developed a complex, functional and ecologically stable society; they simply don't need the men who arrive to "rescue" them, unlike, for example, the women of Poul Anderson's "Virgin Planet" (*Venture*, Jan. 1957)

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who have longed for the day when the legendary men will arrive to fulfil them. Whileaway is also the home of Janet, the "female man" of Russ's novel of that name. Through her, Russ examines the traditional male role; her rite of passage into adulthood was the killing of a wolf; she has born a child and "sired" another; she has a wife, Vittoria; she works as a police officer; and she has killed four people in duels. When asked by a modern earth man, "'Don't you want men to return to Whileaway?'" she answers, simply, "'Why?'"³³

Whileaway is, of course, a future and alternate Earth. An extrapolation closer to our own time is Kit Reed's "Songs of War," (*Nova* 4, 1974), which follows a number of women who, for different reasons, take part in a small armed uprising. Some are changed; some seek a new society; some reject men entirely; some return to their families. Reed treats lesbian relationships contemptuously, and chooses as her central character Sally, a successful artist with a loving husband, who "had negotiated her own peace" with the world, and who blames the women's dissatisfaction on "the human condition," which, she feels, will never change.³⁴ Whether one agrees with this conclusion or not, though, Reed's characters (except for the caricatured lesbians and super-

mothers) and her situations are convincing. Certainly, too, one of the central points which the story makes is that the women in their guerilla camp can't seem to find genuine alternatives to the Alpha-male-dominated society they have rejected; the movement falls apart in leadership struggles, while in the brave new world, no one wants to tend the cook fires. Genuine extrapolations of non-patriarchal societies might provide such alternatives.

Sam Moskowitz, in his introduction to *When Women Rule*, conjectures that women's demands for equality have influenced the development of the Amazon theme in the twentieth century, and that these stories in turn reflect fear, on the part of women as well as men, that "this 'equality' . . . will end in domination" by the women. He continues: "The implication is almost that a male and a female are two completely different species instead of two indispensable sexes of the same animal" (p.26). Unwittingly, he identifies another of the major roles women can play in SF: that of aliens. In James Gunn's "The Misogynist," (*Galaxy*, Nov. 1952), the premise that women really are evil aliens is developed as a joke, though like many sexual jokes the stance fails to hide a strong undercurrent of fear and hostility; those women with their cold feet in bed are

really out to kill men! In Philip José Farmer's "The Lovers," (*Startling Stories*, Aug. 1952), the story credited with first introducing mature sexuality as a theme in SF, the woman is literally an alien, an extraterrestrial insect who dies when her human lover tricks her into becoming pregnant. In "When I Was Miss Dow" by Sonya Dorman (*Galaxy*, June 1966), the "woman" is also an alien, shape-changed to spy on a Terran scientist; trapped in a female body, she learns human emotions, but also the limitations of the female role. The most powerful examination of this theme, of course, is "The Women Men Don't See" by James Tiptree, Jr. (*F&SF*, Dec. 1973). A woman and her daughter choose to leave earth with an unknown alien, rather than live as aliens in male society. As Ruth Parsons explains to the protesting liberal-male narrator: "'Women have no rights, Don, except what men allow us. . . . What women do is survive. We live by ones and twos in the chinks of your world-machine,'" not even hoping for changes.³⁵ Tiptree, who originally thought of the women as aliens, later commented in the *Khatru* symposium that "Of course it is not women who are aliens. Men are."³⁶ As is common in much contemporary SF, the fictional situation serves as a metaphor for the author's vision of contemporary society,

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in which the cultural differences between men and women seem insurmountable. Tiptree is a pseudonym for Alice B. Sheldon, a psychologist who also writes under the name Raccoona Sheldon. Her story "The Screwfly Solution" (*Analog*, June 1977) is a powerful examination of men's alienation from and fear of women, and the ugly cultural myths of woman's inferiority that underly civilized societies.

Woman as heroine, woman as hero, woman as alien: we do have plenty of images of women in SF. Many of them, however, are degrading to all people, and most of them are one-dimensional, the lowest common denominator of social stereotypes that are already passé. There are some real women, some real people who move convincingly off the page—my two current favorites are Odo of Ursula K. Le Guin's "The Day Before the Revolution" (*Galaxy*, Aug. 1974), and Zoe Breedlove of Michael Bishop's "Old Folks at Home" in *Universe* 8,

who enters into an unusual, and unusually happy, group marriage between seven elderly survivors in a joyless future city. But while it's easy enough for readers to demand that SF show real people in a convincing future, it's rather harder for writers to find ways to escape the compelling stereotypes.

It might even be valuable to re-examine the stereotypes, if only to really understand their limitations. Then push the limitations. Alder of Charnas' *Walk to the End of the World* is literally woman-as-object, totally degraded by her society; the novel, and its sequel, *Motherlines* tell the story of her physical escape, and her gradual growth as a person beyond the limitations of her slave mentality. Unfortunately, stereotyped characters and situations are not only easier to write, they are also easier to get accepted by editors in commercial publishing houses. Charnas reports that one woman editor rejected *Motherlines*, which has an all-woman cast of

characters, in the following terms: "You know, if this story were all about men it would be a terrific story. I'm worried about my market. *The Female Man* had male characters in it, so men would pick it up and at least open it. But men get very angry . . ." Charnas adds, "You finish it, it's not hard: 'to be left out.'"³⁷

It would be even more valuable to examine the archetypes behind the stereotypes. The aspects of the Triple Goddess, still offer marvelously rich material for the imagination. The woman-as-nurturer image, in particular, is extremely powerful; for example, in the majority of stories in *Women of Wonder*, the female protagonist functions in some sort of nurturing role, either directly as a mother or indirectly as a space doctor, an empath, the person who takes care of others. But why not depict a nurturing male? There are examples in our society, but the only ones I can think of in science fiction, offhand, are Jason, the

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teacher in Terry Carr's *Cirque* (Bobbs-Merrill, 1977), and Coyote in Paul Novitski's "Nuclear Fission," forthcoming in *Universe 9*. A similar test of the power and validity of archetypes is found in Elizabeth Lynn's fantasy novella, "The Northern Girl," part of her forthcoming fantasy trilogy, *Chronicles of Tornovi*. Lynn has taken a number of archetypal figures (the warrior, the wise elder, the young person setting out on a quest) and a number of social roles (the politician, the teacher) and embodied them all as women. The result is not only a powerful story, but a good deal of stimulus to actually think about social roles, sex roles, and cultural archetypes.

Are the archetypes familiar to North Americans valid for people of other cultures? Many SF and fantasy writers are turning for inspiration to such "alien" cultures as those of North American Indians. Richard Lupoff went to Japanese culture for Kishimo, the woman warrior of *Sword of the Demon* (Harper and Row, 1977). If the first generation of SF writers were primarily adventure-story hacks, and the second generation were the science-trained men like Asimov, Heinlein and Clarke, then perhaps the third generation, women and men, can be cultural anthropologists and sociologists, genuinely examining new forms of social organizations in the only fiction that allows us to play god. Between observing people on buses and in the supermarket, and drawing on all the cultural resources available as alternates to North American society here-and-now, surely a good writer ought to be able to stimulate her imagination beyond the Princess, the Priestess and the Galactic Kitchen Sink. As to how, that's summed up by a speaker in Monique Wittig's Amazon novel, *Les Guérillères* (1969; Viking, 1971):

There was a time when you were not a slave, remember that. You walked alone, full of laughter, you bathed bare-bellied. You say you have lost all recollection of it, remember. The wild roses flower in the woods. Your hand is torn on the bushes gathering the mulberries and strawberries you refresh yourself with. You run to catch the young hares that you flay with stones from the rocks to cut them up and eat them all hot and bleeding. . . . You say there are no words to describe this time, you say it does not exist. But remember. Make an effort to remember. Or, failing that, invent.³⁸ ■

NOTES

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7. Russ, p.54.
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ALGOL INTERVIEW:

SUZY McKEE CHARNAS

Photo: Fanto



INTERVIEWED BY

Neal Wilgus

ALGOL: Since *Walk to the End of the World* was published over four years ago, perhaps it would be best if we began with some biographical information. I know you're originally from New York, that you were one of the early Peace Corps volunteers in the 1960's and that you've lived in Albuquerque since 1969—could you sort of fill in some of the gaps in this sketchy scenario?

CHARNAS: My parents were both painters. I was supposed for a while to become an artist myself (I attended the High School of Music & Art) but I came out of Barnard College in 1961 with a B.A. in Economic History. Thus fitted for nothing useful, I was lucky enough and bold enough to go off in the Peace Corps to teach in Nigeria, West Africa. Usefulness developed after all: for one year I taught History (of the British Empire) and English (*Great Expecta-*

tions) at Girls' High School, which would have been closed by educational authorities had it not acquired another staff member with a reasonably advanced degree (myself). For the second year I was tapped to do an intro course in Economic History at the brand-new University of Ife where all my students were older and wiser than I. I was simply the only person available in the country with enough background in the subject to do the course, and what background I lacked I read up on damn fast. It was an education all around.

On the way home I traveled in Europe for the first time. Then I brooded away a year on a worthless novel, took an M.A.T. at New York University, and got a job where I'd done my student-teaching, New Lincoln School. My class was 9th Grade Core (combined Social Studies and English) which I and my partner, who taught the

other half of the 9th Grade, put together around the study of Ancient History. We had a great time. I also taught, very badly, an elective in African History.

Drug problems arose; a team of "experts" was called in from Flower Fifth Avenue Hospital. In 1967 I went to work with them, designing new curricula and visiting suburban high schools to try to help them work through their own drug crises without destroying their students in the process.

The following year I married. We honeymooned in New Mexico and fell for the place, I because it reminded me of what I missed about Africa, Stephen because it reminded him of a couple of years he'd spent at school in Tucson for his health (he's a native New Yorker, like me). He found a congenial firm in Albuquerque to work in, I got my teaching license for New Mexico, and we moved. I still teach, on and off, as a volunteer at the local alternative high school—English, History, SF, drawing, etc.—but mostly I write.

ALGOL: What was your first introduction to science fiction? Did any one book, author or magazine stand out as the thing that got you hooked?

CHARNAS: As a child I read girl-and-horse stories and Nancy Drew. They were the only books that seemed to show interesting female protagonists doing interesting and difficult things. At some point I fell into SF, and I remember hanging around the corner store waiting for the next issue of *F&SF* or *Galaxy* or whatnot. I read and loved both Bester novels, *Gunner Cade*, *More Than Human*; Asimov's *I, Robot* and *The Caves of Steel*; a Leigh Brackett opus called *The Sword of Rhiannon*, the Jirel of Joiry stories and *Judgment Night*, Simak's *City*, all of A. Merritt, *The Martian Chronicles*, three Clarkes—*Prelude to Space*, *Childhood's End*, and *The Deep Range*. There was one Heinlein book, too, though ordinarily I can't abide the stuff; it was *Double Star*, which I liked because I was in my *Great Impersonation/Prisoner of Zenda* phase and would devour any tale of some one pretending to be some one else. I can't tell you exactly what got me hooked on SF, but all of the above are what kept me reading it, and I'm grateful.

Meantime I read all of John Buchan, or everything I could get hold of on clipper ships or mountaineering, or all the historical novels in the library, or all the biographies, in waves. I was a loner and my interests veered around a lot, but mostly I wasn't a fan because I didn't know there were such things. In the end I gave up SF when I started growing up and most of it didn't. I've never fully come back to it, since most of it *still* hasn't grown up.

What I like to read now are well-crafted mystery and suspense novels,

most of them by English women like Josephine Tey and L.P. James; books about history (*Plagues and Peoples*, for instance); and books about women (*The Mermaid and the Minotaur*, *Of Woman Born* are recent acquisitions). And the center fold of the *Village Voice* (my father subscribes) which recently distinguished itself with an excerpt from that matchless classic, *The Joy of Lard*. My favorite recipe is the one beginning, "Combine the 5 pounds of lard and 5 pounds of oregano . . ."

ALGOL: Can you tell us something of the evolution of *Walk to the End of the World*?

CHARNAS: *Walk* got started when I finally realized that the characters I had rattling and nattering in my head would only be able to go through their paces freely in a world specially invented for them. This world first took shape (circa 1968) as a minimal future semi-civilization dominated by an incredibly complex and boring religion. While attempting to reclaim this junk, I saw that what my people really had in them was a story about or at least reflecting on the nature of our then-political-leadership. I decided to get what fun I could out of placing the Nixon gang's descendants in a situation where they would have to live by the inverse of their forebears' values: homosexuality as a norm, a Communistic economy, mutated marijuana and seaweeds as staples, that sort of thing.

As I played at this, it got serious. I couldn't help recognizing that the thread holding it all together was one basic value that did *not* get inverted, and that was misogynistic sexism.

By the time I was done I found that a female character who had entered as "the girl" (the one always included so that the fact that everyone else in the story is male won't look so lopsided) had developed a whole life and direction of her own, had taken over a section of the book for herself, and was vital and strong enough to demand a book of her own, which is *Motherlines*. Let me note in passing that during this time I was part of a local consciousness-raising group that turned its collective hands and heads to the production of a series of local TV programs by and about women.

ALGOL: *Walk* was, of course, your first novel and thus subject to some of the drawbacks of the first born—are you still satisfied with how it turned out? Would you change much if you could do it over?

CHARNAS: I like *Walk* a lot; aside from some stylistic nit-picking there's nothing I'd change. Not that it's perfect, but it has its integrity and it's whole and finished. It suits me fine as is.

ALGOL: The bleak world depicted in *Walk* is one of survival among the ruins of the present civilization which was

destroyed by something called The Wasting. Though you weren't very specific this Wasting seems to have been a combination of war, disease, pollution, over-population and perhaps a bit of nuclear insanity to top it off. After four years have you become any more optimistic about these problems? Are we making any progress in defeating these hydra-headed monsters?

CHARNAS: I left the nature of the Wasting deliberately vague since I wouldn't presume to foretell which of our various greed imbecilities are going to be foremost in our downfall. My general feeling about the future is that the only "advanced" society that shows signs of having the faintest chance of surviving whatever form the crash takes is that of Communist China. The rest appear to be completely crippled by the short-term perspectives of profit-motive thinking and incapable of any sort of large-scale, concerted action that isn't instantly perverted to the purpose of lining the pockets of a few at the expense of the many; and I do not believe that this approach "solves" the kind of problem you mean. I don't know (any more than anybody else outside of China) the true nature and extent of Mainland China's achievements or the costs of them, but those people do seem to show a public good. We don't, which is why our clumsy efforts to save ourselves from those of our excesses which we have the guts to even recognize are on the one hand laughably inadequate, and on the other more than offset by ever more complicated and destructive imbecilities.

Of course, I could be flat wrong (and what of it?); we are a versatile species, and America is a vigorous and practical-minded nation. We may yet figure out a way to save ourselves as a people rather than as a rag-tag remnant of the once-rich and powerful who have bought themselves shelter at public expense (this does seem to be our present arrangement). Or the crash may never come, just one piddling crisis after another; or history may serve us a walloping surprise out of left field.

My attitude is, I think, *not* that of most SF readers since so much of the genre in America has always and is still built around a horror of group action or values and glorification of the exceptional individual. That's the major bias of our culture showing. It is also the major reason why as a nation we are so easily victimized by the greediest among us.

ALGOL: What's the status of the sequel to *Walk*? I understand it's mostly from the female point of view, in contrast to the mostly male viewpoint in *Walk*.

CHARNAS: *Motherlines*, the sequel to *Walk*, is told from several female points of view; it could scarcely be otherwise, since there are no male characters in the

book. Believe it or not, I didn't set out to exclude them. On the contrary, I was very worried when I saw that there just was no place in the book for men. I'm as much a product of my culture as anybody else, and I was scared that first I wouldn't be able to write a book about only women, and second that if I did it would be boring.

But I did write it, and without men there to hog all the interesting action and character development for themselves, the women blossomed out into whole and interesting people, or so I believe. The result is not, as in the case of a number of good "mainstream" novels that have come out recently (*The Women's Room* is a perfect example), about the long-neglected female "half" of world experience but about a whole, complete and self-sufficient world of women.

It was hard to sell, despite the comment of a person who loved *Walk* but wrote of *Motherlines* that it was no good but that "unfortunately" it would be easy to sell because nowadays SF editors accept any trash if it's written by a woman. One editor said to me, "You know, if this book were all about *men* it would be a terrific story, any editor would jump at it." She was worried about her market: "Men will at least pick up *The Female Man* because it has a few male characters in it. But they get *very angry*—" and she trailed off apologetically, leaving me to fill in the blanks: "at being ignored."

I tell this story not to put down this editor—she is making it in a male-dominated business the values of which she must adopt, and at least she told me straight out what concerned her—but as an example of the general timidity and conservatism of a genre that's supposed to be "way out."

Walk was sold to Ballantine about two months after its completion; about a year after Ballantine refused *Motherlines*, David Hartwell accepted it for Berkley/Putnam subject to approval by Page Cuddy, then Editor-in-Chief at Berkley; she agreed.

ALGOL: You're outspoken about feminism and the plight of women and of course in *Walk* the Fems are nothing more than slaves. Do you think much progress is being made in this area? Has the Carter administration made any real changes? How about NASA's recent inclusion of women in the space shuttle program? It's slow but aren't we making some progress?

CHARNAS: Your question assumes that I felt while writing *Walk* that women in the real world are treated as slaves, like the fems of the Holdfast. As a matter of fact large numbers of women in various countries and cultures have been for centuries and are still treated as the property of their male relatives. However, I admit I was shocked to hear

some American women say that *Walk* isn't fiction at all, it's their lives.

The women astronauts are a good example of the fact that the Women's Liberation movement has indeed created some leeway—for middle-class women. Privileged to begin with, or they couldn't have acquired the background that qualified them for inclusion, they can serve as unusual role models for similarly privileged younger women. But they are simply irrelevant to the lives of the majority of women, who are not middle-class and never will be. Most American women are so insecure—by reason of real vulnerability, not neurosis—that new freedoms seem to them to be threats, and they are afraid to make a new move. Many of them retreat into joining the backlash in order to feel safe.

Generally speaking, for every step forward (such as the creation of various organizations to stop the hiring of secretaries for use as pokies and slaveys around the offices which employ them) there seems to be a step back (apparently most of the women hired by universities and colleges in the "Affirmative Action" period of the early seventies have been dumped in the last two years). The resistance is so fierce, and so devious, and so complex that it's going to take more than a decade of struggle and the fumbblings of various half-hearted administrations to make real changes.

ALGOL: How about women in science fiction—both the women in the stories and the women who write them? Aren't there significant changes happening here?

CHARNAS: See the suggested reading lists in Pamela Sargent's *Women of Wonder* volumes for evidence of the changes you mean, and her introductions for a clear outline of just what has been happening in this area and why and how. Let me just note that one of the major delights of being a woman writing SF now is finding that there are lots of other women writing SF who offer encouragement, friendship, and critical aid. Friends are very valuable for writers, whose work is solitary; and colleagues are very valuable to women, who are often totally cut off from collegial contact and support.

ALGOL: In the Prologue to *Walk* you say, "Of all the unmen, only females and their young remain, still the enemy of men." Must men and women always be enemies? Isn't it better to develop the cooperative side of male-female relationships rather than dwell on the negative aspects?

CHARNAS: The part of *Walk*'s prologue which you quote is intended to indicate the men's interpretation of their present situation in the world. However I do think that women and men have behaved like enemies most of the time and still do so. They will continue in this mutually destructive

relationship until arrangements are made between them, either cooperatively or unilaterally, to put an end to the institutionalized and socially approved exploitation of either sex by the other.

As for "dwelling on the negative aspects," I think you mean that writers should write about solving sexism, not about how awful it is. But there are plenty of men who don't think it's awful at all, so why should they even consider changing things? And there are plenty of women who haven't yet been able to let themselves acknowledge how awful it is, so why should they push for changes? Constructive alternatives are worthless without a bunch of good, healthy screaming to help move a society to consider alternatives in the first place.

Besides, I'm not a genius, and I don't know how to solve sexism. *Motherlines* and the book that follows are attempts to at least think through some possible approaches to solving it, but *Walk* had to be written first so that I knew myself what I was dealing with.

ALGOL: You've said elsewhere that the ugly male rulers of Holdfast in *Walk* are not basically different from the Watergate types who run our present society and in the story Servan D Layo, Eykar Bek and the others are the descendants of our politicians and military brass who survive the Wasting in their underground hideouts. But don't you think that

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women are just as capable of tyrannical behavior, or stupidity, or insanity, or whatever, as men are?

CHARNAS: Who knows what women are or are not capable of, since there has never been the opportunity to find out? Here's (more or less) what the biologist George Wall said about the race/I.Q. controversy: Sure it may turn out that Whites are congenitally smarter than anybody else; but since it has been demonstrated that dietary and other sorts of deprivation makes kids of any color stupid, the only way to find out anything about what non-White kids are capable of when not *rendered* stupid in these ways is by seeing to it that non-White kids are raised with all the advantages of White kids. Then test them if you're curious, with culture-blind tests if you can devise any.

Similarly, raise male and female kids with the same freedom, encouragement, positive role-modeling and physical emphasis and *then* you can start talking about what women—and men—are or are not capable of.

Personally, it's my own feeling that

women and men are a great deal more alike than different psychologically as well as physically, and that pretty much anything that men are capable of women are capable of too, *mutatis mutandis*.

Unfortunately, this argument is often used to bolster the sexist position that if women aren't innately *better* than men they certainly shouldn't be allowed any power because society wouldn't benefit. Which merely indicates the Masculinist's underlying definition of society (men) since the female more-than-half of the population would benefit plenty. And, as Joanna Russ has often pointed out: better or worse or just the same, after 2,000 years of HlStory *it's simply our turn*.

ALGOL: Science fiction fans are often disturbed at the idea that stories might become bogged down with a "message" that will interfere with the "entertainment." *Walk* certainly falls into the "message" category—do you see this as a problem?

CHARNAS: To them I say, oh come on, folks; SF has always been rich with

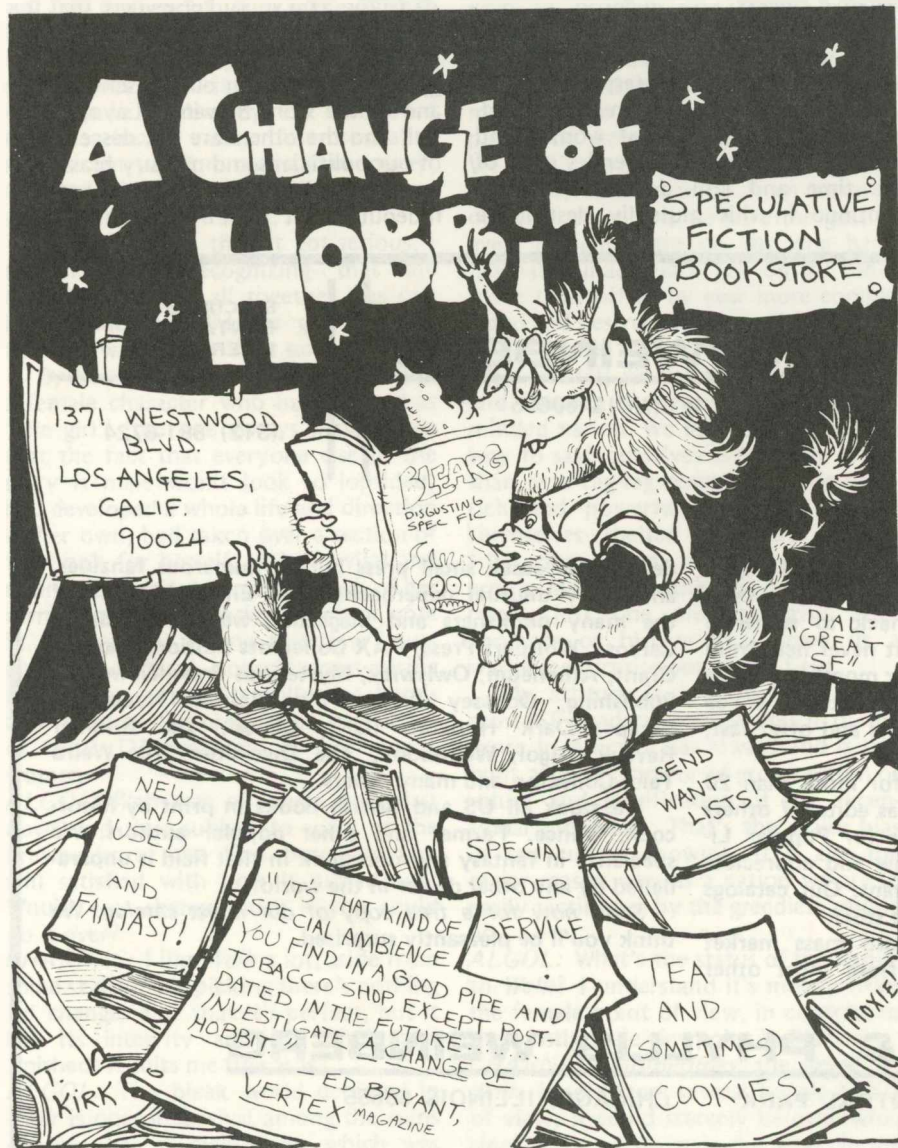
"message," which is only a problem when it becomes propaganda. Propaganda stinks; it lies about the complexity of the world and insists that there is only one unvarying set of answers to all questions (incidentally, what puts me off most about Communist China is that modern Chinese art produces nothing but propaganda, by political decision, and I think that's deadly). The stuff in science fiction that most of its readers find most attractive is, on the other hand, the "message," which is simply an invitation to think about something along with the author. However, if you are invited to think about matters you're not used to thinking about or even flatly opposed to thinking about, the first reaction is usually to scream "Agh, I am being choked on message!" and shut the book, i.e., shut your mind, having confused propaganda with the raising of questions.

