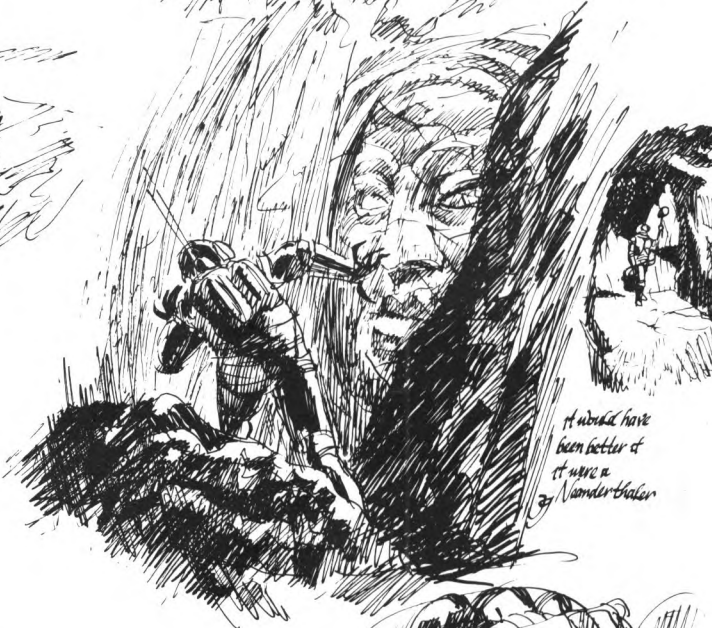




dust, the "Moon
Fash."

Moon Sketches
19. 1963



It would have
been better if
it were a
Nanderblain



five cover ideas for
Sgt. Eva. Part of the
Fortune - or if you prefer, as I did, the Callers of the Fortune



No. 7

1969

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Joanna Russ, a speech*

Good morning -- or rather, good afternoon, everybody. I'm very glad to be speaking to you. In asking me here to speak, you know, Tom Purdom really paid me a tremendous compliment. After all sorts of things about how intelligent I was, and how he was sure I'd be so interesting and give such an interesting talk on a fascinating subject, he paid really the ultimate compliment. He said, "And most of all we want you to be first on the program because you're a teacher" (I thought he was going to say, you know, you know how to talk, you'll be fascinating, fluent and so on, but this wasn't it.) No, he said, "You're a teacher and you have a regular job and you're the only one we can depend on to get up early enough in the morning." Little does he know!

I am glad to see, looking around, that this is not true. I'm not the only one. Thank you all. It was heroic. It was heroic for me, anyway.

Now I'm going to try, today, to talk about something that people will disagree with -- some people, anyway -- and some of you may get pretty mad at me before I'm finished. But I think it's worth it, anyway. I'm trying to operate on the old Leninist principle of presenting a united front to outsiders but being perfectly free to quarrel among ourselves. I think this is something science fiction ought to do -- I mean the quarreling among ourselves. And if we're going to indulge in it, we had better do so pretty quickly: there isn't much time left. The days of our privacy are numbered. Really. The academicians are after us, and there is going to be an invasion of outside people into this field of the kind none of us has ever seen before -- all sorts of goggle-eyed, clump-footed types who will be bringing in all sorts of outside standards (good or bad), outside experience, outside contexts, outside remarks, naivete in some things, great sophistication in other things, all sorts of oddities, all sorts of irrelevancies -- well, Heaven only knows what. I don't even know if it'll be good or bad or how good or how bad. But it is going to happen. The academicians are after us.

Now, if you don't already know it, literary academicians -- and, by the way, I want to include what you might call semi-professional types, like the sort of writers and editors and critics who write for magazines like the *Atlantic*, even though they may not be actually connected with universities -- anyway, literary academicians are always looking for something new to criticize or some new way to criticize something old, and they are just beginning to realize that right under their noses is a whole new, absolutely virgin field of literature that nobody has even had a go at yet. What's going to happen when they realize this fully will be a sort of literary California gold rush. With what we have always considered our own private property trampled under mobs and mobs of people who haven't the slightest respect for our uniqueness, or the

*Presented at the Philadelphia Science Fiction Conference on Saturday afternoon, November 9, 1968.

things we like about ourselves, or the pet grievances we've been nursing for years and so on. Some of these people are fools but some of them -- and I know some of them -- are a lot more sophisticated than anybody in this room. I know that they are certainly much more sophisticated than I am. I think when they get into the field of science fiction, as critics of course, that they will find sf is an antidote for a lot of nonsense that they are subject to, but I'm afraid it's going to work the other way round too.