As for *Walk* and *Motherlines*, I see them as adventure stories into territories usually ignored by SF writers, where I got to poke around to see what I might find there. Certain themes surfaced: in *Walk*, for instance, the idea of anti-female sexism followed to a logical extreme, to see where it would go and what it would imply along the way for the culture that went with it. Similarly, *Motherlines* isn't a tract, a textbook, or a blueprint. It's about, for one thing, healing a violently damaged and deformed personality and the finding of personal power, which concerns are not peculiar to women, by the way; these are matters touching anybody's recovering from any sort of enslavement or exploitation. For another theme there's the question of the kind of culture that women, left to themselves, might develop and the kinds of individuals such a one-sex civilization might produce. The original idea was to lift the concept of an Amazon society free of the bog of archaeological speculation and argument and turn it loose to develop as it might in an imaginary future.

All of which seems to me to be what SF should be and is, at its best: exploration, play with ideas, following the logical extrapolation of a set of premises wherever it might lead. I didn't twist anything around to make the story of either book come out in any predetermined way. The characters invented the plots, and I carried what was going on to the best stopping place I could find. If anything is "bogged down," it's the minds of readers too hidebound to come along.

ALGOL: Can you give us an idea of how you go about writing?

CHARNAS: I'm still finding out about this. Having had the experience of writing two books about three times each in order to get them right the fourth time, I tried to plan out Book III in a notebook first. Result: about a year's



worth of block. While I feel that these notes will prove valuable at some stage, their initial effect was paralysis. So, back to floundering, though I find the expenditure of time very galling.

More specifically, my work habits are these: I get up and have coffee and go heat up my studio, which is a separate building that used to be a shed for short horses (it had stalls, but the roof is not high). When the heat has softened up my typewriter so it won't jam when I hit "return," I sit down and start typing, sometimes from the last sentence on the previous page, sometimes from between the ears. This is the "creative" or "art" part of the work, and I'm good for about three hours of it at a go. If I'm doing the craft part, cutting and pasting and crossing out and retyping, I'm good for up to twelve hours. Everything gets done on the backs of out-of-date time sheets from my husband's law office (long paper), which prevents me from being concerned too early with considerations of ms. length.

Around mid-day I go down to the Y to run, shop on the way back, maybe do letters or reading in the afternoon, and try to reserve the evening for relaxing. Next day, the same.

When I think I've got a completed piece of work, Stephen reads it, and everything has to be done over for clarification and tightening up. Then it goes out to be read by friends whose judgment I trust, followed by more rewriting till it's done. The whole process is extremely draining and exhausting, to the degree that when it's over—about two years' worth—I find myself reluctant to get involved in it again by starting the next work. But the books, I think, are good; at any rate they're as good as I can make them, and I'm willing to be content with that.

As for ideas, I write about the present (which is the only experience I truly have access to) seen through the lens of an imaginary future in pursuit of unusual and illuminating perspectives. Ideas about what parts of the present are worth examining this way come out of the air—out of what people are thinking about and talking about and living through. There's no trick to it, except paying attention, which is actually a pretty good trick.

ALGOL: What other kinds of writing are you interested in doing? Do you think it's likely you'll turn to doing SF short stories? A novel of the future where our society isn't Wasted? A fantasy of some kind?

CHARNAS: This Fall there arrived in my head a 15,000 word story now titled "Scorched Supper on New Niger," due out from HBJ/Jove in the collection *New Voices 3* sometime in 1979. It came on in a rush and was a surprise and delight to do, and I'm presently at work

on the third of a group of stories about vampires. I'm happy doing shorter work (which I used to say I couldn't and didn't do, since in fact till now I couldn't and didn't), but am primarily committed to novels. I like them because the people matter more and come much more alive.

The next book will wind up the unit begun with *Walk* and continued through *Motherlines*, and after that—? It's too far off to think about seriously.

ALGOL: There's a lot of serious talk about a massive effort at space colonization, perhaps by private enterprise, within the next ten to fifteen years. Do you find this at all realistic? How about steps toward longevity, cloning, increased intelligence and other biological breakthroughs?

CHARNAS: Thanks to the considerations discussed earlier, I no longer regard these possibilities as wonderfully exciting in the real world (in fiction, there's still hope and wonder). Our government *is* private industry, so it's very likely to turn out to be just another helping of the same old profiteering and piracy, ending up with the sterility and lifelessness captured so ominously in 2001: *A Space Odyssey*. ALGOL: You once described yourself as a diehard radical with "flames shooting forth from my skull." How would you describe yourself today? Still shooting flames?

CHARNAS: Ah, me. Clearly those readers who get upset by what I've been saying will consider me a radical of the more or less flame-shooting variety depending on how widely their attitudes and my own diverge. But whatever I may once have said of myself on this subject, I wouldn't dream of claiming to be a radical now. In fact, where it counts, I lead almost exactly the life my mother (child of immigrants) wished for her kids: I'm married to a lawyer, inhabit a neat little adobe house in a great part of the country, travel a bit, write books, teach school, keep cats, cook pretty well, know some sharp and creative folks, am close to my two sisters and my step-kids, and sleep well nights. Aside from certain minor variations and a taste for being something of a social hermit, I'm a sample bourgeoisie.

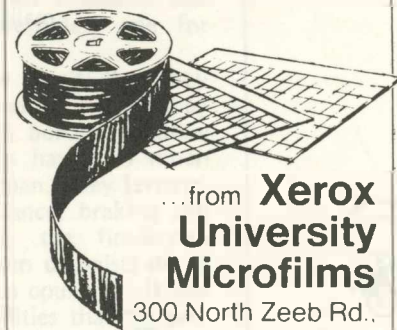
Even in my head I'm not a revolutionary. I like my comforts and my freedoms too well to risk them on the possibility of something far worse. It seems to me that should we somehow rise up and throw off the whole system—which I don't believe for a moment we're about to do—we would at once construct a new one, on the Central European Left or South American Right model: new hierarchies for old and still no honest and effective concern for the welfare of all of us instead of the fattening of this or that self-designated "special" few.

So I'm too much of a pessimist to shoot flames; I've had thirty-eight years in which to become disillusioned, not without effect. I like my life, I think the real future is dreary, I enjoy the futures in fiction, and I hope for miracles. Apart from a bent for writing stories down on paper, I'm like most people: we just do the best we can, and if it's not good enough, then it's not good enough. And if it is good enough, then we have a chance.

ALGOL: Thank you, Ms. Charnas. ■



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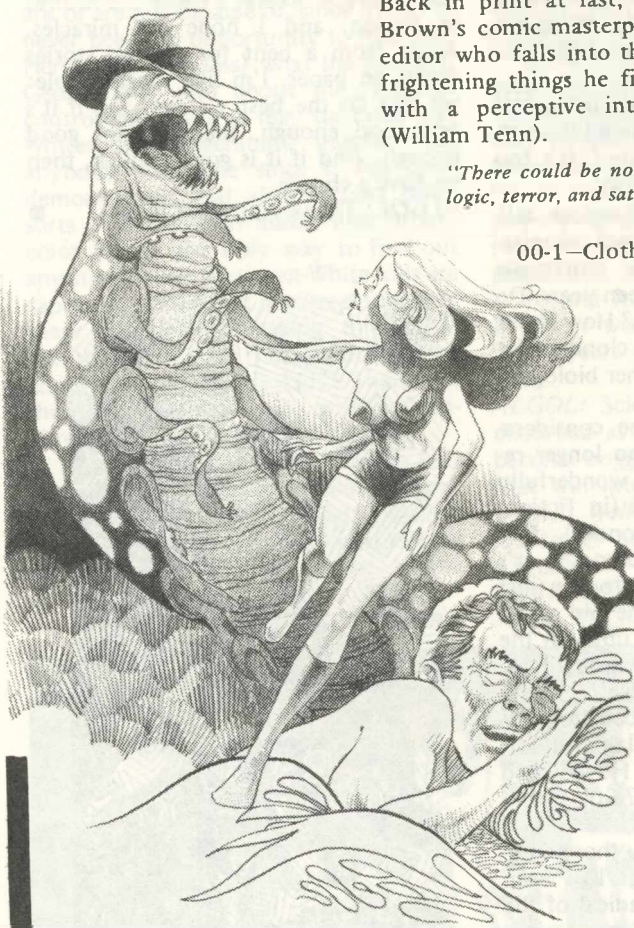
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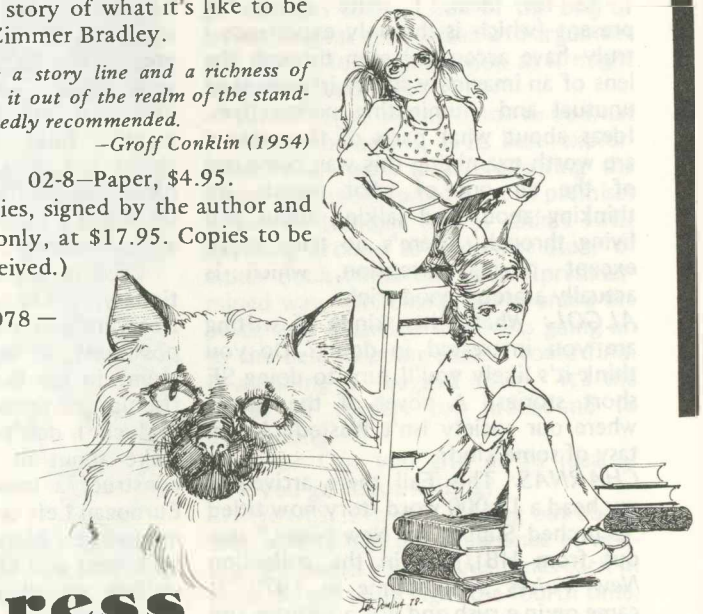
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ON PERNOGRAPHY



Anne McCaffrey

Authors and their worlds *are* fascinating, particularly if you are the author concerned.

Much as I would like to comply with those readers who would assign a mystical origin to the Dragons of Pern, there isn't one.

I was casting about me, like Lawyer Peachum in the *Beggar's Opera*, for a good execution (of a story) for the next Assizes, and a stray thought dwelt overlong on the subject of dragons. Like Doris Pitkin Buck, I have always felt that dragons suffered from a bad press. It occurred to me to remedy this distressing situation with a well-meant short story in their favor. Some 160,000 words later I'm still "dragonizing."

It came about in this wise: so dragons fly? Why? And why fire-breathing dragons? Gotta be a reason. A menace? That's it, a menace only dragons can combat. Great. But dragons as big as mine were looming in the authorial eye would be difficult to manage unless . . . ah ha . . . telepathic dragons, mind-linked at hatching to men . . . dragonmen . . . dragonriders. Now there's a name with charisma in gobs. Ah ha ha! Yeah, but why? Hmmm. Dragons flying, breathing fire . . . think

up something that ignites on contact with oxygen . . . mad dash to science library. Ah ha. Phosphines. Air-borne, telepathic, fire-breathing dragons menaced by what? Something also airborne. Large inimical creatures? Nah, too tame. How about a mindless organism? Again ah ha. Space travelling spores . . . see Arrhenius. On with the story.

The Dragons of Pern are unusual beasts, constructs if ever there were some: they get "impressed" on hatching like ducklings, are telepaths, oviparous but their mating is comparable to bees rather than lizards (although I've never observed saurian habits); dragons are carnivorous but can last eight days, when full-grown, on one full meal, like a camel. They have two stomachs like cows, one for comestibles, one for combustibles.

Actually, dragons don't fly: they only think they do which is how they do it. Even with a boron-crystalline exo-skeleton, dragons have too much mass for their wing-span. They levitate, using wings for guidance, braking and self-deception. True, the fire-lizards from which the Terran colonists developed the Pern dragon could fly: it was their parapsychic abilities that the gen-

eticists strengthened.

Having more or less settled my dragonology, I forget it and build the plot structure around the humans. It followed logically, however, that men who could think to dragons would be regarded with considerable awe by their less talented peers. Ergo, an exclusive confraternity, self-immolating, self-sustaining. (I may well have been reading about the Knights Templar at that point, I've forgotten, but the social structure of Pern is decidedly feudal with occasional modern-child-rearing overtones.) F'lar was the epitome of the proper dragonman.

Now introduce the outsider into the Weyr for observation and comparison. It's more fun to pit the sexes so enter Lessa, in Cinderella guise, with sufficient wit and courage not to need the

cop-out of a fairy godmother. (I don't have one, don't see why she should.)

There are several villains, 'cause half the fun of writing is the villain: Fax who is greedy, R'gul who is well-motivated but dense, and the Threads which couldn't care less and therefore are the best variety of menace. (I tend to develop outside influences anyway: I've had enough in my lifetime of nation versus nation.)

The last ingredient was the timing: the dragons were created (by me and Pern) for a necessity—remove that necessity from the memory of living man, and see what happens. We've all seen certain customs upended, debased, disregarded, yet at their inception, there were good reasons for them. Why do men customarily place women on their left side? So their sword/gun arm is free

... or so they can protect the woman from slops thrown out an upper story window. Swords (and guns, God willing) are no longer *de rigueur*, but the convention/tradition/custom continues: and modern plumbing takes care of the other hazard that initiated the custom. A simple instance, granted, but valid.

I know a lot more about dragons and Pernese than I'm admitting right now, but I don't want to spoil the upcoming novel, *Dragonflight* (Ballantine Books, U6124, 75¢). Pern fascinates me utterly: the dragons are, in essence, mature concepts of the imaginary characters that bore me company in my youth. Or an itch which I can't leave alone. I am bedraggled. I'll be glad to answer specific questions on Pernography from those interested.

—Anne McCaffrey

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Frederik POHL POHLEMIC:

How We Put The Hype In Hyperspace

Tuesday 16 August. This is the first official date on what will be some six weeks of hyping my new book, *The Way the Future Was*: The Candy Jones radio show in New York. It's a friendly way to start. Candy is Long John Nebel's widow. Essentially it's still the Long John show, just what it has always been in the fifteen or twenty years I've been doing it, and on with me are old friends Lester del Rey (The Magnificent) and Jim Mosely (The UFOlogist). It goes quickly, all the way from midnight to sunup. The only difference is that this time when it's over I don't make my usual mad dash for the red-eye to Red Bank. Instead I stroll to my suite at the Essex House and watch the sun come up over Central Park from twenty stories up, because this time my publisher is picking up the tab. Between now and the end of September, it says here on my typed schedule, I will have performed at about 110 radio and TV shows, newspaper interviews, lectures, bookstore autographings and other personal appearances in order to promote the book. Has to be that way, says Judy-Lynn del Rey. *TWTFW* isn't a novel. It's a memoir. Bookstore people won't know where to put it—in with the SF? In with the non-fiction? Or, more likely, nowhere at all, unless they get strong backup and reminder from advertising and promotion. What this all costs I can only guess, but my finger to the wind registers a bundle. Is it worth it? Or anywhere near? Ah, that's what we're going to find out. Day after tomorrow I do some New York newspaper stuff, including a tour with a Sunday News photographer to revisit old Futurian hangouts, and next week the journeying starts. Seventeen cities, including a couple that I will pick up as isolated dates after the first of October.

Tuesday 23 August. The first leg of the trip starts on the Metroliner to Philadelphia. I've specially asked for rail connections rather than air wherever

possible, but was that smart? It doesn't look so. I'm trying to do final editing on *Jem* while I ride, and the bounce of the train is denting my kidneys. Pity the poor typesetter who has to read this. The first date in Philadelphia is a TV taping. Ben Bova is taping too, and the TV host is Joe Hunter, who turns out to be an old fellow copy-boy with Ben on the Philadelphia papers. We have a nice dinner first, Joe and his wife, Ben and Barbara and I. Getting out of the car Ben steps in a Philadelphia pothole and hobbles the rest of the night. But a couple of drinks seems to ease the pain, and if it is all going to be as easy as this it will be a breeze. It isn't. Up early the next morning and back to the same station for a live TV news spot, then to a taped interview for an FM radio station that operates from a tiny hidden room way up in the secret warrens of the Philadelphia Art Museum. Somewhere in the stacks is a sculpture by my daughter, Karen, acquired a couple of years ago and never displayed, but I have no idea where to look for it. The last show of the day is live radio on Philadelphia's equivalent of WBAI, and the only thing wrong with it is that the studio is at 44th and Market, only blocks from the recent shootout between black activists and cops in which one policeman was killed. The cops are up tight, and so is the neighborhood, and cabs don't want to go there. However, I survive. More Metroliner, and I arrive in Washington in early evening.

Now is borne in on me the essential injustice of the world. I don't get to Washington very often, and there are a dozen things I'd really love to do. Visit the Aerospace Museum. Eat at the German restaurant that has the white Berliner beer with raspberry syrup. Call up James Tiptree Jr. and, after fifteen years of friendship by mail, see her at last face to face. But the weather is sultrily draining; I'm tired; I watch a little TV, eat in my room and go to bed.

The next day—*Thursday 25 August*—is the first really hard one. The only thing that saves me is the Ballantine sales rep, who shows up at my second or third stop and chauffeurs me around for the rest of the day. Even so, we miss the return Metroliner and blaze into National just in time to catch a late Newark flight. Making connections for the miserable North Jersey Coast train back to Red Bank gives me plenty of time to think about the Meaning of It All. Is this razzmatazz worth what it costs? Never mind my own time. All experiences are grist to a writer's mill—sometime, somehow. (Besides, I'm still writing every day.) But trains, planes, taxis, hotels—they cost; and I see by the schedule that I've got a limousine and driver in some cities, not to mention a sales rep's pay where one of those conducts me around, not to mention what is probably a solid month's time for Dermot McEvoy, the Ballantine PR person who has been setting this all up, not to mention . . . a lot of things. No doubt including many I haven't even thought of. A couple hundred books sent out at several dollars each. Printing up press kits. Postage. A lot of longline telephoning. Tips. Secretaries. Miscellaneous. Drop it all into the hopper, and what comes out at the bottom is a figure that looks a lot like ten thousand dollars.

Monday 28 August. Wake up at 5:30 AM in the Pittsburgh Hilton with a noble view of the confluence of two rivers to form the Ohio, only I can't see it. There are two reasons. First, my eyes don't want to be open; second, it isn't for God's sake even dawn yet. Why am I doing this? But the local sales rep has given up some sleep, too. He picks me up at the hotel door; we head out to the boonies and make the studio in time to do the AM-Pittsburgh live TV show. Then a radio interview; then some kind of breakfast, and at 10 AM, my first miss. We get to a radio studio after some

false alarms, because it's in an old stable and sure doesn't look like any kind of studio. A teenager jumps out of a parked car, looking unhappy. He's my putative host. He can't take me into the studio for the interview. He can't get in himself. The building is locked tight, and no one is inside. The 6 AM jock didn't make it to work, the station is off the air, the manager is out of town, where it will all end he doesn't know and, anyway, there's not going to be any interview at this place this day.

Pittsburgh, the rep tells me, is a hard town to sell SF. The skinny turnout at the bookstore parties make him look right. But one of the stores had taken twenty copies of *TWTFW* and sold nineteen; the other had taken twenty-five and sold them out clean, then frantically ordered fifteen more so they'd have some to sell when I got there. That strikes me as not bad, everything considered. Is that their normal sale? Hell, no, says the rep. In fact, one of them wouldn't have stocked the book at all if I hadn't been coming, and the other might have gone for maybe five copies, tops. So I am not to worry because they didn't have to call the police out to control the crowds. The tour is doing its magic.

We're through with most of Pittsburgh by five, and then I have a four-hour break before my last date in town. Which is a biggie: network TV with a lot of outlets, a good host and the right kind of audience. We have dinner first, the rep, his new wife and I. They're a nice young couple, married two months, and if he goes on being a Ballantine sales rep they'll never make it to a year. His territory covers 20,000 square miles. Even hitting the outposts only once a month, he drives more than a thousand miles a week. So what do you do with a brand-new bride, freshly transplanted from Boston, no roots in the community? Leave her lonely? Take her along?—so she can sit in the car while you arm-wrestle some local wholesaler into taking 200 more copies of *Gateway*, or dawdle over a Coke while you argue some department-store buyer into giving floor space to a *Star Trek* dump? It appears to me that he is doing a really good job. Coming in through the airport, he pridefully shows me the six pockets in the front paperback rack that are filled with my own books—right out in the high-traffic area, where everybody wants to be—and on the way back the next night I check and half the copies have been sold. Up-front display is paying off just as it is supposed to. But he is coming to decision time. Job or wife? And he's not the only one. There are better territories, but there are worse ones, too, and that jolly road man who pushes your book into every hamlet is an actuarially rotten marriage risk.

Then to Cleveland. I stay at the Hollenden House—an omen? Happens that part of one chapter of *TWTFW* was written there in one of their hotel rooms, passing through town three years ago. Not much has changed. Cleveland is a tough town, almost like Newark—not a soul on the downtown streets at night, everything buttoned up tight. But the next morning—*Tuesday 29 August*—the world smiles. There's a limo waiting for me, with a liveried driver named Bob. He gets me where I need to go, and is waiting, opening the door and touching his cap, when I come out again. When I was starry-eyed sixteen, rapturously longing to be a professional writer, this is how I always knew it would be. What the hell took it so long? All of Cleveland acts friendly. One of the newspaper reporters who interviews me is Don Thompson, a friend; a fan; he doesn't need to ask any questions, because he knows all the answers as well as I do, so we go to the commissary and relax over coffee for an hour. The next reporter is a whole other thing. He's usually an investigative political leader writer, and he plunges into me as though I were a new Department of Sanitation budget. Interesting experience, but I wonder what his story will be like. On the way out to the airport Bob tells me about the last time he had a client at the Hollenden House. He was driving Senator Ted Kennedy. He parked out front and went in to get the senator, and somebody stole his limousine.

What I'm trying to do in St. Louis—*Wednesday 30 August*—is combine the promo tour with a college lecture date. As both parties are hosting me, I find I have two rooms waiting. I choose the Stouffer Towers, so I can look out at the Gateway Arch. The lecture, at Washington University, turns out to be in the chapel—stained glass windows and pipe organ; I feel I should cense the audience before I begin. They're good people, and I would stay longer if I could—they've got a great astronomy department, where some Nobel laureate work has been done—but I've got a TV appointment downtown, and then a plane to catch to Chicago. Where I do a late-night radio show that surprises me. The host is a college professor. On with me, primed to discuss my book, is another professor, Frank McConnell, who teaches an SF course at Northwestern and is writing a book on H.G. Wells. That's not the surprising part. The surprising part is that the host talks to his radio audience as though they were intelligent adults. He uses hard words. He explores complex issues. And the son of a gun tops the talk-show ratings in his area. How astonishing! Even his director is a surprise. She's a doctoral candidate, and her dissertation is on the relation of SF

to medieval literature.

Between 9:30 AM and 5:00 PM—*Thursday 31 August*—I'm scheduled for a very full day, starting with Studs Terkel and ending out at a suburban newspaper chain in Arlington Heights. A nice start here, too. A.J. Budrys turns up on the noon TV show with me, and we manage to have lunch. Then starts the downhill slide. Even with a limo and driver I am barely making the very close connections, and by the time we get started to the 4:00 PM in Arlington Heights it is already 3:45, way down in the Loop, and pre-Labor Day escapees are jamming the Eisenhower Expressway. We don't make it. But then I have dinner with my favorite doctor of philosophy, who gets me to O'Hare in time for the flight to Phoenix. Martin Harry Greenberg is on the same flight by prearrangement, and we spend the long, hot hours talking about anthologies, courses and why we hate airplanes. I am beginning to sense fatigue setting in. This tour is the first of its sort I have ever done, but not unlike the couple for the State Department in Eastern Europe, or the *wanderzeit* in Japan. I wouldn't have missed any of them, even this one, for much treasure. But there is a physical limit to my tolerance for planes, trains and strange hotels. I am looking forward to the five-day break at the Worldcon.

What I am not going to do is write a con report. (But I would be lying if I said I didn't enjoy the hell out of it.) By now—*Friday 1 September to Tuesday 5 September*—I have been beating the tomtoms for more than two weeks, and echoes begin to come back. A dozen people say they saw, heard or read about the book in a dozen different places. Last Sunday the *Arizona Republican* ran a long interview—I haven't seen it, have no idea where they got it, but I expect it's part of the buildup. I turn on the radio Sunday morning to see what's happening with Hurricane Ella, and hear this guy blathering about SF, and through the magic of tape it turns out to be me. The process seems to be working. The bookstores I've gone to have all been moving books pretty well. That \$10,000 figure for cost for the tour begins to seem smaller when a sales rep points out that it would buy only one fair-sized ad in, say, *The New York Sunday Times Book Review*.

Why is it (apparently) working for *The Way the Future Was* when there has not ever seemed to be any relationship at all between publicity and sales on SF novels? I think I know, and there are two reasons. First, because *TWTFW* is factual, it gives a handle to an interviewer or a talk-show host. A novel doesn't. You can talk about a novel for maybe three minutes, maximum, before you are either reviewing it or giving the

plot away. The first turns off the audience. The other turns off the customers. With *TWTFW* the host has dozens of options. He can talk about what fandom is, nostalgia for the pulps, advice to writers, freezing, *Star Trek* or why I am so assy as not to believe in flying saucers. So I can do six shows in a city and have them all different, which I surely could not with a novel. Second, it's a matter of adjusting the pitch to the product. Same as in advertising. It makes sense to print a densely-set full page of text to sell an encyclopedia or a service. It doesn't to sell Coke. For that all you need to do is tell, or remind, the customers that it exists. SF novels are Coke, and if I were the agency handling my own account that's how I would do the selling: TV spot commercials, maybe, for the novels; the tour for the autobiography. . . . But all of this is right out of the bad old copysmithing days of Madison Avenue, which I thought were long behind me, and nowhere near what I conceive to be how I want to spend my time: namely writing. I've said it before and it's true: selling is addictive. And I suspect, from something Tom Dunne said, that St. Martin's PR is thinking about another tour when *Jem* comes out in April. I would be interesting to do it as a comparative study . . . but how much of this sin can a body commit before his

immortal soul is forfeit?

Meanwhile, I'm having a good con, though I wish I could get my hands on the volume controls and turn them down a little: about 20% lower temperature, about 50% fewer people and about 60% less Harlan. At the roast Ben Bova hobbles in on a cane, threatening reprisals because I broke his foot in Philadelphia. His own fault, of course. Why did he go to Philadelphia in the first place, if he didn't want his foot broken? When I leave, Hurricane Norman makes us three hours late getting into Seattle. The Busbys are two seats behind me in the plane, excusing my unsociability so that I can do some writing while we fly, and I am hoping to have a drink with them after we land. But an Alaskan school-teacher in the biggest thermal jacket I ever saw keeps me penned in my seat while Buz and Elinor are off and running as the plane taxis to its people-eater, and I never quite catch up. I get to the Washington Plaza around midnight and find a most unwelcome surprise.

Touring as a writer, your strings are pulled by a distant puppeteer. He makes the hotel and airline reservations, sets up interviews, arranges appearances, solves problems and holds the hand in crises. Until now my strings have been pulled by Dermot McEvoy, in Random

House's New York office. There have been a few jolts, maybe, but no disasters. All that is over. On the West Coast I am in the hands of something called Edye Rome, a Hollywood flack with bizarre notions. Sometimes she gives me the wrong address. Sometimes she gives me the wrong time. Sometimes she leaves impossibly short intervals to get from one date to another, and always—*a/ways!*—she feeds me schedules late, and a scrap at a time. At midnight in Seattle I learn for the first time what I am to do the next day—up till four o'clock in the afternoon, after which nothing. At dinnertime in Portland, I get the next morning's itinerary. The climax is when I check in at the old Sheraton-Palace in San Francisco, and there's *nothing*. So every morning I get up half an hour early to call Dermot on the long-distance phone. In Seattle I complain, in Portland I whimper and by San Francisco I yell. Dermot tells me she's fired. That calms me some. Fired is some satisfaction, although actually at that moment I would have preferred to see her dead. Fortunately, the people I am supposed to see are unanimously decent and forthcoming about it all, and one way or another I make every show.

Walking back to my hotel in Seattle—Wednesday 6 September—this Mercedes pulls up next to me, and some

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woman leans out and tries to pick me up. On closer look, it's Bev Herbert. Frank is next to her, behind the wheel, making the day a real pleasure—even if it only lasts for a five-minute chat, because we're all caught on the hop. The more I see of Seattle, the better I like it. Out of my hotel window I see the bay, and some kind of curious three-way race going on with a blimp, a hydrofoil and a speedboat. They circle around together for a while and then zap off across the bay. (The hydrofoil is an easy win, blimp last.) Behind us are the mountains, and there are nice things in the city itself, including a monorail. The Herberts invite me out to the house next time around, and my private plan is to move in, dig in my heels and dare them to evict me.

But Portland's got a lot going for it, too, and so has San Francisco. In Portland—*Thursday 7 September*—

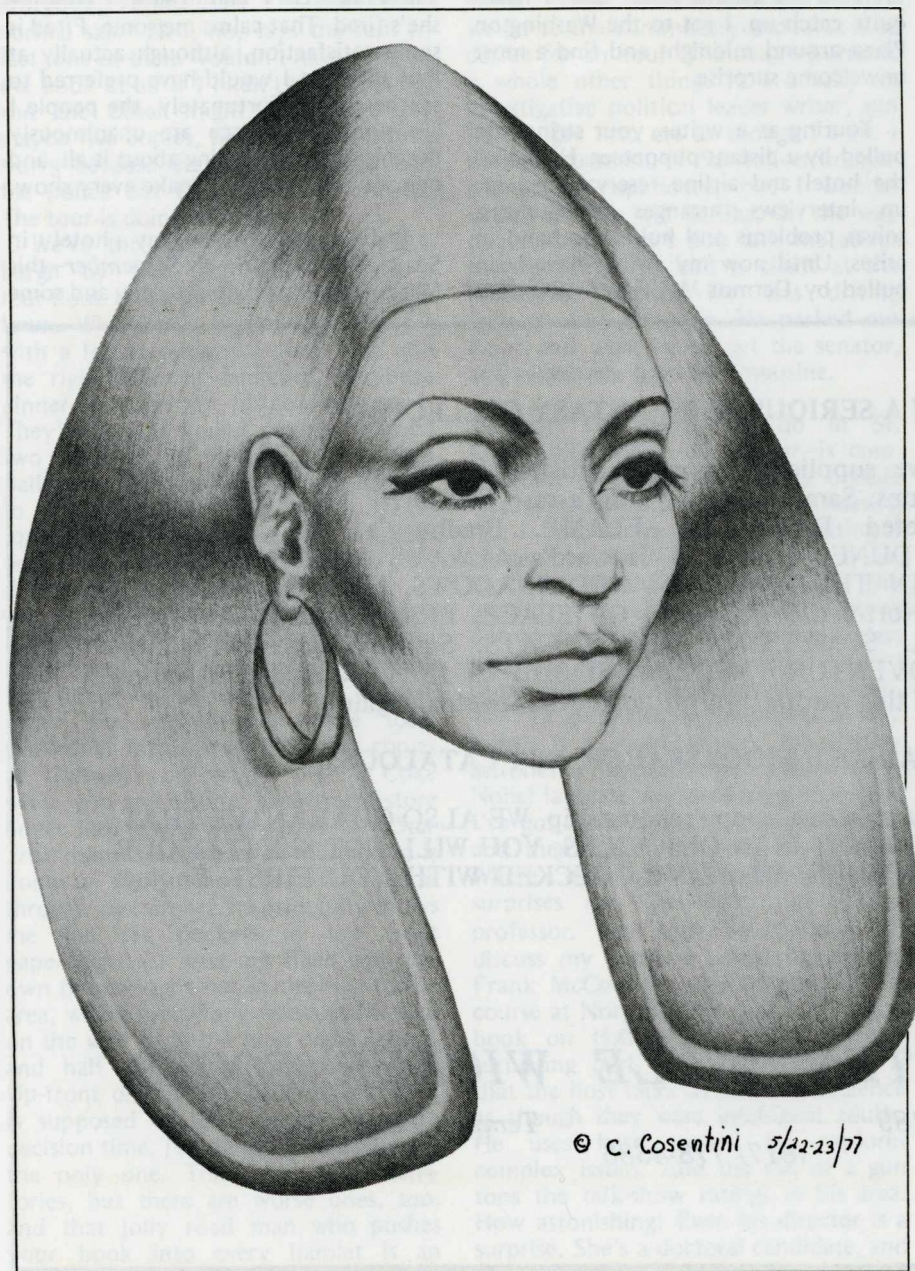
Donna Haines and Margaret Larrance, teacher-students from Jim Gunn's U-Kansas course back in July, meet me and take me out to lunch; in San Francisco—*Friday-Sunday, 8-10 September*—I get to see Frank Robinson and Malcolm Edwards at bookstores, and have dinner with *Locus*'s Charlie Brown and a couple of his glamorous all-female staff, known locally as Charlie's Angels. In San Diego—*Monday 11 September*—DeWayne White of the SF Bookstore keeps me company for part of the tour, and we talk about autographing parties. There is a science to them. Publicity: putting posters in the stores, letting local SF groups and people know about it. Timing: It varies from store to store, Saturday afternoon in many, Sunday night in a few, weekday lunch-times for a college campus. There are stores where an autographing makes great sense—Sherry

Gottlieb whips the customers into line most expertly in *A Change of Hobbit*—and some where it is a waste of time. (The high-traffic paperback outlets in airports and bus and train stations never see the same customers twice.) What autographing is not is a way to get rich. I doubt that it ever happens that the royalties on the books an author signs in his ninety minutes in a store equal the price of the words he could produce in the same time at home. (But one can't write all the time. . . .)

And the next morning—*Tuesday 12 September*—I wake up in the Beverly-Hilton and realize that this is the last day! There are a couple other cities to visit later on, but one at a time, in connection with lecture dates over the next month or so. I am going to stay over an extra day, to go to the party Craig Miller is throwing and to take care of some other business, like seeing my agent to find out what's happening with my two TV projects. (One of them will actually be on the air on Thursday.) But the back of the trip is broken: five studios, one bookstore and one newspaper interview and I am through!

I get out of the cab at Hollywood and Vine, because I'm early for my next date. One of the things that has always bothered me about Los Angeles is that I've never been able to walk around it—the distances are too vast, the time always too short. I perceive that all of my three remaining appointments are reasonably close together, and, moreover, that they stretch more or less toward my hotel. So I walk from one to the other, and after the last one walk back to the Beverly-Hilton, having covered the distance from Hollywood and Vine to Wilshire and Santa Monica Boulevard on foot; and that night I sleep the sleep of the just.

—Frederik Pohl

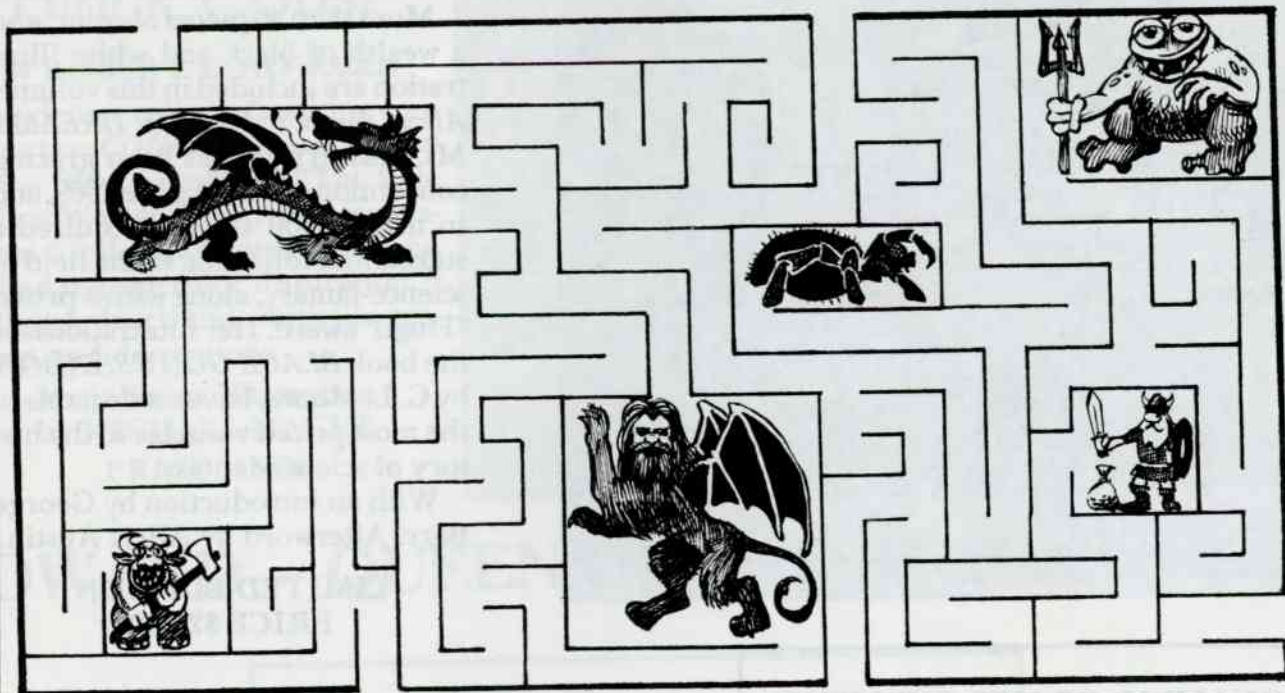




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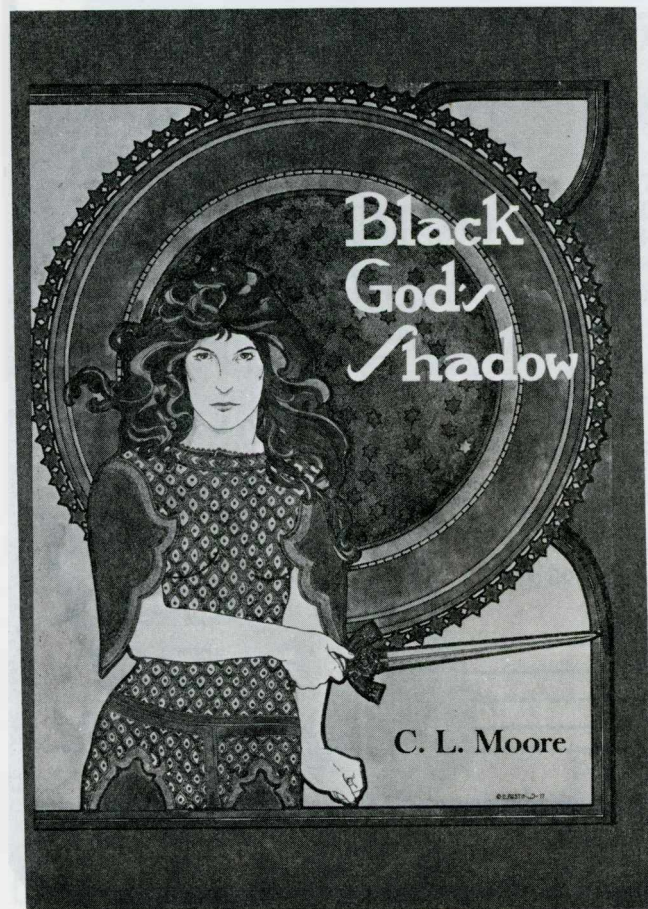
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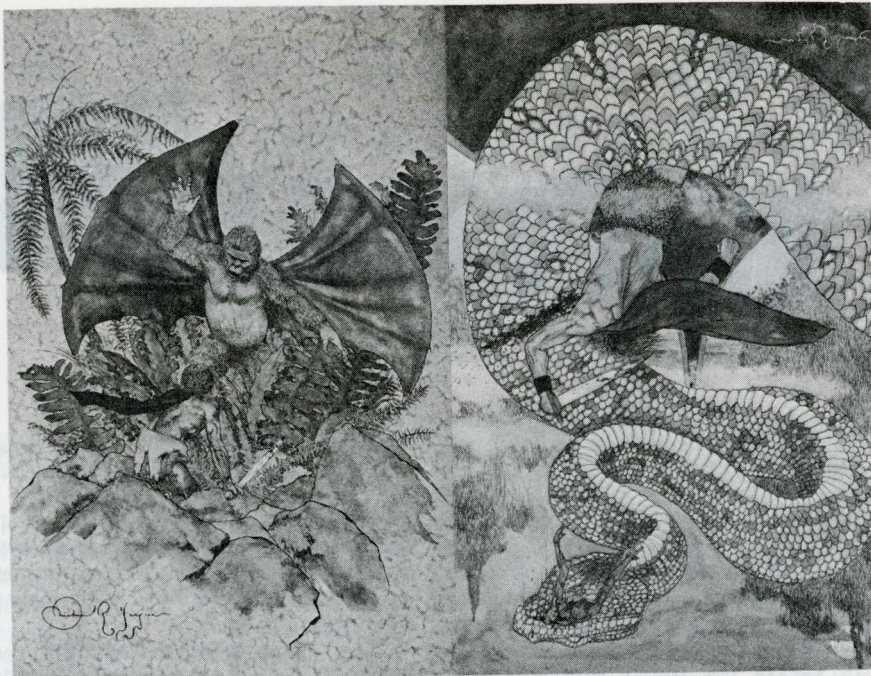
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SCIENCE FICTION AND

In 1902 a short, bright, aggressive young writer who had recently made a reputation with several books that were then called scientific romances gave a talk before the Royal Institution entitled "The Discovery of the Future." The writer was Herbert George Wells and his talk symbolized a new way of thinking about the nature of existence and man's control over his own destiny.

Until the Industrial Revolution, to the average citizen, the future did not exist in the sense we understand the word. There were, to be sure, days and seasons yet to come, but they were no different from those that already had been experienced. For most of the history of humanity, the future represented only more of the same: the procession of the seasons marked by planting, growth, harvest, and decay; the stages of life represented by birth, youth, maturity, old age, and death. Change in those cycles was to be avoided; the only change was for the worse: flood, drouth, blight, starvation, taxation, pillage; accident, disability, disease, plague, murder, war. . . .

Small wonder that for most of humanity's existence it has not looked forward but backward to a better time: to the Christian Garden of Eden or to the Greek Golden Age.

The Middle Ages is our image of humanity without a future. We see the gloom of the Dark Ages lifting for a brief period of technological advancement from the 11th to the 13th centuries and the Renaissance revival of Greek and Roman literature, art, and philosophy only to descend again with the end of good weather, the Hundred Years' War, the Black Death, and a rebirth of mysticism.

The growing scientific enlightenment symbolized by Galileo and Newton and the upsurge in invention symbolized by James Watt's improvement of the steam engine brought chemical energy and ingenious machines to the tasks of humanity. They also brought great

changes in the social structure of western society, in the condition of humanity, and in the way in which it looked at the future.

One major influence on the condition of humanity was growing affluence—affluence based not on conquest or slave labor but upon chemical energy and machines. At first, perhaps, it did not look like affluence, but the poor recognized it. As C.P. Snow pointed out in his 1959 "Two Cultures" lecture, "with singular unanimity, in any country where they have had the chance, the poor have walked off the land into the factories as fast as the factories would take them."

As important as affluence, however, was the introduction of change itself into human affairs, change that for the first time was caused by humanity's efforts to improve its lot; change became a matter of choice rather than of chance, evil spirits, or providence. Science fiction was humanity's literary response not only to the perception that science and technology had become important in human affairs but to the fact of change. The future, where change occurs, became its peculiar province.

The first novel of the future was a book published anonymously in 1763, *The Reign of King George VI, 1900-1925*. It is not considered science fiction because it foresaw no change in technology, in spite of the fact that it was written only two years before Watt produced his remarkable improvement of the Newcomen steam engine. A book that did describe the technological and scientific marvels of the 26th century was Louis Sebastien Mercier's *Memoirs of the Year Two Thousand Five Hundred*, published in French in 1770 and in English the following year, but it was a utopian novel.

A more important work than either was Edgar Allan Poe's "Mellonta Tauta," an 1848 story about a voyage in 2848 by powered balloon; the story not only recognized change, it was about

change.

Meanwhile, the young wife-to-be of Percy Bysshe Shelley, had written a gothic novel about a scientist's attempt to reanimate a creature put together from parts of corpses; it was, of course, *Frankenstein*, published in 1818, and other writers such as Baizac, Hawthorne, Bulwer-Lytton, Fitz-James O'Brien, Edward Everett Hale, H. Rider Haggard, and Mark Twain were writing about immortality, mesmerism, utopias, microscopic life, artificial satellites, lost races, time travel, and television.

But the major influence on the growing public concern about the future and with the literature of change was a Frenchman named Jules Verne. Out of a Victorian fascination with geography and exploration, with technology and invention, he fashioned adventure novels that he called "voyages extraordinaires." Not only did he spread the popularity of the new literature, with Verne life began to imitate art: scientists and explorers such as Igor Sikorsky, speleologist Norman Casteret, Admiral Byrd, Lucius Beebe, Marconi, and Santos-Dumont credited Verne with inspiring their achievements. After a flight to the South Pole, Admiral Byrd said, "It was Jules Verne who launched me on this trip," and submarine developer Simon Lake began his autobiography with the words, "Jules Verne was in a sense the director-general of my life."

Verne seldom dealt with any technology, with any invention, that wasn't clearly possible—typically, the submarine he celebrated in *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea* had been invented by Robert Fulton, who tried to build a working vessel for the French government between 1797 and 1805; his best he called "the Nautilus," and Verne used the same name for Nemo's submarine.

Verne's successor as the standard-bearer for the new genre was unconcerned with practicability. H.G. Wells, who was called "the English Jules Verne" and resented it as much as

THE FUTURE

James Gunn

Verne did, wrote about time machines, creation of manlike animals through vivisection, invisibility, invasion by Martians, and a trip to the moon by means of antigravity.

Verne wrote about Wells's work: "I make use of physics. He invents. I go to the moon in a cannon-ball discharged from a cannon. Here there is no invention. He goes to Mars [sic] in an air-ship, which he constructs of a metal which does away with the law of gravitation. That's all very well, but show me this metal. Let him produce it."

Wells traced his influences not to science—though he derived considerable inspiration from his scientific education, particularly under Thomas H. Huxley, who taught him biology and passed along his notions of evolution—but to Swift, his system of ideas, and his satirical vision of humanity. Although later science fiction writers would often model their work after Verne's celebration of technology and adventure, Wells's purer concern for ideas would eventually triumph.

Science fiction evolved through the all-fiction pulp magazines of the late 19th and early 20th centuries before the first all-science-fiction magazine, *Amazing Stories*, was created by Hugo Gernsback, a publisher of popular science magazines, in 1926; three years later he created the word "science fiction" to describe what he was going to publish in a new magazine called *Wonder Stories*. In its evolution, science fiction adopted a variety of fictional modes—the adventure story, for instance, and the romance—but it became purest, most typical, when it dealt with ideas worked out in human terms.

These ideas were most credible when they were placed in the future. As late as the early 20th century, writers could be convincing about undiscovered islands or unexplored regions of Africa or Antarctica; soon, however, the only place where strange and unknown events could logically take place was the future—it became a kind of undiscovered island protected by the impassable sea of time. In the process of writing about the future—that undiscovered

island—science fiction would seem to be involved in prediction. Not so.

If not with prediction, then, what is science fiction's concern? Science fiction writers would reply that they deal not with *the* future but one of many futures, not with probability but with possibility, not with gadgets but with people adjusting to change.

Frederik Pohl has seen many of the "predictions" come true made in the classic novel he wrote with Cyril Kornbluth in 1952, *The Space Merchants*. Overpopulation, pollution, destruction of fresh-water resources—all of these and more have come to pass while the central warning of the novel, that the advertising industry may take over the world, has not.

Pohl points out that prediction "in itself is neither particularly useful nor particularly interesting. . . . The ability to change the future around to our own best advantage implies that the future isn't fixed. Which in turn implies that it cannot be predicted. Which, in turn, leads to the discovery that the only kind of prediction of the future that is of any real use to us is either one which is incomplete—so that we have an unpredicted area of freedom in which to operate—or unreliable, so that we can do something that will change it.

"If we visit a tea-leaf reader's storefront and learn from her that as we walk out the door and cross the street we will be hit and killed by a runaway truck, we have gained very little. It is only if we learn that such a danger exists, *but is not inevitable*, that we can be warned of the danger in time to avert it."

And so it is with science fiction. The least interesting kind of science fiction, though that which attracts the most attention from the public, is the kind that centers around some predictable invention. For years science fiction—going back to Wells—dealt with space travel and atomic bombs, both of which have been realized, both, along with other warnings, giving credence to Isaac Asimov's comment that "science fiction is an escape into reality."

The science fiction writer, as John Brunner has printed on his business card, deals in futures. And in the

process of speculating about what may happen, in the process of thinking through the problems that the process of change, in all its possible permutations, will bring to human lives, in the process of writing entertaining stories about the predicaments in which people will find themselves in the future, they may occasionally stumble across something that will actually happen.

It has occurred to me a time or two.

But that is not our purpose. What science fiction turns out to be, besides entertainment, is a laboratory in which we can test futures for human habitability. What it presents for avoidance, as in George Orwell's *1984*, is the dystopia. What it hopes for is the utopia, which Wells said in 1906 should be the distinctive method of sociology. What it cautions against is the lack of foresight that will allow the dystopia to be created, or the wrong decision today that will bring it about tomorrow.

But perhaps the most important function of science fiction is to naturalize the future, to remove the natural fear that humanity feels for the unknown, to present the alien as at least endurable and perhaps even acceptable. With science fiction, "future shock," as Alvin Toffler said in his book by that name, no longer need be a disease brought about "by the premature arrival of the future." The science fiction reader loves the future; he reads science fiction because it does not arrive soon enough.

In his 1902 speech about "The Discovery of the Future," Wells described a new kind of mind, constructive, creative, organizing, which "sees the world as one great workshop, and the present as no more than material for the future, for the thing that is yet destined to be."

If the future-oriented mind is given freedom to express itself, Wells saw a magnificent promise for humanity. "All this world is heavy with the promise of greater things, and a day will come, one day in the unending succession of days, when beings who are now latent in our thoughts and hidden in our loins, shall stand upon this earth as one stands upon a footstool and shall laugh and reach out their hands amidst the stars."