Actually I want to get my own licks in before the crowd arrives.

All this was brought home to me in a very personal way a couple of weeks ago. I teach at Cornell, and when Cornell University people find out that I write science fiction, there's this sort of wary and cautious couple of steps back -- "Oh, you write science fiction?" -- and then, with a kind of glaze over the eyes, they say, "Ah -- that's H.G. Wells and all that, isn't it?" and I say, "Right!" And then they run away. This is how it happens. Well, this is no longer so. Just two weeks ago today I found in my office mailbox a note asking me to teach a course in Science Fiction this summer: ENGLISH 305 SCIENCE FICTION -- Open to Graduate Students!

And that started me thinking about all the things I've just been saying here this afternoon. And it made me feel very strongly that instead of trying both other people and myself, I had better be as nasty as possible. After all, we know we're good. We know we're on to something. I knew it ever since I was fourteen, when I found out that science fiction was more exciting than vampire stories. And it is, too. I've been reading the stuff for about sixteen years now -- I'm addicted to it, like everyone else here -- but lately what you might call the Long-Term Fan Syndrome has been happening to me. This is the disease that everyone gets sooner or later and symptoms are always the same. "Oh, they used to write it better. Oh, it was better in the old days." Of course, when you talk to people, you find out that they never have quite the same old days in mind -- some will pick the 30's, some the early 50's, some the late 50's, etc. etc. Then there is this student of mine -- "Oh, they used to write it better. Oh, it was better in the old days." I asked him how old he was -- seventeen -- and what the old days were. It turned out that by the old days he meant last year. When people start differing like that, it's obvious that what they mean is the days of their own youth, that is: the days when they first started reading sf.

Now I don't like this. I want to keep on reading the stuff. I want to enjoy it. So I started thinking, and out of all the things I could complain about, all the things I could kvetch about and criticize, ONE story and ONE picture somehow stuck in mind.

I'm not going to tell you what magazine the story was in, or who wrote it, or who did the picture because those things really aren't important. You can find many, many other stories like it, and quite a few other pictures like it. And I want to make clear at the very beginning that I am NOT talking about the individual defects of individual writers or individual editors -- this is not the point at all. What I am trying to do is get at something that is in the air, and that affects science fiction as a whole. It's not a question of there being a multitude of coincidental decisions as to what to write, just by happenstance. Because a lot of these writers are very different from each other person-

ally. I know many of them. But something in the field is affecting all of them and making people who are not alike write alike.

Anyway, the story itself was a very clear, simple little story -- very delicately and carefully told. It was about homosexuality on Mars. Why Mars I don't know, except that wherever you are as a reader, you're not there at any rate. The point of the story was that men who are isolated for a long time without women will attempt to get their sexual satisfaction from each other -- and this is quite true; this is the sort of thing that any warden of any prison in the United States can tell you not to mention the people who know perfectly well that such things happen -- although not, of course, to everyone -- in places like the army. Anyway, the story was perfectly unsensational and even decent to the point of reticence. There wasn't even any sex in it. Instead -- and this is typically American -- one man killed another. It was really an all right story, very rational, very reasonable, and not in the least shocking. I read it. I had to sort of prop my eyes open, you know, because actually it was pretty dull, but I read it.

Then I came to that picture.

It was a picture of the murderer -- this one guy who had killed the man who had made advances to him. Out of horror and disgust, you see. And the story made the point that such exaggerated horror was a product of unconscious, latent homosexuality. Well, apparently the artist had taken alarm even at latent, unconscious homosexuality, and had decided that by God, he was going to show you that this character was no effeminate sissy -- he was a MAN -- so what he did was put layer on layer of muscles on this character, and give him beetling eyebrows and a snarl -- I simply cannot describe the effect. He would've made an adult male gorilla look fragile. It was absolutely wild.

I was reading my magazine in the student cafeteria and as I reached this picture, I think I made some sort of extraordinary noise, like "Eeeyah" which attracted the attention of a student who was nearby.

"What are you reading?" "Science fiction." Can I see?" (he was very interested) "Oh. That's an alien."