—James Gunn

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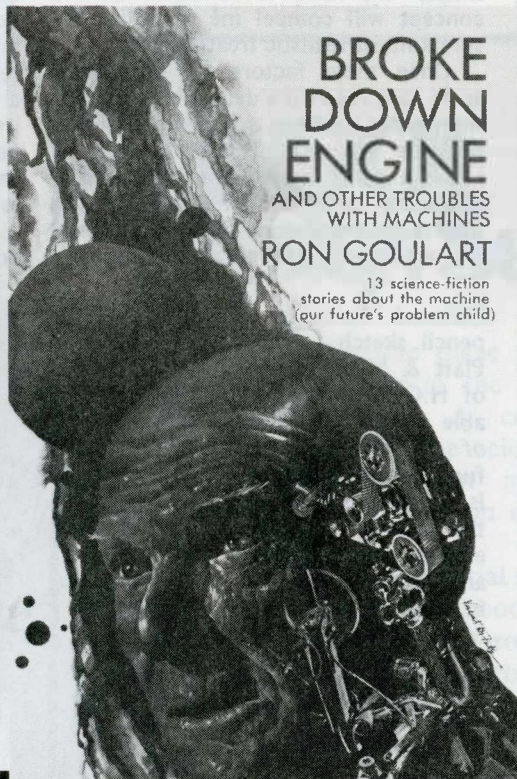
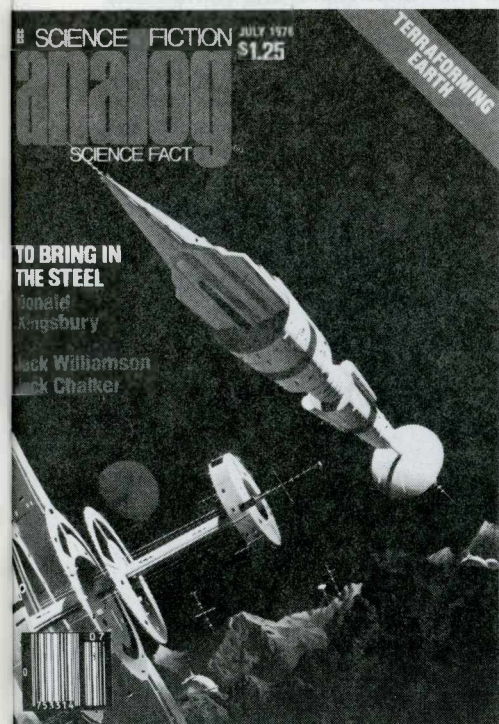
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THE EVOLUTION OF A SCIENCE FICTION COVER PAINTING, Part One

The process begins with the careful reading of a manuscript and the taking of notes. When I have an extra xerox copy at my disposal which need not be returned to the publisher, I will underline the various descriptive passages and key action scenes and isolate perhaps a dozen pages of the manuscript for first hand reference. From the notes or underlined pages I will focus on the scenes or elements which best capture the essence of the book and will then proceed to work up thumbnail sketches in the page margins. The thumbnails are basically rough scribbles designed to determine the break up of areas in the art and the elements are indicated as schematic blobs, often based on the silhouette shapes of what the actual objects will look like. At this point what I am most interested in determining is whether or not the key scenes can even be translated into pictorial form, and if not, what modifications of the author's concept will enable me to produce an effective cover painting. Unless *specifically instructed* by the editorial staff to do otherwise, I will always make an earnest attempt to portray the elements

SKETCHES: VINCENT DIFATE



The three basic categories of SF art are the gadget painting (left) as exemplified by this painting of the solar-powered freighter *C.L. Moore* for Don Kingsbury's novelette, "To Bring in the Steel" in *Analog*, July 1978; the character in the scientific environment as illustrated by the portrait of Dr. Clockwork (center) for the dust jacket of Ron Goulart's

Broke Down Engine and Other Troubles with Machines, Macmillan, 1971; and finally, the symbolic/surrealism approach used for the portrayal of an angelic alien (right) for the recent reissue of Ray Cummings' *A Brand New World*, Ace, 1977.

in the story as the author describes them.

For those of you who have been reading this column regularly, you may have already perceived that I generally tend to break science fiction art down into three basic categories. Of course, there are numerous variations of these basic concepts that can be made, but the three essential divisions are as follows: (1) the gadget painting in which the principal element is a spaceship or machine of some sort, (2) the character in the scientific environment, wherein the focus is shifted from the scientific or technological elements to the human or alien characters who are interacting with them, and (3) the surrealistic or symbol cover painting which need not have any scientific elements at all.

Which of these three approaches I will eventually use in order to produce a cover painting for a particular book will be determined either by editorial directive or by my own personal reaction to the book in consideration. While no active illustrator is above making mistakes, particularly when one considers the volume of work which must be done in order to make a living in the paperback field, let me hasten to add that bad cover art is most often the result of having too many hands pushing the paintbrush. I am not simply passing the buck, I assure you. When essentially non-visual people (such as editors as opposed to art directors) insist upon taking a major role in determining the specifics of a cover painting, the results can only be disastrous. For those of you who have long held the belief that illustrators seem to have enormous deficiencies in their ability to understand what they have read, let me shatter that mistaken belief once and for all. Not only are gross misinterpretations of books frequently and purposely perpetrated against the book consuming public, but artwork is often purchased out of portfolios on speculation in the hope that a book will come up for which such art will be appropriate, and cover art is sometimes arbitrarily shifted around, like so many extra pairs of shoes. The industry wide rationale for these peculiar happenings to those disgruntled and disillusioned readers angered enough to write to them is that the cover art is the "artist's interpretation" of events or elements in the book. To those who work in the industry the rational is—what does it matter, so long as the book delivers. I can almost agree with that, but I ask you, in an industry where numbers have come to mean more than literary merit, how likely are you to come across a "good read" when the cover art is all you have to go by? As the large communications conglomerates swiftly devour the small publishing organizations before our very eyes,

the likelihood of a return to honesty in book packaging sharply diminishes.

But, enough of these ramblings, let's continue with the matter of concept selection. If the main factor of the story is the fabulous faster-than-light spaceship or the machine which converts matter into energy, then the gadget approach is called for. If the story contains especially good characterizations or if the characters themselves are fantastic focus of the narrative (such as the alien who pancakes to earth in the middle of Central Park, or even the robot who evolves human emotions) then, of course, the "character in the scientific environment" approach is used. The third category is a bit harder to pin down. Generally, what once passed for "new wave" science fiction is where I will use this treatment. Style may be the determining factor, but not always. Content, such as the illusion machine described in *The Ganymede Takeover* by Ray Nelson and Philip K. Dick, may help determine the use of this approach. Extreme negativism or the prediction of trends which violate contemporary moral and social patterns will often suggest the surrealistic approach because of surrealism's unique ability to unnerve the viewer by juxtaposing otherwise unrelated elements to startling effect. Or sometimes, simply the need to revitalize an old concept will compel me to utilize the symbolic/surrealistic treatment.

Once these factors are considered and I have reached a determination as to the proper treatment, I then proceed to produce a sketch. The sketch can be either a pencil drawing or a painting in miniature and will indicate all the information necessary for the editorial and art departments to make a decision

Pictured here is a pencil sketch for the Platt & Munk reissue of H.G. Wells' venerable classic, *The War of the Worlds*. The function of the sketch is to show the client the choice of story elements, composition and colors to be used in the finished art. Since this sketch is only black and white, the colors are indicated by name in the margin notations.



as to whether or not I should proceed to finish. Specifically, the sketch (or sketches, depending on how many picture concepts the story contains) should show composition, the selection of elements and the colors to be used.

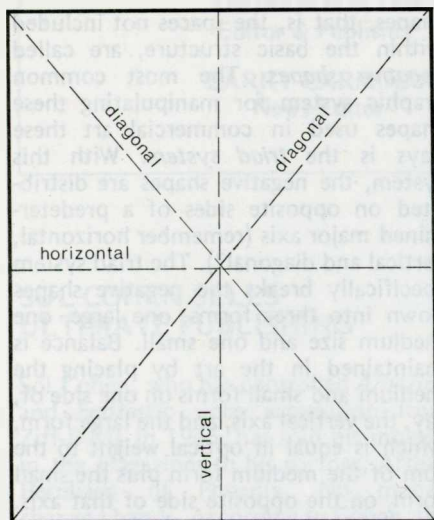
Since the selection of elements is such a highly subjective matter, let's consider the remaining factors in the sketch, composition and color.

COMPOSITION

Composition is the science of arranging the elements of an artistic work so as to carry the viewer's eye through the painting and focus its attention on the most important element(s). The element(s) of greatest importance is called the *center of interest* and does not necessarily have to appear in the exact physical center of the picture. In fact, it is most often desirable that the important element(s) *not* be placed in the exact center, for reasons which I hope will become apparent as we proceed.

Those of you with some art background, please understand that I am simplifying this complex aspect of picture making for the sake of those without special knowledge of, or interest in, the subtleties of the artist's craft.

Basically there are two major types of composition, formal and informal. In order to understand the differences between these two compositional approaches, let's establish some basic reference points and terms. The picture area, that is, the picture as it extends to its outermost dimensions, is called the *field*. The field is divided into symmetrical areas by imaginary axes which serve as reference points. Not so complicated, really. For example, the axis running horizontally through the exact physical



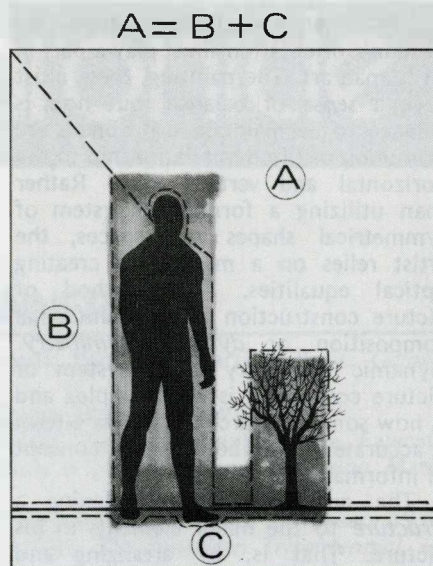
The major reference guides in picture making.

center of the field is called the *horizontal axis*. Running down vertically and cutting the field again through its center is the *vertical axis*. Running from each of the opposing corners and dividing the field into identical triangular shapes are the two *diagonal axes*. Simple enough, isn't it.

FORMAL COMPOSITION: Formal composition is a method of picture making whereby the elements are distributed uniformly across the field. That is to say that for each element placed on one side of any given axis, an

element of equal *optical weight* must be placed on the other side of that axis in the corresponding location. This type of composition is also called *static symmetry* because of its absolute adherence to the principle of uniform distribution. It is most often used in instances requiring great formality, such as religious paintings and that most formal of all modern subjects, the liquor ad. You may also have seen an occasional stately monolith being portrayed by a box of breakfast cereal or a package of cigarettes. The grotesque irony of it all depends on your point of view. For me, cirrhosis of the liver, malnutrition and death by cancer have always seemed to be subjects demanding serious consideration.

INFORMAL COMPOSITION: Balance has always been a crucial factor in picture making and the maintenance of balance relates, on its most basic level, to man and his orientation to his environment. Man stands upright on the flat plane of the earth. It is an unspoken law that the artist must carry that orientation into the field. This, of course, relates most often to representational works, but the principles of balance can be applied to abstract art as well. Let us not forget also, that the artist might set out deliberately to create an image which will disorient and confuse the viewer, but, always, regard-



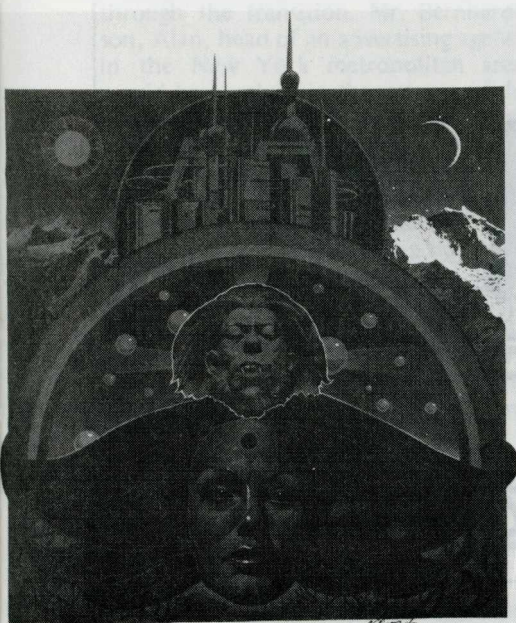
The "L" shape is a fairly common compositional structure used in the informal approach. In this particular situation the tree is actually the center of interest, while the man functions as a framing and focusing element (he's looking *at* the tree, thus he helps to direct our attention toward it). The diagonal axis is used as the basis for the triadic breakup of the negative spaces, but in this instance, the vertical axis would also have yielded an effective triad.

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This painting for the cover of Marta Randall's novel *A City in the North*, is an example of formal composition. Except for irregularities in the towers protruding above the upper edge of the painting's border, the art could be cut in half through its vertical axis and both halves would be congruent.

less of the artist's intentions, awareness of man's orientation must play a part in all human art. The painting, then, must have a sense of balance, but how is balance to be maintained if objects are in motion or tilted in relationship to the horizontal and vertical axes? Rather than utilizing a formalized system of symmetrical shapes and spaces, the artist relies on a method of creating optical equalities. This method of picture construction is called informal composition or *dynamic symmetry*. Dynamic symmetry as a system of picture composing is very complex and is now somewhat archaic, but as a term it accurately describes the basic concept of informal design.

The artist begins by assigning a *structure* to the major elements in his picture. That is, by arranging and designing the silhouette shapes of the major elements, he produces a structure based on a geometric or letter shape. For instance, a man standing upright on level ground, looking at a tree or house in the distance will form a structural shape resembling the capital letter "L."

The main shaft being the upright figure of the man and the counterbalance, the shorter upright shaft at the end of the "L" represents the distant object at which the man is looking. In formal composition too, a structure is essential and for that type of picture construction the artist utilizes more symmetrical forms such as circles, isosceles or equilateral triangles, or uniform letter shapes such as "T"s or "H"s (cut a "T" down the middle and you get two inverted "L"s, cut an "H" in half and you get two horizontal "T"s).

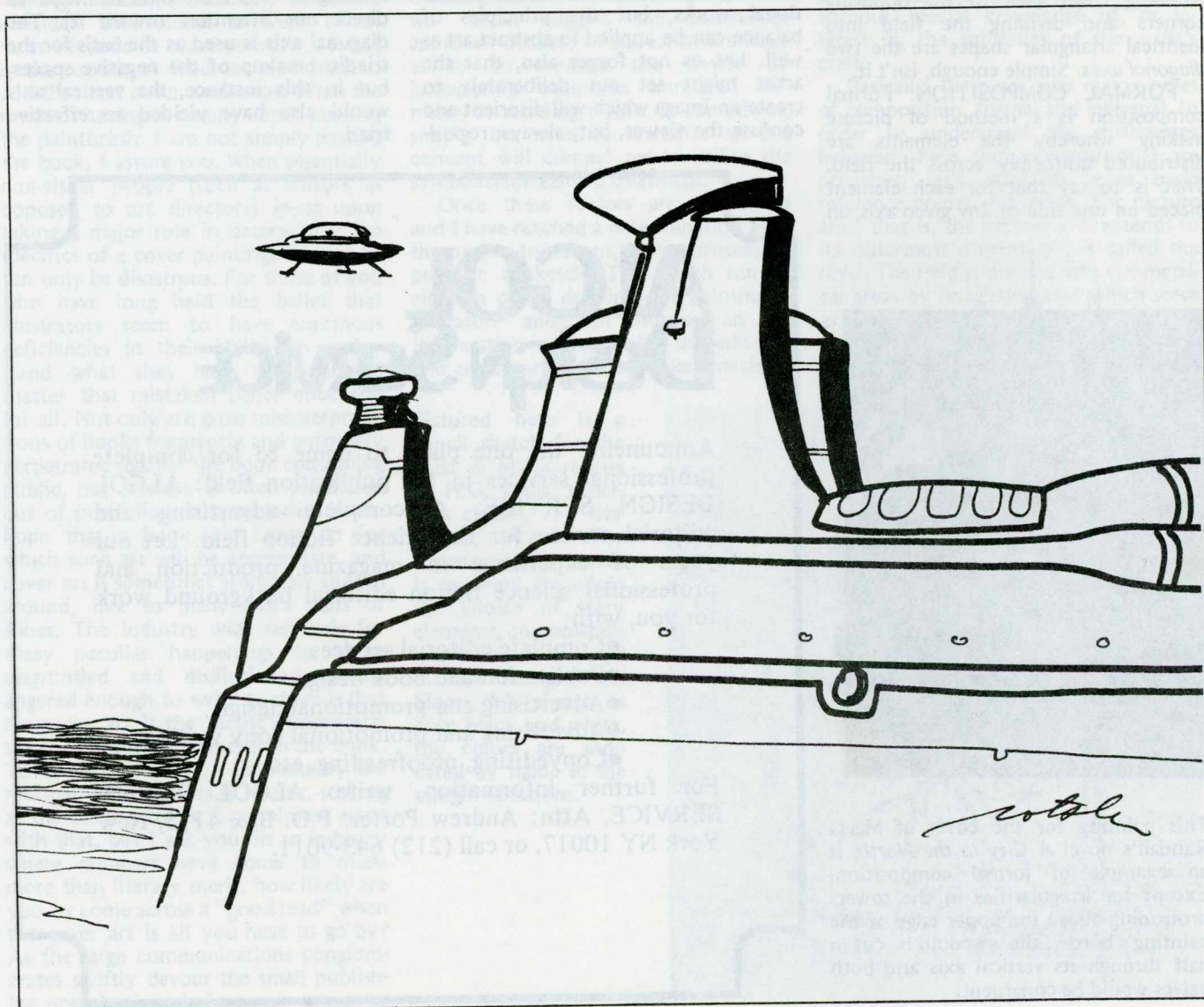
Okay, so now we've got a structure, but how do we know which are the major elements. The major or *primary elements* in illustrative art tell us *who* and *what*. For instance, Flash Gordon punching out the Emperor Ming. The *secondary elements* tell us *when* and *where*. Late afternoon on the planet Mongo.

Once the structure is determined the idea now is to arrange that structure in such a way as to create an interesting variety of shapes with the remaining spaces in the field. These remaining

shapes, that is, the spaces not included within the basic structure, are called *negative shapes*. The most common graphic system for manipulating these shapes used in commercial art these days is the *triad system*. With this system, the negative shapes are distributed on opposite sides of a predetermined major axis (remember horizontal, vertical and diagonal?). The triad system specifically breaks the negative shapes down into three forms, one large, one medium size and one small. Balance is maintained in the art by placing the medium and small forms on one side of, say, the vertical axis, and the large form, which is equal in optical weight to the sum of the medium form plus the small form, on the opposite side of that axis. Got that?

I think I've given you enough to ponder for the time being, so tune in next time for part two of "The Evolution of a Science Fiction Cover Painting." And you thought painting pictures was such a cinch. Shame on you.

—Vincent DiFate



ANDREW PORTER
Editor & Publisher

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S.F. chronicle

SOL COHEN SELLS ULTIMATE PUBLISHING

Sol Cohen, who has controlled *Amazing* and *Fantastic* since acquisition from Ziff-Davis in 1965, has sold his interest in the magazines to his partner, Arthur Bernhard of Phoenix. No money changed hands. According to Cohen, the final papers were signed at the end of September. Cohen plans to retire from publishing after a career spanning more than forty years. He will remain a consultant to the new publishers during the transition, however.

Arthur Bernhard, who publishes other magazines, none in the SF field, said he had been in contact with Ted White and others about the status of the magazines. He is presently studying financial and other papers involved in the transaction, and will not reach a decision on new editorial directions until the end of the year. Ted White, who has been editor of both magazines for ten years, says he is committed to staying with the new owners at least through the transition. Mr. Bernhard's son, Alan, head of an advertising agency in the New York metropolitan area, would be involved in the running of the magazines, probably as publisher. Some possibilities for developing the properties include sales to TV based on rights held. Mr. Bernhard stated, in reference to difficulties with individual writers and the SFWA, that he would not be ashamed to reprint stories, in which he held all legal rights, without additional payment to writers. Mr. Bernhard plans to consult with SFWA president Jack Williamson over difficulties between the publisher and SFWA. □

ATHENEUM MERGES WITH SCRIBNER'S, PLANS SF PROGRAM

Atheneum Books recently announced plans to merge with Charles Scribner's Sons. Under the plans, Atheneum books will be sold by the Scribner sales force, rather than by commissioned reps as in the past. Otherwise, editorial functions of the two companies will remain separate, with merging only of business functions like accounting and shipping. The merged publisher will retain sep-

1978 HUGO WINNERS

Best Novel: Winner: *Gateway* by Frederik Pohl (St. Martin's Press; *Galaxy*, November 1976 to March 1977)

2. *The Forbidden Tower* by Marion Zimmer Bradley (DAW Books)
3. *Lucifer's Hammer* by Larry Niven & Jerry Pournelle (Playboy Press, Fawcett)

Best Novella: Winner: "Stardance" by Spider & Jeanne Robinson (*Analog*, March 1977)

2. "In the Hall of the Martian Kings" by John Varley (*F&SF*, February 1977)
3. "Aztecs" by Vonda N. McIntyre (*2076: The American Tricentennial*, ed. Edward Bryant, Pyramid)

Best Novelette: Winner: "Eyes of Amber" by Joan D. Vinge (*Analog*, June 1977)

2. "Ender's Game" by Orson Scott Card (*Analog*, August 1977)
3. "The Screwfly Solution" by Raccoona Sheldon (*Analog*, June 1977)

Best Short Story: Winner: "Jeffty Is Five" by Harlan Ellison (*F&SF*, July 1977)

2. "Air Raid" by John Varley (as Herb Boehm, *Isaac Asimov's Science Fiction Magazine*, Spring 1977)
3. "Dog Day Evening" by Spider Robinson (*Analog*, October 1977)

Best Dramatic Presentation: Winner: *Star Wars* (Twentieth Century Fox)

2. *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* (Columbia Pictures)
3. "Blood! The Life and Future Times of Jack the Ripper" by Robert Bloch & Harlan Ellison (Alternate World Recordings)

Best Professional Artist: Winner: Rick Sternbach

2. Frank Kelly Freas
3. Stephen Fabian

Best Professional Editor: Winner: George H. Scithers

2. Edward L. Ferman
3. Ben Bova

Best Amateur Magazine: Winner: *Locus* edited by Charles & Dena Brown

2. *Science Fiction Review* edited by Richard E. Geis
3. *Janus* edited by Janice Bogstad & Jeanne Gomoll

Best Fan Writer: Winner: Richard E. Geis

2. Susan Wood
3. No Award

Best Fan Artist: Winner: Phil Foglio

2. Grant Canfield
3. Alexis Gilliland

The John W. Campbell Award: Winner: Orson Scott Card ("Ender's Game," *Analog*, August 1977)

2. Stephen R. Donaldson (*Lord Foul's Bane*, Holt, 1977)
3. Jack L. Chalker (*A Jungle of Stars*, Ballantine, 1976)

The Gandalf Award for Grand Master of Fantasy: Winner: Poul Anderson

2. Ursula K. Le Guin

The Gandalf Award for the Best Book-Length Fantasy: Winner: *The Silmarillion* by J.R.R. Tolkien (edited by Christopher Tolkien, Houghton Mifflin)

2. *Our Lady of Darkness* by Fritz Leiber (Berkley, published as *The Pale Brown Thing*, *F&SF* January-February 1977)
3. *Lord Foul's Bane* by Stephen R. Donaldson (Holt)

1246 final ballots were counted; only in the dramatic presentation category did the winner achieve a majority on the first count; and only in the Amateur Magazine, Fan Writer, and Fan Artist categories did No Award place above sixth place, achieving respectively 12%, 16%, and 14% of the votes cast.

Total number of votes cast in each category: Novel: 1130; Novella: 1048; Novelette: 1007; Short Story: 1042; Dramatic Presentation: 1220; Professional Artist: 1078; Professional Editor: 1150; Amateur Magazine: 958; Fan Writer: 903; Fan Artist: 868; John W. Campbell Award: 990; Grand Master: 1147; Book-Length Fantasy: 1030. □

arate editorial offices initially. Atheneum has a ten year lease on space in the Chanin Building in the Grand Central area, and Scribner's is reluctant to move from above the famous Scribner's Bookstore on upper Fifth Avenue.

Despite gaining distribution of Richard Garrison's *Heritage Press* last September, Atheneum children's book editor Jean Karl says that Atheneum will launch its own SF list in Spring 1979. Atheneum has long been a publisher of quality children's fantasy

including books by Le Guin, McCaffrey, Norton and McKillip. The new list will continue to originate in the children's book department, with a broader market characterization as Young Adult and Adult books. They will be listed in the Adult catalog as well. Writers interested in submitting mss. should query Jean Karl, Atheneum, 122 East 42nd Street, New York, NY 10017. □

CTV NETWORK SCRAPS THINGS TO COME PLANS

Canadian CTV network's multi-million

dollar plans to turn H.G. Wells' *The Shape of Things to Come* into a 24 episode TV series have been scrapped, Toronto sources report. CTV's plans for the SF series, if realized, would have made it a credible programming producer and alternative to the US networks. Reason for cancellation was the cost, network executives claimed. After the dust of cancellations and show changes settled, only five of sixteen new prime-time shows on the network are Canadian, none SF. □

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S.F. chronicle

DAVID HARTWELL NEW SF EDITOR AT POCKET BOOKS

David Hartwell, SF editor at Berkley Books since 1973, left that company at the end of October to join Pocket Books. Prior to joining Berkley he was SF Consulting Editor at NAL. He also served as editor of *COSMOS SF*. Jon Silbersack, Hartwell's assistant for the past 6 months, will be interim SF editor at Berkley. Silbersack, a long-time SF reader, is a graduate of Brown University, where he taught a course in science fiction. As *ALGOL* went to press, no other details were available.



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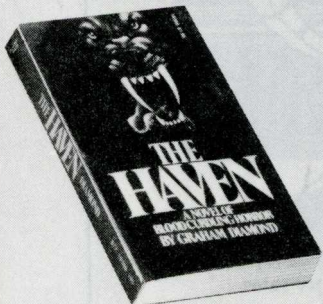
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LUPOFF'S BOOK WEEK

BY RICHARD LUPOFF

DYING OF THE LIGHT, by George R.R. Martin. \$9.95. 365 pp. 1977. Simon and Schuster.

A DIFFERENT LIGHT, by Elizabeth A. Lynn. \$1.75. 183 pp. 1978. Berkley Books.

MORTAL GODS, by Jonathan Fast. \$8.95. 153 pp. 1978. Harper & Row.

I AM NOT THE OTHER HOUDINI, by Michael Conner. 186 pp. 1978. Harper & Row.

We have here four first science fiction novels—or almost four firsts. The blurb material on Jonathan Fast says that *Mortal Gods* is his second novel. I don't know whether the previous one was science fiction. In fact, it escaped my notice altogether, and but for the flap copy on *Mortal Gods* I'd have thought this a first novel.

Dying of the Light very definitely is "Railroad" Martin's first novel, although he is by no means a new writer. He's been doing SF short stories for some years: enough to have won him considerable reputation, a couple of collections, and a price for *Dying of the Light* that is, I believe, a record for a first novel published within our category.

The book starts promisingly enough. A favorite theme of Martin's, in his shorter fiction, has been the bittersweet encounters of former lovers. True to form, the hero of *Dying of the Light*, Dirk t'Larien, receives a summons from his ex-sweetheart, Gwen Delvano. She is married to another man now, a Kavalat (cavalier?), and in the Kavalat culture the "family unit" is normally a triad of husband, wife, and husband's male-friend. (I've always wondered how harem-keeping cultures deal with the fact that *homo sap.* is provided by

nature with roughly equal numbers of males and females.)

Gwen's role in the Kavalat triad isn't exactly that of a wife, either, as we know marriage in our own culture. In a way she is regarded as less than human, a slave or even a thing. In another way, she is treasured and pampered. One sees precedents.

The setting of the novel is most intriguing. Martin revives the time-honored notion of the wanderer planet, only his wanderer, Worlorn, is not going to crash into an inhabited world, nor sweep dangerously close to one, *a la* Niven & Pournelle, Baxter, Leiber, or Wylie & Balmer. Worlorn's course through space is carrying it through the region of several stars. These will provide enough heat and light to make the planet liveable for a few years. As Worlorn experiences its brief day it is stocked with numerous life-forms; great cities are built upon it; it becomes a festival-world, a huge unending *mardi gras*—until it passes once more into darkness, desertion and death.

The whole thing is a marvelous invention, and Martin carries t'Larien into the Kavalat culture impressively. He settles down into a new and uncomfortable relationship with Gwen and her two Kavalats; Dirk discovers that Gwen is disillusioned with the romantic imagery of Kavalat society and wants him to "take her away from all this." He does, and the book settles into a kind of chase-confrontation-fight-capture-and-escape-again circle that is reasonably well executed but. . .

But, as one reads the chase-etc sequence, and the sequence goes on and on, one gradually comes to the realization that the people in the book are basically pretty dumb, and pretty dull, and that after a certain point one

doesn't really care a hell of a lot whether Jaan kills Dirk and takes Gwen back, or whether Dirk kills Jaan and takes Gwen away. From which point onward, the reading becomes a mere chore; a reader of limited conscience might simply skip to the last scene and find out, and save himself reading the last hundred or so pages of the book.

Which is, one realizes, a characteristic typical of the first-novelist, however skillful a short story writer he or she might previously have been. (Cf. *Up the Walls of the World* by Tiptree.) It's really hard to tell how long a book ought to be. Two hundred pages? Five hundred? Spin the material too far, too thin, and the reader comes away bored and vaguely dissatisfied; cut it too short and the reader is equally dissatisfied, feeling as if he's read a synopsis rather than a novel.

I think that *Dying of the Light*, at 250-275 pages, might have been a triumph. But at 365 (well, 350; the last fifteen pages are a glossary) it's simply too long. One's interest—or, at least, *my* interest—ran out before the book did. ■

A Different Light by Elizabeth A. Lynn is, in a sense, an "earlier" work than *Dying of the Light*. By this I mean that Lynn did not spend as long writing short fiction as Martin did, before attempting a novel. Martin benefited from the experience of his short stories; he structures well and his prose is thoroughly under control.

Lynn's prose is good and will surely become better, but at this stage in her career she is susceptible to excesses like the following:

Now he was thirty, with nowhere to go, and the weight of time piling up behind him like the rubble of an

old building made him want to gag. Now I ask you, if ever an author's prose got out of hand and ran wild like a volcano with lava tipping over the ship of state so it foundered on the quick-limes of a citrus vine, it has to be that sentence. Nowhere to go. Weight of time. Rubble of an old building. Want to gag. Why would the rubble of an old building make anybody want to gag anyhow? Unless he tried to eat the building.

The weight of time is a nice touch, as a matter of fact. But that garble of mixed similes is classic!

I don't mean to lean too hard on Lynn's prose. Most of it is serviceable or better; occasionally it's quite striking, although solidity rather than flash is her strongest characteristic. Martin fills his book with hard, jagged, glinting images, while Lynn just goes ahead and builds. Her materials tend toward good, heavy, seasoned timber while Martin's are stone and steel and gemstones. In her own way, Lynn is as good a prose craftsman as Martin is. As long as she keeps things under control. But occasionally they break loose, and then—wow!

Structurally and thematically, *A Different Light* is also interesting. The novelist is clearly visible behind the scenery, working with her materials, getting things in order and into motion, and it is as instructive to see where she goes wrong as it is to see where she goes right.

Essentially, the novel falls into three sections.

The first of these, approximately 100 pages in length, is a sort of plotless, Delanyesque exercise in character-and-setting. People wander around a sort of nonterrestrial Greenwich Village, dropping into bars, chatting with old friends, looking for one another, having drinks, forming temporary pairs, coupling for one-night-to-six-month stands, then parting, filled with bittersweet *angst*, and being oh-so sensitive and artistic.

Instead of Delany's omnipresent poet-with-only-one-sandal, Lynn has a painter who's dying of cancer.

It is all very impressive and artistic, and one can almost settle in for a book's worth of this stuff (especially a relatively short book). After all, Delany got away with it—more, he made his early reputation writing this kind of short novel.

But after about a hundred pages, Lynn switches into another mode altogether. She packs a few of her central characters into a spaceship and sends 'em rocketing off to a primitive world inhabited by culturally degenerate descendents of an earlier colony. They (the space travellers) have been hired by a wealthy art collector to get some of the sacred masks of these people, masks which are exquisitely beautiful, have

great religious significance to the primitives, and are also endowed with a superscientific ability to collect and magnify telepathic radiations.

You see—we're into a big space-chase type of book. Lynn executes this not too badly, but it's very jarring to have to switch modes in the fashion that *A Different Light* requires. I think the book would have been far better had Lynn either stayed with her original Delanyesque artists'-pads-and-bar-rooms material, and saved the space-chase for another book—or dispensed with the Delany-type material and made *A Different Light* into an all-out space adventure.

But wait. That isn't all.

The space-chase sequence of the book ends and there's still thirty pages left! What will she do with it? Back to bars-'n'-pads? Off on another little space-chase?

Neither! What we get, is a whole *other* story, the third in the book. Our sensitive dying artist is approaching the end of his life. He goes to an institute where espers are trained, and consents to participate in an experiment whereby the personality of a dying person is imprinted on the mind of a telepathic recipient. The experiment is conducted, Dying Hero finally shuffles off his mortal coil, and resurfaces as a secondary personality sharing the skull of another person.

We are now marched through the strange dialogues inside the skull of Dying Hero's new host (who is also an old friend). In fashion reminiscent of Heinlein's *Fear No Evil* and van Arnham's even earlier *Star Mind* the co-habitants of the skull where Dying Hero has lodged, gradually get to know one another, work out their living arrangements, and painstakingly integrate their interests and desires.

This is, clearly, a theme that might have made an excellent novelette—or possibly a novel in its own right. But tacked onto the rear of *A Different Light*, it's as ungraceful and as unnatural as a string of tin cans tied to the tail of a frightened mongrel hound.

All of which, I fear, makes *A Different Light* sound like a worse book than it really is. In actuality, some of Lynn's writing is impressively reminiscent of that of Edgar Pangborn, Charles L. Harness or Jack Vance. And thematically, *A Different Light* is a more convincing study of human relationships than *Dying of the Light*. Elizabeth Lynn reminds me of a talented but inexperienced ballerina who undertakes a difficult role before she's ready for it. You can see the grace, you can see the strength, and yet the *gaucheries* are un-overlookable and embarrassing to witness.

This is a book worth reading, even

though it is a bad book. I know that later efforts by the author will be better. ■

Mortal Gods' author Jonathan Fast, according to his book's jacket, "lives in Connecticut with his old lady and his two dogs," and has "written extensively for motion pictures and television." The latter, at least, is obvious from the book. It's very visual, filled with readily recognizable characters and situations, moves with a rapid and unrelenting pace, and is one of the stupidest, shallowest, and most cliché-ridden novels to appear since J.O. Jeppson's *The Second Experiment* came out (and went right back in) a few years ago.

Fast's hero, one Nick Harmon, is a PR flack employed by a chemical company (Mutagen Laboratories) in the year 2226. The company—and the whole planet earth—is after some incredibly valuable minerals that are found on the planet Alta-Tyberia. The Alta-Tyberians, in turn—a race of blue-skinned humanoids—are dying out because of a recent non-viable mutation in their populace.

An ambassador is coming from Alta-Tyberia to earth carrying a precious sample of the race's genetic matter; Mutagen Laboratories is going to try and correct the genetic flaw so that the Alta-Tys don't become extinct.

All good enough, except that the narration is done in junior-high-school level wisecracks. And as for the thinking. . . .

For instance, Nick goes to see his boss. We learn that the boss's secretary is a robot. Okay—the twenty-third century has robots. No big deal. But a little later, Nick and the Alta-Tyberian ambassador Hali Hasannah (an Alta-Ty female) take a cab to town from the spaceport. The cabbie is human.

Why?

A society that uses robots for secretaries would hardly use humans for cab drivers.

But . . . It hardly matters, since the cab runs on an automated road. Maybe the cabbie's there because of a union featherbedding clause, what the hell.

But then . . . but then the cab goes too fast and jumps the guide rail and flips and explodes.

But—if they can build robots that . . . and they have automated taxicabs and still . . . but . . . and . . . but . . .

Things move on at a rapid pace, and Fast presents us with several very nice devices. Nick's father, for instance, living in the ultimate life-support system because his body is completely worn out.

And the Lifestylers. . . .

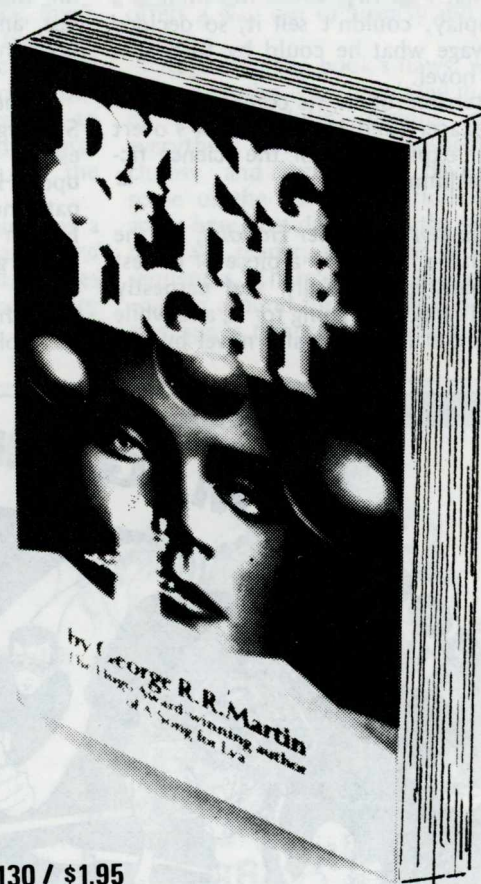
Now the Lifestylers are a lovely notion. They're genetically-tailored androids created to provide people with

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god-heroes to worship. It's a very Hollywood idea. There's Lex Largesse, whose shtick is generosity. There are the bee-people who fly so fast, in formation, that they can create an artificial "self" of themselves for petitioners. And so on.

But Fast has the Lifestylers living in a sort of fourth-dimensional hideyhole that is introduced, dangled tantalizingly before the reader, and then whisked away again ... as are the Lifestylers themselves. Too bad. They could have made for some fascinating reading.

Well, the book wends its way—actually, it tumbles along, helter-skelter—to a boffo climax that you can just see in the last five minutes of the Special of the Week. It's all so much like the screenplay of a Grade B-Minus special-for-television film, that I seriously suspect that Fast first wrote this thing as a screenplay, couldn't sell it, so decided to salvage what he could by turning it into a novel.

A terrible book, its complete ineptitude exacerbated by the author's overt cynical exploitation of the science fiction medium. ■

I Am not the Other Houdini, on the other hand, is clearly a piece of honest workmanship, carefully and earnestly done. It has a lot going for it, and while I can't call it a successful novel by any

manner or means, it is definitely worth reading. And its author, Michael Conner, is definitely a man worth watching. (By the by, I don't know anything about Conner, either, except what the publisher's blurb tells me; whereas Fast lives with his old lady and two dogs, Conners lives with his wife and two children. Somehow, that sets the tone right there.)

Conner's book takes place in 2079, there's been a world conflict, and while the US emerged relatively unscathed, the disintegration of the country has been going on steadily since our own time. By now there's little more than a shadow government in Washington. The old states have merged into regions, and the regional governments are the real seats of power.

Still, Washington is trying to hang on, and the Western region, the wealthiest and strongest of the regions, is hovering on the brink of outright secession.

"The Other Houdini," Alphonse Sterling, is a great stage illusionist and escape artist who has patterned himself upon Harry Houdini. Who of course had patterned himself upon the earlier French illusionist, Robert-Houdin. Sterling is going to do some sort of bravura escape stunt in orbit, televised live on the 4th of July, and the Feds fear that he's going to swing the West into seces-

sion. They need to thwart this, and send Ryan Arcad, who has some pretty good psi in his satchel, to do it.

There's a fine intermittent duel between Arcad and Sterling; Sterling is himself one of the most impressive character studies I've read in fiction, and the complex emotional tangle among Arcad, Sterling, and Sterling's wife Kam is beautifully handled.

The book is complex, and unfortunately, about halfway through, Conner seems to get beyond his present ability to keep as many pie-plates, oranges, and indian clubs in the air as he's tossed up. They start coming down with an awful clatter, and the book degenerates, like too many others, into still another sequence of chase-fight-capture-escape.

But even after this happens, Conners turns in some terrific moments—especially Starling's climactic performance.

Pick up a copy of *I Am not the Other Houdini*. Read it. Dig it for what it is and for what it has, and most of all for what it shows Michael Conner knows how to do. This guy is going to be a whiz, in another couple of books!

MAN PLUS, by Frederik Pohl. \$1.95. 246 pp. 1977. Bantam Books. (Random House, 1976.)

GATEWAY, by Frederik Pohl. \$1.95.



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313 pp. 1978. Ballantine Books. (St. Martin's, 1977.)

THE WAY THE FUTURE WAS: A MEMOIR, by Frederik Pohl. \$8.95. 312 pp. 1978. Ballantine Books.

Fred Pohl's two most recent novels have escaped notice in this column, up till now, but considering the number of Hugos and Nebulas they've piled up, I guess they managed to find an audience anyhow. Astonishing!

What I find impressive about them is not merely the fact that they're good novels. In fact, I found both of them solid and enjoyable books; I also found both of them flawed, but then who ever said we were entitled to perfection? What impressed me particularly, was that they're quite different from each other, and (within the limits of my own reading: I've read many but by no means all of Pohl's books) different from anything he's done before, also.

Man Plus is a heavily researched, painstakingly worked-out hard science novel of the finest sort. It deals with the modification of a human being, through surgery, biological conditioning and cyborging techniques, to "become" a "Martian." I don't know what gave Pohl his inspiration, although I might guess that it was the sight, almost a decade ago, of the first astronauts working on the surface of the moon.

Well, when you're going to live in a hostile environment, like the bottom of the ocean or the surface of an alien planet, you *can* function by carrying with you a miniature replica of your own, natural environment. That's what both deep-sea divers and astronauts do. But it makes for a damned limiting and inefficient way to function.

Alternately you can try and bring along a larger bit of your environment (e.g. Sealab, Spacelab, Tranquillity Base, proposed dome cities, sealed caverns). Or go all out: terraforming on a planetary scale.

Still another approach: customizing humans for varied environment, as in James Blish's *The Seedling Stars*.

But never, to my knowledge, has anybody worked out with the thoroughness and the completely convincing detail the modification of a man, as Pohl does in *Man Plus*. In essence, that's the whole of the book. Oh, there's a somewhat flimsy plot (with a couple of grossly unconvincing twists in it, but never mind). The plot is there just to provide a narrative thread and to provide a little dramatic tension for the book.

But what *Man Plus* is, mainly, is a modern version of the old hard, *hard* science novel. I think that Pohl outdoes people like Hal Clement and Larry Niven at their own game. ■

For contrast, *Gateway* is a space adventure, a Sense of Wonder story, also right out of the traditions of decades past, but also done up in modern form and done beautifully. The basic gimmick is this (in case you're one of the eleven living SF readers who don't already know): an alien base, ancient and anciently deserted, is discovered, right here in our own "neighborhood" of the solar system. At the aliens' base are found their spaceships, preprogrammed, capable of FTL and/or hyperdrive, and offering therefore uncalculated knowledge, opportunities for exploration, technological advancement, and wealth.

Also, offering danger. The majority of the crews that take out the alien ships return either dead or not at all.

But those that survive . . .

For Pohl's hero, space exploration offers a way out of poverty and oppression.

Regarding the book's flaws: well, the main narrative is encapsulated in a series of psychoanalytic sessions, so that everything is seen in retrospect. It's a clumsy and superfluous device. And some of the quieter interludes, at the space-base, just don't pack the wallop or hold the reader, as do the exploration sequences. There's a bit too much of waiting around for the Next Big Event, and one is tempted (I resisted, virtuous

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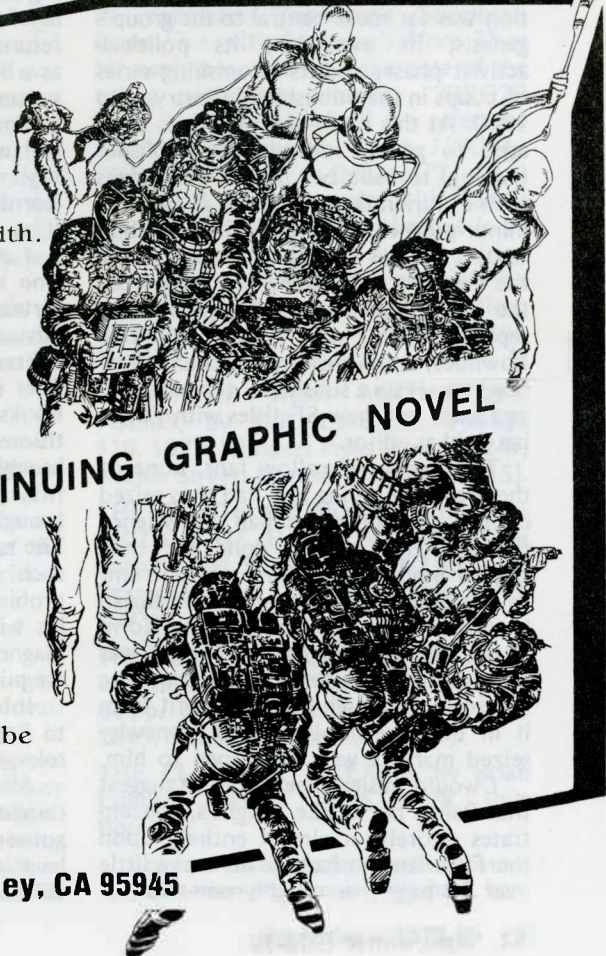
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fellow that I am) to skim the drunken parties, the romantic liaisons, the miniature character sketches that Pohl uses as spacers between his major occurrences.

But it's still a helluva performance; it gave me the kind of excitement that I got thirty years ago reading Jack Williamson and Doc Smith, and they don't hardly make 'em like that any more. (And Pohl mentioned recently that he's got a sequel in the works.)

Cheers! ■

The Way the Future Was is going to be read inevitably as a reply and/or a rebuttal to Damon Knight's *The Futurians*. Citing Pohl again, he denies that this is so. He says that he wrote the book because Lester and Judi-Lynn del Rey asked him to do so and offered him a contract. And it's true that Pohl has been leading up to a full-scale biography for some years; viz., his section of *Hell's Cartographers*, *The Early Pohl*, his annotations to several other short story collections, his Paul Walker interview.

But even so. . .

But even so, *The Way the Future Was* reads like a response to Knight's book, and there is internal evidence in Pohl's book that he was aware of Knight's, and had read it before he wrote (or at least before he polished and turned in) his manuscript. The comparison may still be invidious, but it seems to be unavoidable.

Pohl's connection with the Futurians antedates Knight's, and Pohl's participation was far more central to the group's genesis, its evolution, its political-activist phase, and its astonishing series of coups in the publishing industry circa 1940. At this point the Futurians managed to get an independent publisher (Albing) to issue two new SF magazines with Futurian Don Wollheim as editor; a minor pulp chain (Silberkleit-Columbia) to oust Charles Hornig, a carryover from the Gernsback *Wonder Stories* era, from the editorship of their SF group, and replace him with Futurian Doc Lowndes; and a major pulp chain (Popular) to set up a subsidiary (Fictioneers) and issue two new SF titles with Futurian Pohl as editor.

This group of callow fans, none of them even of voting age, had thus seized control of more than half the science fiction field! Having done so, they started buying and selling stories from/to one another, and from their Futurian brethren Blish, Asimov, Wilson, Kornbluth, Michel, etc. Damon Knight was more or less peripheral to this sequence of events, although he did benefit from it in that the newly-created or newly-seized markets were also open to him.

I would mislead the reader to suggest that Pohl's book, like Knight's, concentrates entirely or almost entirely upon the Futurians. In fact, he devotes a little over 30 pages, or roughly one-tenth of

The Way the Future Was to that group. The rest of the book is studded with other gems. One instance is Pohl's illumination of his own—and by extension, most of the Futurians' and many others in and out of the SF community—his own, involvement with Communism.

It was the late 1930s; as a rather callow teen-ager, Pohl was drawn to some Communist meetings by a certain slightly lurid glamour that attached to them. He was further attracted by the announced goals of Communism—an end to racial prejudice, attainment of world peace, improved conditions for the laboring classes. . .

Who could disagree with those?

Pohl's own disillusionment with the Communists grew from the Moscow purge trials of the late 30s, and from Stalin's—and consequently all good Party members'—series of flip-flops regarding Hitler. Pohl describes most effectively the incident that finally crystallized his decision to break with the Party: a toast that was proposed, to the "liberation" of Paris by the heroic people's army of Nazi Germany.

I was alive in those days, a child but not too young a child to have some awareness of world affairs. It's hard for me to remember that such things happened, and it must be even harder for people born in later years to believe that such things happen.

At any rate, *The Way the Future Was* continues on through Pohl's career editing *Super Science Stories* and *Astonishing* for Popular, his military service, his return to civilian life and strange career as a literary agent (scoring magnificent successes until he discovered that he was bankrupt), his connection with Campbell at *Astounding*, with Gold at *Galaxy*, his (Pohl's) collaborations with Kornbluth, his editorship of *Galaxy* and *If*, and on up to the present.

I do have a few gripes with the book. One is that Pohl is oddly reticent on certain topics; for instance, unless I missed some very brief and oblique reference, he makes no mention of his brief but notable career as editor at Ace Books. For another, there are odd repetitions in the book: a topic will be brought up and explained, then forty or fifty pages later the same topic will be brought up and explained all over again. The rambling digressions on Pohl's part, such as a section on his daughter's problems with *petit mal* and Fred and his wife's difficulties in securing proper diagnosis and treatment for the child, are puzzling distractions.

Interesting and doubtlessly moving, to Fred Pohl. But of very questionable relevance in a book like this.

All of these things should have been caught by an editor, brought to the author's attention and fixed—it would have taken, really, very little time or effort. But apparently nobody both-

ered, and the book winds up reading as if it went straight from typewriter to typesetter, without ever crossing an editor's desk. I should also mention that as a potentially valuable reference work, the book really needs an index. Which it doesn't have.

But these are (relatively speaking) nits. *The Way the Future Was* is almost as compulsively readable as *The Futurians*; as a source of historical data it's at least as good; and—it leaves one with a pleasant taste in the mouth, rather than the opposite as did *The Futurians*.

A fine, fine job. ■

SLAPSTICK, by Kurt Vonnegut. 243 pp. \$7.95. 1976. Delacorte Press.

KURT VONNEGUT—THE GOSPEL FROM OUTER SPACE, by Clark Mayo. 64 pp. 1977. Borgo Press.

As Chip Delany points out in *The Jewel-Hinged Jaw* (and as Anthony Boucher pointed out twenty-five years ago in *Modern Science Fiction*), the label "science fiction" has little to do with the content of most books. It is, rather, a publisher's way of hedging his bet. The label guarantees a certain safe level of sales below which it's almost impossible to fall—but also, as a rule, carries with it a rather severe upper limit on sales, which is almost never exceeded. The omission of the label removes the floor from under sales: a book published simply as "a novel" can die deadlier than a doornail. But this also removes the ceiling on sales, and a runaway bestseller is always a possibility.