Well, he ~~was~~ right, of course, he was absolutely right. In the anxiety to show you a real he-man, the artist who did the picture had created a megalith, a monster, an armored tank, something that had only the faintest resemblance to a human being. I loved that picture. It was so awful that it was wonderful. I wanted to keep it but it fell in my orange juice and got sort of messed up. Still, every once in a while I think of that picture -- and then I think of one of those megaliths trying to rape another megalith -- and it makes me just feel good. In its own way, it's perfectly inimitable.

Of course, the trouble is that the science fiction illustrator who did the picture was not trying to be funny. And therein lies the whole point of my speech today.

It is a scandal, a real scandal, that in a field like ours, which is supposed to be so unconventional, so free, free to extrapolate into the future, free of prejudice, of popular nonsense, so rational and so daring, it is an especial scandal that in OUR field so many readers and so many writers -- or so many stories, anyhow -- cling to this Paleolithic illusion, this freak, this myth of what a real man is. And it's a scandal that he ruins so many stories. Because he does, you know, he

ruins everything he touches. He has only to make one appearance and at once the story he is in coughs, kicks up its heels and dies dead. He only has to look at a woman to turn her into pure cardboard.

Let me put it more generally, and I hope more clearly.

Science fiction is still -- very strangely and very unfortunately -- subject to a whole constellation or group of values which do not have a really necessary connection with science fiction. I would call them conventional or traditional masculine values except that they are really more than that; they are a kind of wild exaggeration of such values. Of course everything becomes exaggerated in sf because we don't show things in the here-and-now, but as they might be. It's a kind of fantasy and that's what fantasy does; it tends to exaggerate and put things into dramatic high relief. (By the way, I think what I'm talking about is particularly American; I don't think American sf has in the past owed very much to British sf or that they spring from the same roots at all.) American science fiction began in the pulps -- I'm not downgrading this, I think it's a very good thing, although I can't go into the reasons why -- now -- because I don't have time. But this origin in trash, real popular trash, may have something to do with the persistence of this really strange kind of image. If I wanted to put it in one sentence, it would be something like this:

The only real He-Man is the Master of the Universe.

Which, of course, leaves out a great many people. †

And if you believe this but are a little less extreme about stating it, it comes out something like this:

The real He-Man is invulnerable. He has no weaknesses. Sexually he is super-potent. He does exactly what he pleases, everywhere and at all times. He is absolutely self-sufficient. He depends on nobody, for this would be a weakness. Toward women he is possessive, protective and patronizing; to men he gives orders. He is never frightened by anything or for any reason; he is never indecisive; and he always wins.

In short, he is an alien monster, just as I said.

The trouble with this creature -- the megalith with the beetling eyebrows -- is the trouble with all mythologies. It's not that he doesn't exist, because everybody knows that he doesn't exist. I don't think there's a single sane man on earth who could seriously and honestly say: yes, I am all that, I am like that; I am never frightened of anything, I have no weaknesses whatsoever, I am a sexual dynamo, I always have my own way, everybody obeys me and so forth. We all know that such a person is impossible. We don't really believe that he exists.

But we do believe that somehow -- despite what we actually know about other people and ourselves -- that he ought to exist, or that he's in some sense ideal, or that there's something wrong with people who are not like that. Or, at the very least, that it would be a hell of a lot of fun pretending you really are like that, even though you know you aren't and you couldn't possibly be.

Now I don't like this -- part of the reason is obvious. This is an ideal that is BY DEFINITION absolutely closed to me. I can pretend to be Cleopatra but I can't very well pretend to be Antony. And for various reasons Cleopatra doesn't appear in science fiction much. I like to think that because I'm a woman I can stand outside this whole business

and be somewhat more objective than if I were caught up in it, as I think a man has to be, to some degree.

I also don't like this strange myth that is set up as a person because he kills every story he touches, or almost every story; they're usually stone dead before the first word comes out of the typewriter. If the stories are alive, they live through the other characters, or through the alien characters, or through incidental comedy or through other interesting things that come in as sort of sidelines. But this turns the story into a grab bag, with no center. The story cannot live through its central character, its central conflict, or its central system of values.