Kurt Vonnegut—and his publisher, Seymour Lawrence—early on discovered this phenomenon, and after Vonnegut's early publications of "Dell SF Originals" and short stories in *F&SF* and *Galaxy* and writing for fanzines and attending the Milford conference and joining Science Fiction Writers of America, he reversed his field. His books appear simply as novels, he resigned from SFWA, he quit writing for science fiction prozines and fanzines, and he never went back to Milford.

But if the term science fiction means anything, not merely as a publisher's slogan (like *Amazing Medical Discovery* . . . new hemorrhoid cream) but as a meaningfully designated subclass of the class *fiction*, then Vonnegut's novels are science fiction, will he or nil he. Listen, *Slapstick* is about a pair of telepathic twins whose intelligences synergize into super-genius when they're in close proximity but deteriorate to bright-normal when they're farther apart. They pretend to be idiots, however, as a form of protective coloration. Nice old science fiction device, first used by Olaf Stapledon around 1935, I believe. It also involves a scheme to relieve population pressures by breeding miniature

humans—Bob Bloch did this in the 1960s. And there's a future plague which reduces most of the world to a state of neo-barbarism-in-the-ruins. Cf. Jack London, 1915.

There's a definition of science fiction devised some years ago by Damon Knight and repeated by Delany in his recent book, to the effect that "Science fiction is what I point to when I point to something and say, 'That is science fiction.'" This is a glib and appealing definition, but upon analysis it proves itself to be silly nonsense at best and arrogant nonsense at worst. Science fiction may be hard to define (although I've got a definition of it that I think works—ask me for it some time) but retreating to solipsistic arrogance is not going to do the trick.

And *Slapstick* is, by God, a science fiction novel if ever there was one, whether Vonnegut, Seymour Lawrence, Delacorte Press, Damon Knight, or Samuel R. Delany want to call it that or not.

As for whether *Slapstick* is a good science fiction novel or not, that's another matter. It has all of the trademarks of Vonnegut's novels, since the first few: a bitter zaniness, a deceptively simple style relying on commonplace vocabulary, short sentences, scenes and chapters, and a many-times-repeated key phrase. (Back in *Slaughterhouse-Five* it was "So it goes"; in *Slapstick* it's "Hi ho." It's stupid and irritating.)

Unfortunately, since writing *Slaughterhouse-Five* almost a decade ago, Vonnegut has obviously lost heart. He's done only two novels since then. *Breakfast of Champions* (1973) was announced as Vonnegut's last novel. It was a pitiful wail of despair at the human condition. *Slapstick* is a bit better, but once again, Vonnegut lacks the courage, energy and dedication to carry his scheme through to completion. The book starts promisingly, wanders off on a variety of tangents, and finally fizzles into nothingness at the end. It isn't Vonnegut's worst performance, but it's a poor one.

Listen, I feel sorry for Kurt Vonnegut. For all his wealth and lionization, his personal life seems to be permanently scarred by his experiences as a boy-soldier in World War II and further marked by family tragedy since. Further, I feel a considerable sense of kinship to Vonnegut. His boyhood in Indianapolis resonates in my own years there in the 1950s (although I wasn't a native hoosier like him), and his traumatizing experiences as a PR flack for General Electric in Schenectady, New York, must surely have been a lot like my own years working for IBM in Poughkeepsie.

Yes, I resonate with this guy. But I can't forgive him for putting out these defeated, sloppy, unsatisfactory and

unsatisfying books. If he was written out after *Slaughterhouse-Five*, by damn he should have quit writing. He doesn't even have the excuse of needing the bucks!

Slapstick? A better title might have been *Slapdash*. ■

Clark Mayo's *Kurt Vonnegut—The Gospel from Outer Space* is one of Robert Reginald's Borgo Press monographs on contemporary writers. There have been a number of monographs and symposia on Vonnegut, some of them pretty good, some of them dreadful, and Mayo's is actually a pretty good survey of Vonnegut's writing.

It provides an adequate career-sketch and an examination of each of Vonnegut's eight novels and his lesser works. In reading it I was struck by my own recollections of my reading of Vonnegut over the years. The very first of his stories that I encountered was "The Barnhouse Effect," a short that appeared in the old *Collier's* magazine. I was a kid in junior high school, and had come down with German measles or mumps or some other such childhood disease that kids nowadays get inoculated against. I was already a science fiction fan, had read through everything I could lay my hands on that bore even the slightest resemblance to SF, and finally hit on *Collier's*. And there, even though the blurb didn't say as much (of course!) was a science fiction story!

Gosh!

I missed Vonnegut's first novel, *Player Piano*, when it first came out. But when *Sirens of Titan* appeared I read it, and rather enjoyed it, and was somewhat enchanted by a dispute that broke out in the pages of *Yandro*, Robert and Juanita Coulson's fanzine. Ted White had read *Sirens* as a straight SF novel and reacted against it violently. Wilson Tucker responded to the effect that, No, no, Ted, don't you see, this is *satire*. And so it went.

I also overlooked *Mother Night* in 1962, but when I read it in later years I found it of the greatest relevance to science fiction. The book itself isn't quite SF—it comes close, though. It's a sort of multiple-agent conspiracy novel: Robert Anton Wilson would be right at home in its pages. And the narrator, Howard W. Campbell, Jr., seems to me undeniably Vonnegut's portrait of the holy John W. Campbell, Jr., of science fictional fame.

Campbell—John Campbell—used to publish outrageous editorials in *Astounding* and *Analog* propounding all sorts of vicious borderline-fascist ideas. When these have been pointed out in more recent years, such Campbell apologists as Ben Bova have tried to excuse them on the grounds that Campbell didn't really mean them—he was being deliberately outrageous, taking positions he didn't really believe in, in order to

goad people into thinking-about-the-unthinkable, questioning basic assumptions, and so on.

A somewhat dubious theory but. . .

Vonnegut's response to this is given in the very opening paragraph of the introduction to *Mother Night*, and is quoted by Mayo:

"This is the only story of mine whose moral I know. I don't think it's a marvelous moral; I simply happen to know what it is: We are what we pretend to be, so we must be careful about what we pretend to be."

So much for that particular line of Campbell apologetics. John Campbell and Howard Campbell, equally. In fact, identically.

Some of Mayo's silences—I can only attribute them to blind spots—are rather surprising. For instance, in the case of *God Bless You, Mr. Rosewater*, he makes no note of the protagonist's name, Eliot Rosewater. It seems to me that there is a distinct reference to Eliot Roosevelt (have I spelled it right?) and to Barry Goldwater, who was running for president while Vonnegut was writing this book. It's another not-quite-SF novel, and another book with references to the bombing of Dresden, clearly the central event of Vonnegut's life.

Mayo goes on at some length about Kilgore Trout, Vonnegut's favorite imaginary science fiction writer, and his novel 2BRO2B. Yet he fails to note that Trout is "really" Theodore Sturgeon (although elsewhere in the monograph he compares Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse-Five* with Sturgeon's *More Than Human*); nor does he make note of the titling technique whereby 2BRO2B ("To Be Or Not To Be") is a reference to Hugo Gernsback's *Ralph 124C41+* ("One To Forsee For One Plus").

I could pick other nits with Mayo's monograph, but on the whole it is an intelligent and rather nicely written introduction to Vonnegut, certainly far more accessible and less pretentious than the general run of academic turpitude that one encounters. ■

A WINTER WISH AND OTHER POEMS, by H.P. Lovecraft. 190 pp. \$10. 1977. Whispers Press (Box 1492-W, Azalea Street, Browns Mills NJ 08015).

THE ROOTS OF HORROR IN THE FICTION OF H.P. LOVECRAFT, by Barton Levi St. Armand. 102 pp. \$10. Dragon Press (Elizabethtown NY 12932).

THE DREAM QUEST OF H.P. LOVECRAFT, by Darrell Schweitzer. 64 pp. \$2.45. 1978. Borgo Press (Box 2845, San Bernardino CA 92406).

THE CLOCK OF DREAMS, by Brian Lumley. 190 pp. \$1.75. 1978. Jove Books.

Lovecraftiana of every sort continues to pour from the presses. We have here

four very different volumes, each of interest in its own way, and representing collectively a feast for the Lovecraft enthusiast, a puzzlement and/or an annoyance for anyone else.

As far as I can recall, we didn't have this kind of craze in the science fiction field until the 1960s. Of course there were always people with specialized interests, whether those happened to center upon, say, Doc Smith or Edmond Hamilton or Robert Heinlein or some other big noise of the period. But it's only in the past decade-and-a-half that we've had these mad rushes, first concerning author X, then author Y, in which every last story, fragment, or shopping list is put into print, accompanied or followed by biographies, bibliographies, analyses, continuations and pastiches. It's happened with Burroughs, Howard, to a lesser extent Doc Smith, and now the Old Gentleman from Providence.

Well, I happen to be an admirer of Lovecraft's, so I have no complaint. For all his crotchets and shortcomings, his works have a depth and a staying-power that I really don't find in, for instance, most of Robert E. Howard.

A *Winter Wish*, edited by Tom Collins, is a lovingly produced collection of Lovecraft's poetry. An earlier volume, *Collected Poems*, appeared years ago from Arkham House, so the obvious and easily available material was denied to Collins. Instead he dug out poetry from more obscure sources, mostly the amateur press, of which Lovecraft was an ardent supporter. The poems cover a span of two decades, from 1914 to 1934, with the majority of them dating from the late 'teens and early 1920s.

A passionate archaist, Lovecraft took for his models poets like Dryden and Pope, and wrote for the most part in the couplet form:

March

*Let other bards with nobler talents
sing
The beauties of the mild, maturer
spring,
My rustic Muse on bleaker times
must dwell,
When earth, but new-escap'd from
winter's spell, etc.*

As Sprague de Camp noted in his biography of Lovecraft, a little of this stuff goes a long way, and a whole book of it can get a mought bit wearying. But Lovecraft was capable of other things; as Collins mentions in his annotations, Lovecraft quite deliberately chose to write the kind of poetry (and, for that matter, the kind of prose) that he did. "If he'd only known better" does *not* apply. He knew exactly what he was doing, and we must either accept it or not on its own merits.

That Lovecraft was both aware of and capable of executing the most

modern forms is evidenced by "Waste Paper." He was enraged by what he perceived as the anarchistic ravings of Eliot, and wrote this response to "The Waste Land" in 1923. It begins:

*Out of the reaches of illimitable
night*

*The blazing planet grew, and forc'd
to life*

*Unending cycles of progressive strife
And strange mutations of undying
light*

*And boresome books, than hell's
own self more trite*

*And thoughts repeated and become a
blight,*

*And cheap rum-hounds with
moonshine hootch made tight,*

*And quite contrite to see the flight
of fright so bright*

*I used to ride my bicycle in the night
... and so on for 133 lines that are
variously breathtaking,
laughter-provoking, and (perhaps
inadvertently) quite moving. This is a
true gem, a long-lost treasure that in my
opinion, alone justifies the whole book.*

Collins includes several short essays and a thorough set of annotations in *A Winter Wish*. It's a most attractively produced book, a definite "must" for the Lovecraft devotee. ■

Barton L. St. Armand is a member of the Department of English at Brown University. This is the institution that Lovecraft intended, at one time, to attend, and that possesses the most important collection of Lovecraft materials in existence. *The Roots of Horror* represents an intensive examination of Lovecraft's work, with its main emphasis on an attempt to discover both *why* and *how* Lovecraft put the feeling of "fear-and-loathing" into his tales half a century before Hunter Thompson made that phrase so popular.

St. Armand uses the tale, "The Rats in the Walls" (1924) as a paradigm for Lovecraft's works. This is, indeed, both one of Lovecraft's best stories, and one that well typifies his attitudes. In it, a protagonist discovers the horrid past of his semi-human and pre-human ancestors, and following this discovery descends, himself, into the degraded and horrifying condition from which Mankind had so painfully raised itself.

I find St. Armand's notion fairly convincing. Lovecraft was a cosmic pessimist, seeing intelligence and order as a transient variation from the chaotic norm of existence, and "The Rats in the Walls" well expresses this feeling.

The Roots of Horror is an attractively produced book, with several pages of photographs in addition to the text. Basically a straightforward academic treatment of the subject, it's not suitable as a starter, but most rewarding for anyone who has read all

or most of Lovecraft and seeks a very serious analysis of his art. ■

The Dream Quest of H.P. Lovecraft, by Darrell Schweitzer, is much broader in scope than the St. Armand book. Schweitzer is the editor of a most admirable collection of essays about Lovecraft, published previously by T-K Graphics, and has also collected a volume of parodies of Lovecraft, to be published later by the same house.

Unfortunately, this new study is marred by errors, poor assessments, and occasional lapses into plain bad writing that severely limit its value. Schweitzer starts off by stating that Lovecraft's father died when Howard was three years old (in fact, the elder Lovecraft died when Howard was eight), and that Lovecraft's mother died in 1919 (in fact she died in 1921). There is a discussion (p.5) of the old Lamarckian/Lysenkoan notion of the inheritance of acquired characteristics that is simply incomprehensible.

Regarding Lovecraft's short novel *The Dream Quest of Unknown Kadath*, Schweitzer says, "This work was never polished, submitted, or even typed." (p.18) This is of course utter nonsense, implying as it does that Schweitzer's comments are based upon Lovecraft's unpublished manuscript. The short novel has been published repeatedly, and is currently in print in an Arkham House omnibus if nowhere else. Presumably, Schweitzer means to say, "This work was never polished, submitted, or even typed *during Lovecraft's lifetime*." But this is not what he says, and I do not think that readers should be required to provide such editorial services for authors.

Speaking of the same work, Schweitzer says, "It does drag in spots, as the wonders pile atop each other until they seem a little less wondrous; but whenever this starts to happen events suddenly speed up, and the plot carries us through." The oddity of this statement is that *Dream Quest* is as nearly plotless a narrative as ever anyone has penned. Its structure is literally that of a dream-quest, with a pointless wandering series of events filling the pages. The work may be carried by imagery or mood or sheer beautiful writing (although not for me—I consider it one of Lovecraft's weakest efforts), but in no event is it saved by its (non-existent!) plot.

Even one of Lovecraft's most famous lines is rendered erroneously (p. 23):

"That is not dead which can eternal
lie

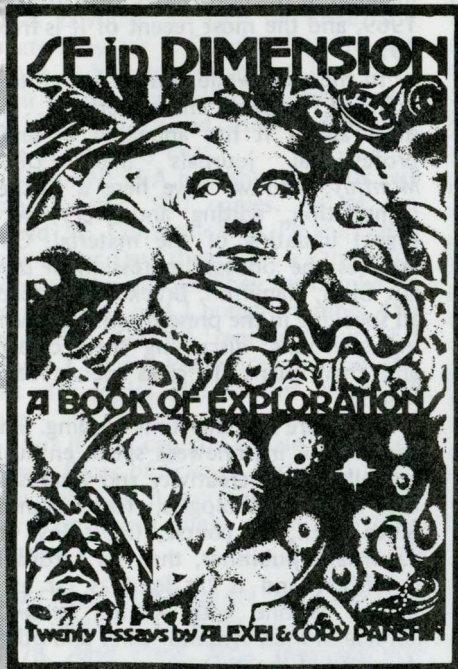
And with strange eons death die."

It should read, "...aeons death may die." The modernization of the deliberately archaized spelling "*aeons*" may be forgivable—maybe—but the omission of a word is not.

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—Delap's F&SF Review

Alexei Panshin is the author of the Nebula-winning novel RITE OF PASSAGE, and has won a Hugo Award for his criticism. Alexei and Cory Panshin together are the authors of EARTH MAGIC, a novel of the future to be published by Ace Books in October, and of a recently completed popular history, MASTERS OF SPACE AND TIME: THE STORY OF SCIENCE FICTION.

SF IN DIMENSION by Alexei and Cory Panshin, 342 p., \$10

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So it goes. I must say that the Schweitzer book will prove misleading and unilluminating for the beginning reader, and at best redundant—at worst enraging—for the more knowledgeable. Recommended only for the completist who must have *everything* written by or about Lovecraft. ■

The Clock of Dreams, by Brian Lumley, is an oddity of another sort. Among Lovecraft's lesser works were a series of stories loosely connected via a continuing protagonist—"The Statement of Randolph Carter," *The Dream Quest of Unknown Kadath*, and "The Silver Key." E. Hoffmann Price was intrigued by the last of these, and roughed out a sequel to it. He sent this to Lovecraft and Lovecraft rewrote it; it was published as "Through the Gates of the Silver Key," as a collaboration.

Lumley, in turn, has continued the sequence, first with *The Burrowers Beneath* (Arkham House and DAW), then with *The Transition of Titus Crow* (DAW) and now with *The Clock of Dreams* (Jove). Any connection with Lovecraft is by now so remote as to be almost undetectable. Lumley's latest is a wild romp through time and space; Jove's blurb writer compares the book to the works of Phil Dick and Harlan Ellison.

You might want to sample it for whatever virtues it has, in its own right. I find Lumley's writing slightly disquieting—he's always just past the ends of my mental fingers, always setting up situations, discussing and philosophizing. His story is always happening *right over there*—but we never quite seem to get *into* things.

But it's certainly unusual stuff, and may well work for other readers better than it does for me. ■

SMALL PRESS DEPARTMENT

The number and activity of specialty publishers operating within the science fiction field continues to increase, and the quality and variety of the productions of those publishers continues to impress me. Here is a sampling of recent productions from small, specialized publishers:

SPEAKING OF SCIENCE FICTION, by Paul Walker. \$6.95 paperbound, \$18.75 hardbound. 425 pp. 1978. LUNA Publications, 655 Orchard Street, Oradell, New Jersey 07649.

As far as I know, this is LUNA's first book, although the same publisher (Frank and Ann Dietz) also produces the excellent *LUNA. Speaking of Science Fiction* is a thoroughly professional job featuring attractive typography and a very impressive cover/jacket painting by Dexter Dickinson.

The major content of the book is a

series of interviews conducted by Walker with major science fiction authors and editors. Unlike most interviewers, Walker works neither from notes nor tapes, but rather conducts his interviews by mail. This leads to some very interesting procedures. Walker will write to an interviewee and ask a number of questions. The respondent is then expected to write out replies. Walker scans the replies, searching for provocative statements, intriguing phrases or references, etc., and then writes again, citing the respondent's statement, and asking for a clarification or expansion of the point. When the interviewee provides that, Walker again scans the material and probes further.

Not quite all of the interviews in the book were done this way. The section on Horace L. Gold was adapted from a talk that Gold delivered at a southern California fan gathering. That on Brian Aldiss was actually an interview conducted by the British fan James Goddard, with supplementary material secured by Walker.

In all too many cases, Walker's interviewing technique tends to produce documents that read like essays-upon-assigned-topics, rather than the warm, conversational dialogues that I had hoped to read. At times, also, Walker gets beyond his depth. He never really penetrates Ursula Le Guin's reserve. Her responses are courteous, intelligent, relevant—but remote, impersonal, guarded. One learns a little about literature, but hardly anything about Ursula Le Guin. Similarly Alfie Bester simply takes the interview away from Walker, turns it into the familiar and excellent Alfie Bester Show, and leaves the reader smiling, amused, somewhat illuminated within certain narrow parameters dictated by Bester—not Walker—but still completely in the dark as to the *real* Alfie Bester who lurks behind the carefully constructed mask.

But the majority of the interviews are more successful than these, and the subjects make a most impressive list. Never before had I any inkling of the kind of woman Zenna Henderson is; I feel now that I know her. Similarly R.A. Lafferty, Keith Laumer, Roger Zelazny, James Blish and a few more *do* reveal new aspects of their personalities. Robert Silverberg talks mainly about his work as an anthologist—a side of him not much illuminated, previously. Harlan Ellison, too, reveals something of his inner nature. And Leigh Brackett's material about both herself and Edmond Hamilton was both informative and touching.

Each interview is accompanied by a pen-and-ink sketch by Dave Ludwig, and a brief bio-bibliographical word-portrait by Walker. These two areas represent the book's greatest weaknesses: Ludwig's sketches make most of

the people look at least ten years older than their actual age—and ugly. Walker's introductions are sometimes labored, and contain an unfortunate peppering of bibliographic errors. Perhaps most serious shortcoming is the age of the material. Most of the interviews were actually conducted in 1972; some of the material in the book dates as far back as 1969, and the most recent of it is from 1974.

In the meanwhile, Walker has edited, polished, prepared his material . . . almost all of it has appeared in semi-professional journals like *LUNA Monthly*, and we have here a further compilation, editing and (very, very slight) updating of the material. One receives the oddest impression of *deja vu*: Blish, Hamilton, Brackett—all dead, all speaking in the present tense, answering questions, discussing their careers and their plans. It gives me an eerie feeling.

But there's further time-binding. Several of the interviewees speak enthusiastically of the creativity and success of the *Orbit* anthologies, for instance. Since then, of course, *Orbit* lost its paperback publisher, then its hardback publisher, and is (at least as far as I know) as one with *Worlds Beyond*, *Miracle Stories*, *Witches' Tales* and other deceased of the old era.

Still, the values of the book far outweigh its failings, and I recommend it very highly for any reader seeking an insight into the personalities behind the stories we all read.

(The publisher asks that readers who order directly, rather than buying the book through dealers, add 50¢ for shipping in the U.S., or 75¢ for overseas . . . and 5% sales tax if in New Jersey.) ■

THREE FACES OF SCIENCE FICTION, by Robert A.W. Lowndes. \$10. 96 pp. 1973. The NESFA Press, Boston.

Yes, that says 1973 up there; it's no typo. *Three Faces of Science Fiction* was a little book published by the New England Science Fiction Association in honor of Lowndes, when he was guest at one of their conventions. The contents were adapted from a series of editorials Lowndes wrote for *Famous Science Fiction* magazine in 1966 and '67.

Lowndes has had a long career as editor of low-budget magazine and book lines; it's been a rigorous course for him, and has taught him a lot about, as he puts it, "making bricks without straw." One of the tricks is to write and run long editorials in your mags—that preserves the editorial budget and lets you pay a fraction more for stories.

As a by-product, it also has provided Lowndes with a forum for a series of fascinating essays over the years. He became a dedicated science fiction

reader back in the early 1930s; an active fan (one of the original Futurians) just a few years later; and a professional editor *circa* 1940. He's had a long and constructive career.

I will not say much about the essays in *Three Faces*, except that the three faces are Propaganda, Instruction, and Delight; and, based on the number of pages devoted to each of these, the greatest by far is Delight. Reading the essays is like settling down in a cozy chair before a crackling fireplace, greeting a good old friend, and engaging with him in a lengthy chat.

When NESFA brought this book out they printed 500 copies. As of the World SF Convention in Phoenix this past Labor Day, there were a handful of copies still available. They are numbered sequentially, and I bought number 455 from the NESFA representative, Ed Wood. I do not know how many of the last 45 copies still remain unsold—if any.

But if you can still obtain a copy of *Three Faces of Science Fiction*, I think you will find it worth your money to purchase it and surely worth your time to read. ■

SPACING DUTCHMAN, by Eric Vinicoff and Marcia Martin. \$1.25. 60 pp. 1978. Aesir Press, 2461 Telegraph Avenue, Berkeley CA 94704.

Vinicoff and Martin are a team whose collaborative stories have been appearing for several years now, mostly in *Analog* and *Galaxy*. *Spacing Dutchman* is their first book—actually, little more than a long novelette or novella, produced in an unpretentious but attractive and very readable edition by Aesir Press.

It's a breathlessly-paced story with enough stuff in it to make a sizeable novel in other hands—or, I'm sure, in Vinicoff's and Martin's, had they chosen to spread it out a bit. There are elements of space adventure, crime-and-detection, private eye ("James Bond in Outer Space"), a bit of sex (some of it even slightly kinky), and a wealth of clever invention.

My favorite is the computer-generated dialogue-hologram, which Vinicoff and Martin's hero, Hans Bergenholm, conjures up when he needs a sort of . . . well, mandala, to help him sort out the clues. Bergenholm's computer generates an image of . . . Sherlock Holmes, of course! But as much as I like that gimmick, I kind of go for Bergenholm's partner-in-detection, who is a police chief, a countess, a martial-arts expert, and a psi-witch, all rolled into one. Played by Diana Rigg, I am sure!

And then there's their arch-foe, the sinister Fritz Reisman. . .

Oh, it's all a little corny. And certainly not Profound. Probably not Art at

all. But fun, fun, fun! God, Eric and Marcia, let's have the further adventures of Hans, Valarie and Fritz! Please?

(Regarding the present story, there's no indication on the book of its having previously appeared elsewhere, so I assume that this is first publication of the story. Highly recommended!) ■

THE BOOK OF ELLISON, edited by Andrew Porter. \$5.95 paperbound; a hardbound edition of 200 copies is \$15.00. 200 pp. 1978. Algol Press.

A couple of times now, when Harlan Ellison has got out a new book, he's phoned me and asked if I intended to review it. Each time I've told him, No. The reason? Harlan and I have known each other too long, and have had too many emotionally-charged encounters, whether positive or negative. When I pick up a collection of his stories I start reading the stories but instead of being caught up by them, I find rising before my mind's eye That Incident in Wichita in 1959 . . . or The Strange Confrontation in the Statler Lobby in 1967 . . . or The Unpleasant Exchange at the Jefferson Airplane Party in 1971. . .

There's just no way that I can properly assess Harlan's work. Harlan the man keeps looming between me and the printed page.

(To be quite honest about this, the last time he phoned and asked if I'd review his new book, I agreed to give it a try. Fine, Harlan said, he'd talk to the books editor of the LA Times and see about getting me the assignment. Nothing ever came of it. . .)

The problem is, Harlan is such a showman—he's so visible and oh God so audible a *personality*—that I find it utterly impossible to tell whether his stories are really any good. Or whether they're all flash and hype, and will promptly sink from notice any time Harlan himself steps out of the spotlight.

Maybe they're great . . . maybe they're lousy. I really can't tell. I *have* read a number of them, and I *still* can't tell. I try to think about the story, but instead there rises from the mists of memory That Encounter in the Beverly Pico Hotel in 1974. . .

But I can read and immensely enjoy (and heartily recommend) *The Book of Ellison*. This is half *about* Harlan: a compendium of essays, articles and bibliographies by Isaac Asimov, Lee Hoffman, Ted White, Bob Silverberg, David Gerrold, Joseph Patrouch, and Leslie Swigart. And the other half is material *by* Ellison, gathered from a variety of sources as disparate as World SF Convention program book, and fanzines dating as far back as 1955. That's right, I said 1955.

The Book of Ellison is a fascinating document. For its own entertainment

value, worthwhile; as still another guaranteed collector's item, more than worthwhile. And will it help us to understand and assess Harlan Ellison once and for all? That, I don't know. ■

ANGELS OF DARKNESS, by Cornell Woolrich. \$10. 217 pp. 1978. The Mysterious Press, P.O. Box 334, East Station, Yonkers, NY 10704.

Cornell Woolrich (a.k.a. William Irish and George Hopley) worked in the realm of mystery, suspense and terror, the last effect often approaching fantasy but as far as I know always stopping just short of the ghostly. Woolrich liked to keep his terror psychological rather than supernatural, so there was always a natural explanation by the end of his tales.

Still, close enough for some readers. . .

Otto Penzler's Mysterious Press continues its policy of issuing *very* handsome editions of difficult-to-obtain material. The present volume, *Angels of Darkness*, contains eight Woolrich stories, seven of them originally published between 1936 and 1947; the eighth, dating from 1968, the year of Woolrich's death. Some of the stories have never seen book publication before; others are scattered in old collections or anthologies but by no means easily obtained.

There is a striking sense of otherworldliness in all the stories in this book. They may not deal with ghosts or magic, but the stock murder-mystery figures of two generations ago have by now assumed the archetypal nature that ghosts and magic used to have. The ruthless, snarling, tuxedo-clad gang lord . . . the mouselike but indomitable librarian . . . the good-humored Irish cop. First the pulps and then the screen invested these figures with a ritual significance that sways scores of millions of people.

The stories in *Angels of Darkness* vary in quality, but are all at least readable and in some cases still hold an irresistible power of tension that was a trademark of Woolrich at his best. The volume is enhanced by an introduction by Harlan Ellison and an afterword by Francis M. Nevins, Jr. ■

WHAT MAD UNIVERSE, by Fredric Brown, introduction by Philip Klass. 198 + xviii pp. \$12.95. 1978. Penny-farthing Press (P.O. Box 7745, San Francisco CA 94120).

Fairly early in my reading experience (my science fiction reading experience, that is) I came across an early Bantam paperback edition of Fredric Brown's *What Mad Universe*. I had no idea that it was a spoof of any sort. I read it as a straight SF adventure novel, and I *loved* it. Parts of it scared the daylight out of

me; parts of it were just grand extravagant fun; occasional bits, I'm sure, even appealed to my immature libido.

It was only years later that I discovered things like fandom, letter columns, and magazine editors; that I became hip to the clichés and conventions of pulp SF, and that I realized just how much more Fred Brown achieved, in *What Mad Universe*, than a straight SF adventure yarn.

The book has had a long and varied life: magazine version in *Startling Stories* in 1948, hardcover edition from E.P. Dutton the following year; a Bantam paperback a while after that. It was out of print for several decades, but I believe is currently back in another mass paperback edition.

If you just want a reading copy, the obvious thing to do is pick up a paperback for a couple of bucks. But the book is a little classic, and has long deserved some sort of proper collector's edition. Preferably with the full paraphernalia of introduction, illustrations, etc. The Pennyfarthing Press edition (P.P. is a new specialty house; *What Mad Universe* is their first book) is just that, and with a vengeance.

The introduction is by Phil Klass, better known in the science fiction world as William Tenn. Klass and Brown were friends, back in the late 1940s, when Brown wrote *What Mad Universe*. Here we have Klass reminiscing about Brown, then switching to his academic hat (in real life he's a prof at Penn State) and giving us a proper scholarly apparatus on the book.

The jacket artwork and interior illustrations by Grant Canfield are excellent—in keeping with the interpretation of the book as a zany takeoff rather than a straight thriller.

Doubtlessly \$12.95 is a pretty stiff price for this book, but I understand that there are to be only 750 copies issued, and we once again face a situation where the book is certain to be a premium-priced collector's item in years to come. I recommend it to you. (The Pennyfarthing people request California customers to include sales tax if ordering directly—by my calculations, that comes to 78¢ if you live in a 6% sales tax county or 87¢ if you live in a 6½% sales tax county.)

Forthcoming books from Pennyfarthing include a new edition of Wilmar H. Shiras's *Children of the Atom*, as well as a number of originals. Certainly the oddest of their originals is *Cosmos*. This was a round-robin space opera by eighteen (!) authors, including Doc Smith, A. Merritt, John W. Campbell, Edmond Hamilton, David H. Keller, Ray Palmer and a dozen more. The novel was serialized in 1933-34—but has never had a book edition!

They're also planning a "Best of the Year" series. Urk, who needs another of

those? Well, again, there's a gimmick here—they're going to start with *The Best of the Year: 1929*, and issue annual volumes on the golden anniversary of the stories' original appearance. A nice stunt!

Also on line are *The Darkover Concordance*, by Walter Breen, and *The Atlantean Nights' Entertainments*, a previously unpublished novel by Edgar Pangborn. An excellent line.

A word of disclaimer: there has been trouble in the past, and there inevitably will be in the future, over the old conflict-of-interest bugaboo. Editor/agents buying their own clients' works, author/editor/husband/wife teams publishing one another's stories, and so on. In fact, there have been a number of questionable projects of this sort, over the years. In a way, some of them can be traced back to the ubiquitous Futurian colony of forty years ago, where room-mates collaborated on stories, bought, sold, illustrated, reviewed, etc.

I mention this situation just now, because it appears that I'll be doing some editorial work for Pennyfarthing Press. I had nothing to do with *What Mad Universe*, the book reviewed above—I just love both the book and the new edition of it. I'd have praised it whoever published this edition.

But the fact is, if I do perform any tasks for Pennyfarthing at a later time, there's likely to be a raised eyebrow or two. Mentioning this in advance may not clear the air entirely, but at least it will avoid the further complication of my having concealed facts. ■

BRIEFLY NOTED

Seademons by Lawrence Yep and *Zandra* by William Rotsler (the Yep was published by Harper & Row, 1977; the Rotsler, by Doubleday, 1978) offer a fascinating contrast, especially in their shortcomings. Yep's novel—his first non-juvie, by the way—is a serious, carefully worked out and powerful study in psychology and sociology.

It grows from a fascinating notion, one previously (but rarely) examined in the past. Yep posits a remote world, colonized by humans in the fairly distant future. We have the usual loss-of-technology theme, so the colony finds itself operating on a sort of seventeenth-century level.

There is native life on Yep's world, the most interesting species being a sort of giant squidlike creature that is apparently intelligent. A human child is taken by the squids and raised, changeling-fashion, for a number of years; she is then returned to human society to serve as a bridge between the species.

This is, of course, a very unusual approach to the first-contact or how-can-we-communicate-with-aliens theme. The closest approach to Yep's that I have seen was Jack Vance's *The Dragon*

Masters. There is great intelligence and sensitivity employed in Yep's handling of the theme, and each major event in the novel is both built up to and then analyzed in retrospect at great length.

In fact, this comprises the major shortcoming of the book. Yep telegraphs his events far in advance, and chews them over endlessly while the reader waits . . . and waits . . . and waits, for what's coming. And then *after* the event takes place, it gets chewed over again, while the reader waits, and waits, and waits for the plot to get moving once more.

The book tries one's patience, and leaves one wishing that Yep had spent a little—or a lot—more time on things actually *happening*, rather than on his foreshadowings and his afterthoughts.

Zandra, by contrast, is a pot-pourri of Barsoom, Bermuda Triangle, and disaster-film genres. Rotsler takes a jetliner full of assorted types and zaps 'em through the fourth dimension. Since the plane had departed LAX he can justify some of the overdrawn figures he uses: the supermacho soldier-of-fortune, the professional animal trainer, the gorgeous ebony-skinned sex goddess, and so on.

They crash on an alien world, and those passengers-'n'-crew not killed in the crash start out to try to find their way to . . . just about anywhere. We now have the beginning of a survival and/or trek novel. Maybe something like *Big Planet* or *Riverworld* or . . . whatever. But quickly the survivors discover that there are people on this planet. Oh, so it's going to be a contact-with-aliens book.

But no, the people the survivors meet, take them prisoner. They know that strangers crash on their world from time to time. They've built quite a thriving economy on the salvage of alien artifacts and the enslavement of survivors. Ah, so it's going to be a slave-world book. Something like a John Norman epic?

But no, it turns out that there are many nations and races here, with castles and royal courts and lascivious kings and princesses just waiting to lure our heroines and heroes into their respective bedrooms. And there are succession struggles, and wars, and airboats. Oh, back to Barsoom again.

The pace never slacks up; Rotsler never keeps one new notion onstage long enough to explore it thoroughly; by the end of the book you feel as if you'd just survived the Tidal Wave at Marriott's Great America amusement park.

I somehow feel that if Bill Rotsler and Lawrence Yep could just exchange a few brain cells, they'd both be better for it. Yep's slow-paced, deliberate consideration and sensitivity, balanced off against Rotsler's breakneck action pac-

ing and inventiveness, could produce a super-duper book! As it is, each of them seems to display just half the characteristics that are needed. ■

Baronet Publications was the parent company of the late *Cosmos* SF magazine. While the magazine is gone, the company survives, and has issued *The Illustrated Roger Zelazny*. This is an unusual production, a marriage of picture and text that is more graphic than a conventional novel-with-illustrations, less so than a comic book. I'm reminded of the "picto-fiction" magazines that EC attempted in the late 1950s. The illustrations are by Gray Morrow; the Zelazny material was adapted by Byron Preiss. If you're interested in a very intriguing attempt to marry text and illustration, pick up a copy of this (\$8.95). ■

There seems to be no end to the flow of histories, reference works and critiques of science fiction. *The Visual Encyclopedia of Science Fiction*, edited by Brian Ash (Harmony Books, \$7.95) isn't really an encyclopedia at all—you don't find the factual stuff you're after by making the usual alphabetical references.

Instead it's a potpourri of articles, illustrations, charts and tables and diagrams. There are little articles by a lot of the big names in SF: Aldiss, Anderson, Asimov and so on, through to A.E. van Vogt, James White and Jack Williamson—but most of the material is compiled by Ash and a staff of researchers and writers under his guidance.

I think this book is a lot of fun to play with. It has an interesting chronology of SF, and theme sections on Spacecraft and Star Drives, Future and Alternative Histories, Lost and Parallel Worlds, Time and Nth Dimensions, and so on—and hundreds of illustrations ranging from photos of important writers to marvelous old book jackets, magazine covers and story illos. Probably of less interest as a serious reference work than for browsing, but grand fun nonetheless. ■

David Kyle's *Science Fiction Ideas and Dreams* (Hamlyn) is a companion volume rather than a sequel to his *Illustrated History of Science Fiction*. In all honesty, Kyle is neither an especially insightful critic nor a particularly graceful writer himself; and Stuart Teitler, who is a supreme antiquarian bibliographer, tells me that Kyle's information on old books is neither very new nor very accurate. . . .

Yet Kyle *loves* science fiction and that love comes through the book. Also, it's a large-format hardback filled with hundreds of color plates and monotone illustrations, and if only for this reason,

it's a fan's or browser's delight.

Not to pick nits, but I have to call Kyle on one point, at least. He credits Anne McCaffrey with being the first woman ever to win a Hugo. That was in 1968. If Kyle had just taken the trouble to check his DeVore/Franson checklist (even an old edition) he'd discover that a woman won a Hugo *five years earlier*. Bighod (as the fans are wont to exclaim), I ought to know. I was there. That woman was Patricia Lupoff! ■

Come on, Kyle!

Paul A. Carter is an academic (University of Arizona) and is also a long-time science fiction enthusiast and occasional author. His book *The Creation of Tomorrow* (Columbia University Press, \$12.95), is the first history of science fiction that I know of to concentrate on the *science fiction magazines*. I think this book is long overdue and is an excellent job! For thirty years (starting in 1923 if you want to count *Weird Tales*, '26 if you start with *Amazing*) almost all the significant SF published in the United States appeared in the magazines. Since the mid-1950s, book publishing has become far more important, but the magazines continue to appear and to exert an influence.

I have a little list of errors in Carter's facts (and/or matters of judgment in which I think he's mistaken) that I would go into at length, if this were a feature review. But here in the "briefly noted" section I will say only that Carter's errors are not very many or very serious, his biases are fairly visible and not too severe, and the book is both a good source of understanding of a very important era in the development of modern SF, and a gracefully-written, pleasant few hours worth of reading in its own right.

Two-and-a-half cheers for Paul Carter! ■

Dark Imaginings, edited by Robert Boyer and Kenneth Zahorski (Delta, 1978) has one thing going for it and one thing going against it. The good news first: this collection of "gothic fantasies" (weird tales, we'd ha' called 'em in my day, children, or maybe just plain skeery yarns) is a damned good collection. The experienced reader will find a somewhat elevated percentage of familiar tales in the book, but in some cases at least, I found them to be old friends, seen again after a long absence, and consequently all the more welcome.

And some of the *unfamiliar* tales are real winners! I'd never before come across "Smith and the Pharaohs," for instance, by H. Rider Haggard. Come to think of it, I'd never read anything of Haggard's except novels, until now. This short story is a gem! The other bylines include George MacDonald, A. Merritt,

Robert E. Howard, C.L. Moore, Clark Ashton Smith, Leiber, Lovecraft, Bradbury, etc., finishing out with Peter Beagle's modern classic, "Lila the Werewolf."

Fine!

The *bad* news is the book's dull introduction. The editors *are* academics, and they obviously wish to see their book adopted as class reading across the nation, so there *has* to be an academic introduction and it *has* to be murky, heavy, pretentious, and largely vacant of meaning. Boo!

A good book nonetheless. Don't let the dumb intro turn you off. ■

Alien Creatures by Richard Siegel and Jean-Claude Soares (Reed Books/Addison House) is almost the opposite of *Dark Imaginings*. The book concerns itself with images of aliens, and the introduction by Boylston Tompkins is well informed, meaty, coherent: altogether worth reading. The book itself is a somewhat pointless pastiche of motion picture and television production stills, posters, frame blow-ups, etc., all accompanied by a minimal (and poorly executed) textual commentary.

A few of the pictures are kind of interesting, and some of the 1950s pix, especially the stunt-man-in-a-rubber-monster-suit ones, are good for a nostalgic chuckle (if you're old enough to remember the 1950s). But altogether, the book's a waste of money. ■

By way of contrast, *Faeries*, by Brian Froud and Alan Lee, edited and designed by David Larkin, (Abrams, 1978) is a triumph of taste, talent, and intelligence. The book is a publisher's follow-on to last year's surprise hit, *Gnomes*, and it is, if anything, superior even to the earlier volume.

It's a beautiful book, filled to overflowing with the most beautiful drawings, calligraphy, scholarship—a joy of a reference work, a delight for the browser, a pleasure for an evening's reading and elevation. There are at least two people on everyone's gift list who should receive *Faeries* this year, the person him- or herself, and his or her favorite in the world. I cannot imagine anyone too old, and hardly anyone too young, to love this book.

Don't miss it! ■□



Random Factors LETTERS



Alice K. Turner
NEW YORK MAGAZINE
755 Second Avenue
New York NY 10017

I think that ELBOW is the best name for a magazine I ever heard of. I think you are mad not to use it.

PS: It *does* smell nice.

Gerry Thompson
13400 Bromwich Street
Arleta CA 91331

What a CUTE little name! So MEANINGful! So DEPTHful! So DARLING! So evocative of the mature appreciation of SF. So when do you introduce the logo of Mickey Mouse in Space Helmet brandishing Blaster and Conan's Sword whilst straddling Breasty Broad?

I dig your desire to jack your income up over the subsistence level by increasing circulation, but this ploy will garner only graduates of the Sat. Morn Cartoonies. Course, if you switch to color plates of Spiderman or Dick Tracy Conquers the Moon, it could go.

I think I'll sick on my typewriter.

Robert Bloch
2111 Sunset Crest Drive
Los Angeles CA 90046

Many thanks for what is probably your best issue to date. Change your title if you

must, but for heaven's sake don't change your editorial policies and high standard of content!

Poul Anderson makes sense, Fritz Leiber gives a really cordial insight into his creative processes, and I love Joe Haldeman's reference to "surreal writers"—the perfect descriptive phrase.

"Eric vonSnarl"
Klingon Clutch # 49
Portland, Oregon

In regards to your editorial comment about the field running out of good names, you gotta be kidding! What about

HELIUM FLASH
UNREAL ESTATE
SOLLAR WIND
MELTED MOON MONTHLY
THE ROMULAN REPORTER
POLE STAR

just to name a few. I have pages of potential titles.

Jean Jordan
Rte # 2 Box 768B
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I probably don't pronounce ALGOL right but it seems a shame to change a name so well known in SF fandom. Perhaps that name has set it apart and made it more attractive to new buyers, whereas STARSHIP sounds a bit juvenile. Or are you trying for younger

readers since the rest of us, according to your survey, are growing older?

Ed Krieg
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A couple of your correspondents appear to think the *Chronicles of Thomas Covenant* a good trilogy. It is not. The "hero" is the worst character I've ever seen—constantly bitching about his problems. Having a leper as a hero is a bad thing. Having the hero rape a young girl is another. I do not seem to recall any other instance of heroic fantasy where one has a chronic complainer who strikes out. The ending of Donaldson's book is a real letdown. I seem to recall that Job finally got surcease from his troubles from God.

I enjoyed Anderson's [article] a lot. To me, Anderson is saying that men like Van Rijn are necessary for society. One may not necessarily approve of their morals or methods but their aims are worthy. Look at the example of the Italian City States and the German Hanseatic League.

Sandra Miesel
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Martin Wooster was surprised that I am regarded as "one of the leading interpreters of Dickson." Need I point out that among the misguided souls who so regard me is Gordy himself but what does he know, eh? What's a critic to do? Submit a certificate of authorization with each essay? Or perhaps I should take out ads studded with laudatory quotes from past subjects—if I can manage to please writers as diverse as Silverberg and Norton I must be doing *something* right. My series of Dickson essays for Ace is being written with Gordy's blessing and represents the fruit of years of intense discussions with him. I am most emphatically not foisting eccentric private interpretations on him nor on any other author I study.

And as for Dickson being a philosophical writer, he's been proclaiming that loudly, repeatedly, for decades but some people just haven't noticed. Likewise, he's been expounding the meaning of the Childe Cycle like an evangelist but some people will continue to misunderstand. Stephen Antell is alarmed over the "idea that the higher form towards which we are evolving is the ideal man of war." Nowhere does the Cycle say this! Dickson's ideal, which he calls Ethical/Responsible Man, will combine the best qualities of Dorsai, Exotic, and Friendly. That is, he will think, believe, and defend his right to do so. Donal Graeme is *not* the ultimate Dorsai nor are the Dorsai themselves the wave of the future. The Dorsai are a deadend side shoot on the evolutionary tree but one which protects the trunk at crucial moments. Donal's first incarnation was as a warrior, but his next is as an engineer-turned-magician, and his final one is as a poet. (Got anything against poets, Stephen?) Or as one of the prophets summed up the problem of an uncomprehending audience, "Seeing they do not see, hearing they do not hear, lest they be converted and I heal them."

There was much of interest in Poul Anderson's rambling but statements like: "A woman who really *is* a woman is the highest thing that evolution on Earth has thus far come up with" set my teeth on edge. What are we, two species or one? I have generally found the Andersonian Superwoman unconvincing and depressing. Having had more opportunities than Poul to see womankind red in tooth and claw, I reject his adoration as undeserved. Neither logic nor experience will support quantitative distinctions between "good women" and "good men."

Vincent DiFate did a marvelous job with John Schoenherr. Furry rocks are not generally the most promising interview

subjects. (But I'm doing Jack a disservice. He's not a rock. He's really a bear passing as a man.) Nice to see this superb picture maker getting recognition—he's never received the awards and attention he's deserved. I'll second everything Vinnie says about the quality of Schoenherr's animal paintings. Several years ago I had the pleasure of organizing his first one-man show at a local gallery. But Indianapolis taste runs more to the gaucheries of Leroy Neiman and no one except fans bought anything. There was however one senile coot who praised Schoenherr for copying pictures out o' them thar books so accurately. He refused to believe that the book illustrations were reproduced from the drawings, not vice versa. Weep, illustrators, weep.

Valdis Augstkalns
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Vincent DiFate on Powers has been interesting and cryptic. I like Powers for selfish reasons. When I was a very poor student they were standardizing (or trying to) the Rorschach ink blots at my dear old Alma Mater. I got a pair of paid return engagements at the psych. dept. by casually remarking that one of the cards resembled a Powers pic. "Looks like a black and yellow Martian from his *Slave Ship* period."

"Really?"

"Well, it sure ain't human..." etc., etc.

If I had been in Vincent's position, I would have asked a few along the lines of: ... those Dell covers in sepia ink and wash for the Laurel poetry series: Why is the Dickinson cover so much superior (lifelike, animated, pick your adjective) to all the others. Sympathy? Luck?

Gregg T. Trend
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Didn't get my subscription copy until 2 days ago (September 18th). Third Class Mail is 3rd Class service all right.

Three cheers and a nuclear fizz for going quarterly. The title *STARSHIP* has commercial potential but aren't you leary of being confused with *Starlog*? In the bookstore where I do most of my SF&F shopping—Paperbacks UnLtd in Ferndale, MI—they stack your mag next to *Starlog*. Or perhaps you're counting on the intellectual "move-up" from that sort of thing.

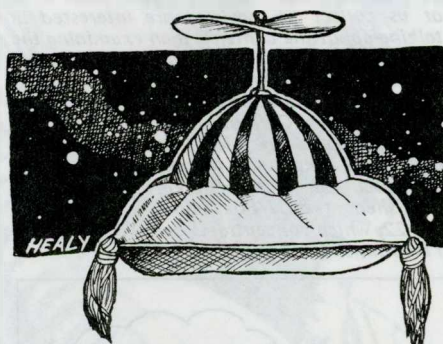
Another good DiFate column. I hadn't realized that Schoenherr illustrated so many animal-oriented children's books. Strange, as a child I lived on property here in Michigan subdivided from a farm owned by Johann Schoenherr.

[I don't think there'll be much confusion over the titles. Fantasy & Science Fiction and Fantastic have been sitting next to each other for 25 years without any confusion over which is which.]

Robert P. Barger
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Evansville, TN 37332

I much enjoyed the cover and likewise the interview with John Schoenherr. One thing I kept thinking to see mentioned in the interview is that Schoenherr has a fairly new book out from the Grumbacher Art Library Series (self-help books in art where a well-known artist usually explains the basic way to go about doing something, like How to Paint Landscapes, or How to Draw the Human Figure, etc.). Schoenherr's book is *Painting Wild Animals*, costs about two bucks, should be available in any large art supply store, and is worthwhile not just for the fine art, but for the background and whys and hows of that art as well.

Change the name of *ALGOL*? Well, I can stand it I guess. *ALGOL* isn't all that great a name for *THE* magazine about SF. But for Ghu's sake, *STARSHIP*! ??? Hold a contest or something for a new name if you have to, but don't name this fine magazine something sucky like *STARSHIP*, unless you want more oh—wait. I see—you think *STARSHIP* will appeal to a wider audience, you intend to reach out and latch onto the Trekkies and Star Wars freaks, and even some of the mundane CE3K crowd, while still retaining your tried and true readers. Well, I guess I can stand it. Maybe my sister will even start reading *ALGOL* (or whatever it is going to be called) now with a name like *STARSHIP*—I just hope the contents of the magazine don't decline in quality to match the intelligence of most of the new subscribers. Intelligence here meaning intelligent grasp of SF rather than I.Q. of course, I mean your average SW fan or CE3K fan doesn't know Heinlein from Ellison, and how are you going to edit for him while still maintaining interesting stuff for us other readers?



Ron Neeld
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In Poul Anderson's article "Talar Om Science Fiction" in the Summer-Fall 1978 issue, the author seems somewhat upset that fans and English teachers who review books "don't particularly care for my stuff," to use his own words. Now I am not one who doesn't care for Anderson's stuff—in fact, he has several novels on my list of favorites (*Brain Wave*, *The High Crusade*, and *Tau Zero*). But as good as his work is, there seems to be something lacking in it that keeps it from becoming great. And I think that this lack has something to do with something he says somewhat earlier in his article. He hints that given enough money, he would give up writing, and says "I'd give up writing long before I gave up screwing, or numerous other pleasures."

Contrast this viewpoint with that of Theodore Sturgeon, who once wrote that he would rather write than eat, as he had demonstrated on several occasions. If there is any writer in science fiction who deserves the term "greatness," it is Theodore Sturgeon, who has been called by Damon Knight "the most accomplished technician the field has produced, bar none." I think Sturgeon's greatness stems in large measure from the fact that he really *cares* about his work ... and that the spark missing from Anderson's work that keeps it from being great is this attitude of care. Perhaps if Anderson cared more about his stuff, readers and reviewers would care more for his stuff.