The third reason I don't like this kind of thing -- and this is the most important of all -- is that this ultra-masculine scheme of values messes up one of the most important and fascinating subjects science fiction is dealing with today. Also, was dealing with by the way, although I will stand corrected about this -- but I think it's been a pre-occupation of sf from way back.

I am talking about the subject of power. Now this is a serious business. What you and I think about power, and what we expect powerful people to do, what we are willing to let them do, the kinds of people we give power to, whether we have any power, and how much -- these are really important. And for some reason, sf seems to have gone right to questions like this from the very beginning. How should power be used? What does power justify? How can power be overcome? All this sort of thing. For a contemporary novel -- only one among many -- *Bug Jack Barron*. It's practically about nothing else.

I think again that this may be a particularly American thing, the flavor (?), well, the quality, the particular kind of concern we have with power. Europeans tend to concentrate on the ethical side, and you get things like Albert Camus writing about suicide being the supremely moral act, things that tend to seem pretty bizarre to an American. Europeans -- would you believe European movies? after all, I haven't read everything -- seem to take it for granted that people are pretty powerless, pretty helpless, everybody has weaknesses, everybody is limited by society -- and that's just the way it is. For us, power seems to be a problem *per se*, just because it exists. And vulnerability, too -- the opposite side of power -- this, too, is a problem just because it exists. We aren't just concerned with power; we're downright obsessed with it. And we tend to link up the idea of power with that old, beetle-browed he-man I was talking about. We insist that power -- mind you, ABSOLUTE power, too, power of all kinds -- is equivalent to masculinity.

This leads to trouble. The trouble with making masculinity equal to power -- especially the sort of absolute, ultimate power that sf writers like to write about -- is that you can't look at either power or masculinity clearly. This is bad enough when you can't think clearly about masculinity, but when you can't think clearly about power, it's Godawful. In politics, for instance, power is simply real -- it exists -- it's like the electricity in the lights of this room; and if you look at a real political situation or a real moral situation, and instead of seeing what's really there, you see Virility -- Manhood at Stake -- foodness knows what -- everything gets all mucked up. Of course, this sort of problem isn't confined to science fiction; you can see it hap-

pening all over the place. But science fiction has a unique chance to deal with these things in their chemically pure form, so to speak, to really speculate about them. But so often we don't.

One of the strange things in sf, when you meet this concern with power, is that sf writers seem pretty much to insist on an either-or situation. That is, people in stories tend to be either all-powerful (this is the Ruler of the Universe again) or absolutely powerless. Either the hero is conquering the world or the world is returning the compliment by conquering HIM. In any case, it's a completely black-and-white situation with nothing in between. Alexei Panshin once complained about characters who are strangled by their vacuum cleaners. Well, I think this idea of megalithic, absolute power has a lot to do with being strangled by your vacuum cleaner. If the real man is absolutely invulnerable, then if you're not absolutely invulnerable, you're not a real man, and if you're not a real man, you're absolutely weak and absolutely vulnerable, so even a vacuum cleaner can get you. You even sometimes get this weird hybrid, who is at the same time a superman (utterly powerful) and is being persecuted by the whole world (i.e. he is utterly powerless). In fact, he's being persecuted because he's a superman, that is, because he's powerful. But if he's persecuted, he's powerless. That is, he's powerless because he's powerful. Or vice versa. Sometimes the brain just reels.

Also, you get something else very bad in science fiction from this confusion of maleness -- masculinity -- with power. You get what's been called porno-violence, that is, violence for the sake of violence. (Pornography of violence -- pornoviolence. An elegant word.) I certainly think that science fiction is less of an offender here, if you want to call it an offense, than what's called "mainstream" writing. But we do get a lot of this. I am also getting tired of characters who are tortured or flayed or impaled alive in various ways, or who have to drag themselves along corridors "in a blaze of pain" (it's always a BLAZE OF PAIN in these stories, nobody ever feels just Bleh) or they climb mountains while their lungs are bursting just so the author can enjoy himself masochistically by showing what strong stuff his heroes are made of. "Every nerve screamed with the pain coursing through him." We've all read this dozens of times. Sometimes it's pain and sometimes it's rapture, but it's always bullshit. Bullshit is nice for fun and games, but when you adopt the attitude behind the bullshit and try somehow to apply it or believe in it in real life, that's not good. What I mean is, power is a real thing. It exists. To have power over other people, to control other people, is a real thing which produces real emotions, real problems, real pleasures, real anxieties; to be controlled by someone else, or to be helpless, produces real emotions, real problems, real anxieties, real pleasures. A writer can depict these. But if he is all hung up on the masculinity-equals-power bit or the heroes-must-be-all-powerful-or-they're-not-heroes bit, then he isn't going to get at any of the real things at all. He's just going to thrash around in a sort of void. At the worst, he will simply produce stuff that is too dull to read. At best, he will produce a kind of pornography. But he won't get beyond that. I wish I could bring in here a book by Stephen Marcus called *The Other Victorians*. It has one of the best definitions of pornography that I've ever seen. Mr. Marcus's point is that what makes something pornographic is not simply that it excites you sexually. After all, even a book like *Madame Bovary*, which we consider very reticent should excite you sexually, among all the other things it does. What