Jeff Frane
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Seattle WA 98111

Aside from some apparently gratuitous slaps at the anti-war movement and feminists (Fascist, by the way, has about as much meaning nowadays as "peacenik"), Poul

Anderson's essay in the latest issue had an interesting thrust. I was particularly intrigued by his term "resonate" as applied to writers and their audiences. On first reading, his idea that people who write reviews (or teach English) don't like his stuff, while non-publishing con-attendees do seemed like a pretty good theory. In retrospect, though, I am skeptical. The key lies, I think, in his phrase "Mostly they seem to ignore it..." Now *that* I can buy.

I recently reviewed *Earth Book of Stormgate* for the *Seattle Times*. I enjoyed reading the book, as I do most of Poul's stories, but when the time came to write the review it was difficult to come up with anything terribly original about the book—or the experience of reading it. As Poul says, he puts a lot of work into the background of his tales. They're usually richly inventive and he has a true skill as a storyteller. The problem about reviewing his books, though, stems from that tired old hassle about "entertainment." While Poul does provide a fascinating background and a plot, the stories never seem to lock into those levels of the mind that are stimulated by really *great* fiction (and we coyly avoid the word "literature" here—I'm not about to get into *that* argument). While I believe he's entirely accurate in saying that (to paraphrase) every story carries with it some of the assumptions and feelings—worldview, if you will—of the author, there are a great many of us (beyond "academic snobs") who appreciate a little more meat than a wacking great yarn can offer. Writers like Le Guin, Delany, Dostoyevsky, Melville and Nabokov didn't get their reputations purely on the basis of "sensitive analysis of character." Nor on the basis of style. Or plot. Or theme. Or any of the other elements that were stressed by English teachers attempting to beat a little appreciation for languages into our thick little heads. They received those reputations because of their ability to weave all those elements into a unified whole that caused those thick little heads—rarely, perhaps—to *think*. A little brainsweat is good for the thought processes and good for the human as a whole. Writers who are ambitious enough to struggle toward the writing level of people like this offer the reader (and consequently, the reviewer) something to sink one's teeth into. And unless the reviewer is simply trying to hip a circle of friends onto a couple of good stories, the odds are that the review is being written because the reviewer *likes to write* (or doesn't like it, but is compulsive) (or likes to show off—there's always that possibility). If the book in question stimulates the braincells, maybe encourages a whole new way of thinking, then that reviewer is more likely going to write and write well about that book than another which simply offers an hour or two of diversion.

As I've said, I like Poul's writing. Some of his books (like *Midsummer Tempest* and *Operation Chaos*) remain among my favorite tales in SF. But I can think of no examples of his work ever stimulating me, cerebrally, like *The Dispossessed* or *Roadside Picnic*. As a result, I would (and have) find it easier, and more satisfying, to write about either of those books than anything I've read of Poul's.

Larry D. Woods
Woods & Woods
121 Seventeenth Ave., South
Nashville, TN 37203

I thought the column and response by Frederik Pohl was both enlightening and a calm, reasoned statement about many of the issues in which all of us should be concerned and active. His point of view with respect to an individual's participation with respect to those issues and their treatment is excellent. As always though, events often outstrip publication deadlines and the Tennessee

statute which causes great concern for Mr. Pohl (as it should) has now been declared unconstitutional in whole or in part by a federal judge in Knoxville, a state judge in Nashville, and yet another state judge in Memphis. Various appeals have now been lodged by the state government with higher courts in an attempt to redeem this ridiculous so called anti-pornography statute and hopefully the Tennessee appellate courts will render the same judgment as each and every trial court has rendered thus far.

Gordon Adamson
P.O. Box 490
Lake Forest, IL 60045

Authors, artists, publishers, organization, books old and new, the history of SF—all are discussed in ALGOL and in other magazines by and about SF and fantasy.

However, there is one aspect of the field which I have not seen mentioned, and which, I think, is worthy of comment. This is the collecting of SF and fantasy, in books and in magazines.

I began to read SF in the spongy pages of *Amazing Stories*, more than fifty years ago, and have continued to do so fairly steadily, ever since. Consequently, I now have a moderately large collection of books and magazines, yet I know less about them than about items in any other area in which I collect.

Perhaps I have missed discussions of these matters, but I think ALGOL would benefit from a column devoted to SF collection.

Obviously, this is a most difficult area. Many of the publications in the field are physically fragile, even though some paperbacks are sturdier than might be supposed. Hardbacks have appeared intermittently in the last eighty or ninety years, and some were published by small houses, not always in publishing centers. In the paperback field, the same book may have differing titles and even texts for differing editions—all matters that make trouble for booksellers, collectors and bibliographers.

Shouldn't we know more about these matters?

May I correct Martin Wooster (No. 32, p.71)? Spengler certainly quotes the lines, "Alles vergangliche ist nur ein gleichnis," but they are from the last chorus of Goethe's *Faust*. The Priest translation has: All earth comprises/Is symbol alone;/ What there ne'er suffices/ As fact here is known;/ All past the humanly/ Wrought here in love;/ The Eternal-Womanly/ Draws us above.

[I think what you need is a course in handling library materials. The fact is that while a lot of us collect SF, we're more interested in talking about the contents than examining the bindings. Of course, I've learned all sorts of interesting things from my former vocation: advertising production. But somehow I think an article in ALGOL on the glories of Smythe Sewing would be lost on the general readership. There are places things like this are discussed. One of them is Xenophile, published at P.O. Box 9660, St. Louis MO 63122, which concentrates on pulp collecting. I recommend X highly.]

members to vote merely on the basis of their having written film criticism. Anyone reading as many film journals as I do knows that such credentials do not imply any ability or knowledge higher than that of a prairie patty.

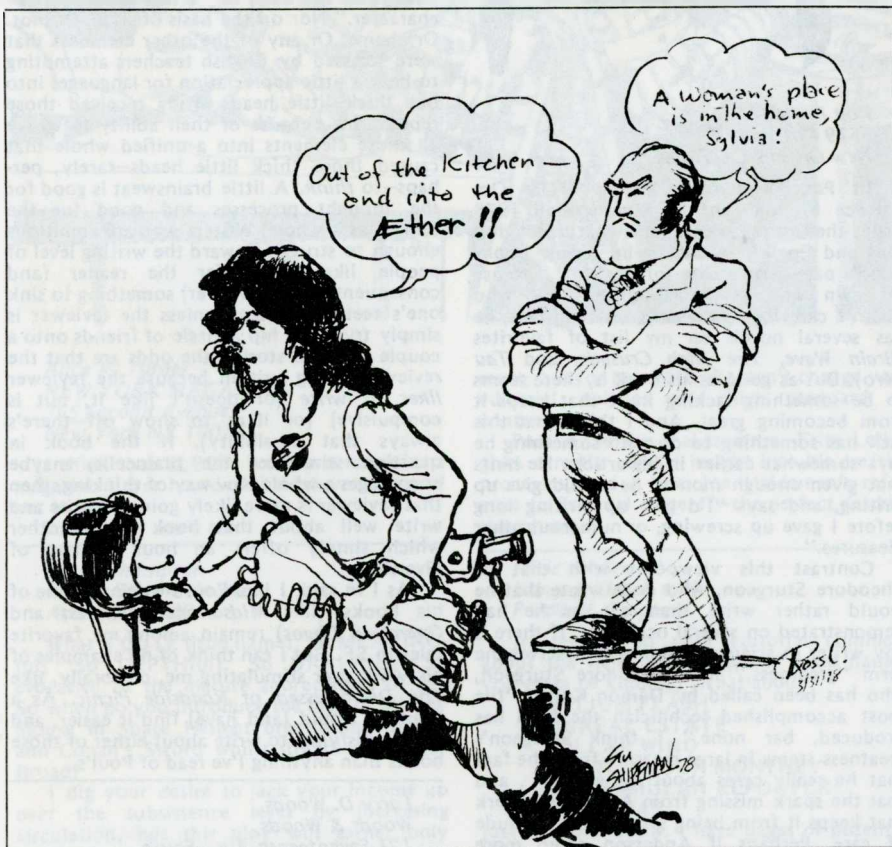
Beverly Clark
1950 Cooley Ave., # 5306
Palo Alto CA 94303

Lupoff's Book Week is a feature I appreciate, though oddly enough I disagree with his reviews at least 75% of the time; nevertheless his column is usually the first thing I turn to in a new ALGOL. I suppose that I know by now that his taste is not mine, and even that sometimes things he dislikes about a book will be the very things that I like—sort of reverse recommendation. I also appreciate his reviewing the book itself, not the author's state of mind or the literary awareness of the reader, and the general unobtrusiveness of his own personality in the reviews—that is, he doesn't seem to be using the reviews as a platform for espousing his own causes. (I recommend the review column of the *Harvard Educational Review* for anyone who would like to see particularly egregious examples of reviewers who are using reviews mostly to advance themselves or their causes.)

I found myself agreeing with most of what Harlan Ellison had to say, though from a rather distant position, not being involved with the writing or movie business. Surprisingly, because I don't usually agree with him, though I always find him stimulating and thought- (not to mention anger-) provoking, which is perhaps as good a reaction as always agreeing with him. Maybe even better, because it forces me to clarify why I disagree with him or why he made me angry, and I end up with not only a better understanding of Harlan's thoughts, but of my own. His description of the general exploitation of writers by Hollywood types parallels the comments people had at a film seminar I attended in Seattle: the general feeling among these people, practicing filmmakers for the most part, was that the Hollywood system was generally corrupt and stifling of creativity. Sometimes its models seem more the robber barons of the early 20th century; certainly the folks Harlan describes seem to have as much awareness of and respect for the people who make their multi\$ extravaganzas possible as say, the president of Exxon. Or maybe the president of Gulf and Western.

John Boston wondered why SF was held in such low regard for so long and shunned by the literary mainstream. I have two suggestions, neither of them developed nor probably original. First, it may have taken a while for "consciousness" to catch up with technology in America, and when it did, it shied away from the strange new world it found. I seem to recall from college days that American literature is primarily romantic, and the earliest technologically oriented SF would seem repugnant to the romantic mind, especially when that mind was already suspicious of the new developments that threatened to upset its world; it saw no place for itself in the world of machines and science. The romantic tends to be conservative or even reactionary in the sense that his or her orientation is backwards, towards the last golden age, rather than forwards, and SF is an inherently forward-looking literature.

The second point is related: most people didn't understand technology very well at first, and even less consciously understood what its effects might be. Naturally the people who did understand it were the technologists themselves, with their interest in the machinery for its own sake, and they wrote about it from their points of view, emphasizing the machinery and glorying in it at a time when the majority of the population and mainstream writers didn't understand



ADDITIONAL COMMENTS ON THE SPRING ISSUE:

Richard Brandt
4013 Sierra Drive
Mobile, AL 36609

While I'm here at bondage to the typewriter, I must make a late comment on

Harlan Ellison's SFWA resignation speech: his proposal for a select committee to vote on the Dramatic Presentation category doesn't go far enough. Persons who are "obviously knowledgeable" should be excluded, and only those who *have written* in one of the dramatic media should be allowed to vote. Otherwise, the whole concept of the Nebulas as an award given by one's peers loses its validity.

I definitely would not allow SFWA

much of it, and didn't like what they thought they understood. The taint of association with machinery still clings to SF, I think, and works to make it an alien genre to those who still fear or distrust machines. It could be that the attitudes of SF are inherently opposed to the general mindset of Americans, and that's why it's never been really well-accepted or popular; even the current general acceptance focuses on the utilitarian aspects of SF rather than on its literary merits.

Creath Thorne
Route 3, Box 202
Savannah, MO 64485

I want to comment briefly on Fred Pohl's column. His idea for an interdisciplinary approach to the teaching of science fiction sounds lovely; the only problem is that it probably won't work. I speak out of pure experience, having sat through similar classes and having even tried to teach them. All literature, after all, is subject to this type of interdisciplinary approach in a way that, say, a biology textbook is not; if one were to teach the novel *Tristram Shandy*, for example, one might bring art historians, philosophers, psychologists, historians, and critics to the type of course Pohl outlines. But such courses rarely put the various approaches together in any coherent fashion and the various approaches themselves are treated in such a skimpy and sketchy fashion that the student doesn't learn much about the particular discipline, either. Suppose, as Pohl suggests, a class session is devoted to the astronomy in *Gateway*. How much is a student really going to learn about astronomy in such a class? To the extent that he does learn real astronomy, how much will he learn about the novel *Gateway*? One has a choice: keep the literary text central, in which case the expertise of various scholars is rarely needed; or put together a series of lectures in which the text dwindles almost to the vanishing point. I just don't think that an interdisciplinary approach to teaching SF works.

Clifford R. McMurray
1915 W. MacArthur # 77
Wichita KS 67217

I greatly enjoyed Mrs. Miesel's interview with Gordon Dickson. Anyone who compares it with my own interview with Dickson in SFR can see that we each have different approaches to both the art of interviewing and the man himself, but she did a thoroughly excellent job. And although it is an apples-and-oranges comparison, perhaps even a better job than myself.

Sandra's comments on the role of women in the Dorsai series are particularly intriguing. My own feeling is that Dickson uses his female characters as symbols of the "average" human, as opposed to his "superhuman" heroes. The women represent 1) the failure of the average man to comprehend the true nature of the hero, and 2) the helplessness of humanity before the power of the hero. This may trigger some heated rejoinder, but such symbolism does have a certain historical validity. It has not been so very long since women were emancipated from male protection. That the symbolism remains in Dickson's writing is but another indication that he is in many ways a Victorian kind of writer. It is no accident that he quotes Kipling at the drop of a hat.

All of the above may easily lead to a wrong impression. Dickson can defend himself, but let me say that no one who has met him can think of him as any kind of chauvinist. He is one of the most consistently underrated geniuses in or out of SF, and any article that helps hasten the day when he is given the kind of attention he deserves is to be congratulated. To both you and Sandra, hats off.



WE ALSO HEARD FROM: W.E. Neal, Jr., A.D. Wallace, Cyril Simsa, Dian Davidson, Henry Morrison, Robert B. Ross, Alan Hunter, Lydia Moon, Kim Owen Smith, Bob Soderberg, Chris Mills, Philip M. Cohen, and Mike Girsdanský.

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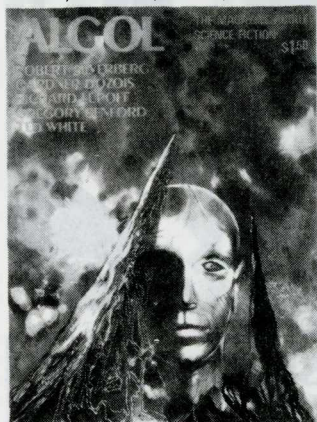
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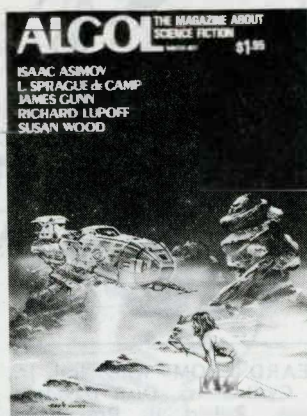
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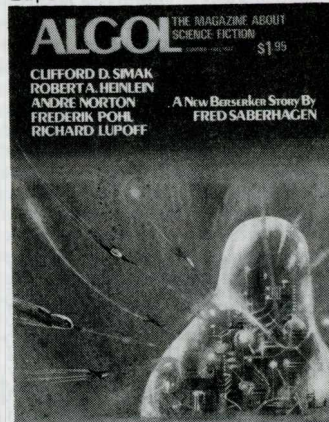
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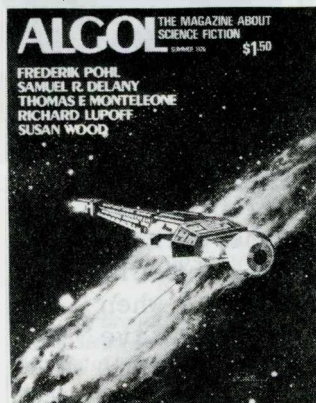
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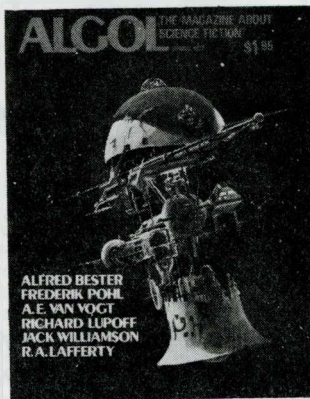
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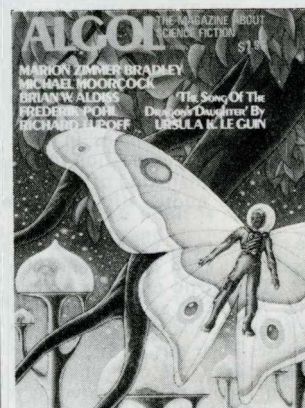
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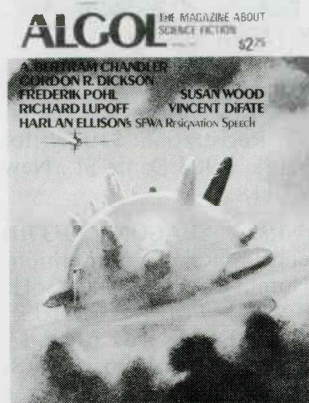
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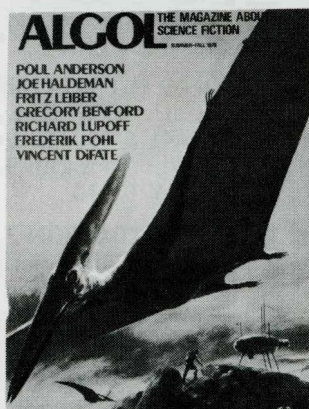
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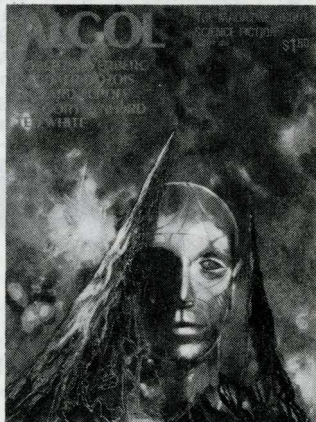
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Nov. 3-5. NOVACON 8. Holiday Inn, Birmingham UK. GoH: Anne McCaffrey. Write: D.J.R. Holmes, 1222 Warwick Rd., Acocks Green, Birmingham UK B26 6PL.

Nov. 18. GALACTICON. Los Angeles Convention Center, Los Angeles CA. Registration: \$2. Write: Galacticon, P.O. Box 39439, Los Angeles CA 90039.

Jan. 5-7 1979. CHATTACON 4. Sheraton Downtown, Chattanooga TN. GoH: Alan Dean Foster. Registration: \$7, \$9 at the door. Write: Chattacon 4, P.O. Box 21173, Chattanooga TN 37421.

Feb. 2-4. WISCON 3. Wisconsin Center & Madison Inn, Madison WI. GoH: Suzy McKee Charnas, John Varley. Fan GoH: Gina Clarke. Registration: \$5, \$7 after 1/15/79. Write: Wiscon 3, Box 1624, Madison WI 53701.

Feb. 16-18. BOSKONE XVI. Sheraton-Boston Hotel, Boston MA. GoH: Frank Herbert. Artist GoH: Mike Symes. Registration: \$8, \$10 at the door. Write: NESFA, Box G, MIT Branch P.O., Cambridge MA 02139.

Mar. 9-11. COASTCON '79. Buena Vista Hotel, Biloxi MS. GoH: George R.R. Martin. Write: Michael Bledsoe, 8401 Zanna, Biloxi MS 39539.

Mar. 26-Apr. 1. AGGIECON X. Texas A&M University, College Sta. TX. GoH: Theodore Sturgeon. Artist GoH: Boris Vallejo. Toastmaster: Wilson Tucker. Registration: \$5 to 3/16/79, then \$6. Write: Aggiecon, Memorial Student Center, Box 5718, College Station TX 77844.

Mar. 30-Apr. 1. LUNACON 22. Sheraton LaGuardia, Queens NY. GoH: Ron Goulart. Artist GoH: Gahan Wilson. Registration: \$7.50 to 3/15, then \$9.50. Write: Lunacon c/o Walter R. Cole, 1171 East 8th Street, Brooklyn NY 11230.

Apr. 13-16. EASTERCON '79. Sheraton Hotel, Melbourne, Australia. GoH: A. Bertram Chandler. Fan GoH: Brian Thurogood. Write: C&D Ashby, P.O. Box 175, So. Melbourne Vict. 3205, Australia.

Apr. 20-21. NEBULA BANQUET 14. Warwick Hotel, New York NY. SF professionals, SFWA members and guests only. Registration: \$15, couples \$25. Write: Charles L. Grant, 51J Village Green Apts., Budd Lake NJ 07828.

May 25-28. PENULTICON. Cosmopolitan Hotel, Denver CO. GoH: C.J. Cherryh & Samuel R. Delany. Fan GoH: Don & Maggie Thompson. Registration: \$10. Write: Penulticon, Box 11545, Denver CO 80211.

May 26-30. ABA 79. LA Convention Center, LA, CA. Write: American Booksellers Assn, 122 East 42nd Street, New York NY 10017.

Jun. 29-Jul. 2. WESTERCON 32. Sheraton Palace, San Francisco CA. GoH: Richard Lupoff. Fan GoH: Bruce Pelz. Write: Westercon 32, 195 Alhambra St., #9, San Francisco CA 94123.

Jul. 20-22. CONEBULUS III. Thruway Hilton, Syracuse NY. Registration: \$6 to 7/1, then \$10. Write: Conebulus 3 c/o Carol Gobeyn, 619 Stolp Ave., Syracuse NY 13207.

Jul. 20-22. DEEPSOUTHCON '79. Le Pavillion Hotel, New Orleans LA. GoH: R.A. Lafferty. Registration: \$10. Write: Faruk Con Turk, 1903 Dante St., New Orleans LA 70118.

Aug. 23-27 1979. SEACON '79/37th World Science Fiction Convention. Metropole Hotel, Brighton, UK. GoH: Brian Aldiss (UK), Fritz Leiber (US). Fan GoH: Harry Bell. Registration: \$5 supporting, \$7.50 attending to 3/31/78; then \$7.50 & \$15 to 12/31/78. Write: SeaCon '79, 14 Henrietta St., London WC2E 8OJ, UK.

Aug 30-Sep 3. NORTHAMERICAN. Galt House, Louisville KY. GoH: Fredrik Pohl. Fan GoH: George Scithers. Registration: \$10 to 6/30; \$15 to 12/31/78, \$7 supporting. Information: NorthAmerican, P.O. Box 58009, Louisville KY 40258.

Nov. 2-4. NOVACON 9 (WEST). Turf Inn, Albany NY. GoH: Bob Shaw. Registration: \$7.50 to 4/16/79; \$10 to 10/15/79; then \$15. Write: Novacon 9, P.O. Box 428, Latham NY 12110.

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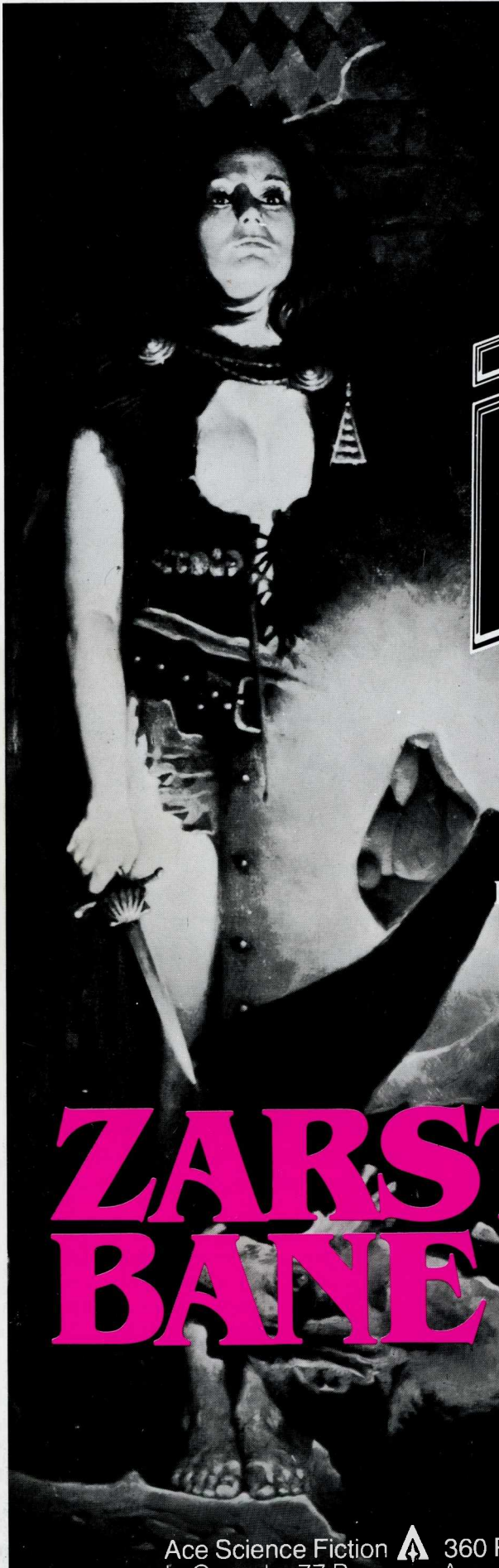
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