pornography does is to exclude everything else, and -- in the process, ironically enough -- it ends up by excluding real sex, too. Pornoviolence is pornographic because it excludes real violence, and the real experience of what violence is and means and feels like. It excludes real power, and the real experience of what power is and means and feels like. In their place, it puts myths, fantasies -- in a word, nonsense.

Let me return now to my beetle-browed, lumpy-muscled friend. I've complained about the bad effects of a system of values that makes being Ruler of the Universe the only decent position in life for a red-blooded American boy. But there is another objection to this system of values besides the way it messes up people's heads when it comes to thinking about power. I mentioned before, that although nobody actually sets up as the Invulnerable Superman, still there's this kind of omnipresent, vague feeling that it would be pretty nice if you could be an invulnerable superman, though, alas, one can't be in real life. Let me run down the list again: No weaknesses. Super-potent. Absolutely uncontrolled by others. Absolutely self-sufficient. Depends on nobody. Gives everybody orders. Never afraid. Never indecisive. He always wins.

Ah! if only one could be like this.

But is it so attractive, really?

It seems to me that for the one quality -- being invulnerable -- every other quality has been given up. The super he-man is super-potent (he has to be, this is an expression of strength) but does he have super pleasure? Not in the stories I've read. Pleasure involves a kind of letting-go, a kind of loss of self, and he can't afford this. This would be weakness. Is he super-happy? Usually not. He does exactly what he wants -- that is, nobody controls him -- but is he therefore super-spontaneous? Super-impulsive? No. Being spontaneous would be dangerous; it would expose him to weakness, and he must not be weak. He can be fond of other people, in a sort of parental or protective way, and he can behave tenderly towards them -- although he doesn't, usually -- but no one can be tender to him because that would mean he depended on someone, and depending on someone would mean he was weak. People admire him but they can't love him, and if you think for a minute, you'll see that he can't love anyone else, because love is possible only between equals and by definition he has no equals. He is a very lonely man. There is a kind of sadness that runs through stories about the superman, and the rugged he-man hero, too -- sometimes the author is aware of it and sometimes he's not -- but there is often (underground sometimes) this profound, despairing sadness. I'm thinking now of Gordon Dickson's Dorsai, the warrior people, where the sadness is quite explicit. You see, the price you have to pay for absolute mastery of every situation is awful. It's the whole rest of life.

Well, if you don't have traditional masculine values, then what? Traditional feminine values? I can't answer this vehemently enough. No no, a thousand times no. There are stories like that in sf and I hate them. If I opened *Analog* tomorrow and found that by divine fiat it had suddenly turned into the *Ladies Home Journal*, I think I would drop dead. And not just from shock, either. If anything gets me madder than the strong, laconic individualist who defeats Ming the Merciless by killing sixteen million billion aliens with his bare hands in four pages, it's the sweet, gentle, compassionate, intuitive little woman who solves some international crisis by mending her slip or something, when her big,

strong, brilliant husband has failed to do so for twenty-three chapters.

I find conventional masculine heroics funny, but conventional feminine heroics are nauseating without being funny. To me, anyway.

Well, what I want -- I can't describe it really, because it would be different for every writer, but maybe I can give a sort of general impression.

I would like to see science fiction keep the daring, the wildness, the extravagant imagination that we got from starting out in the pulps -- but I would like to see us shed the kind of oversimplified values and attitudes it got from the same place -- this business about the He-man is only one of them. So many science fiction stories operate on assumptions about people and assumptions about values that would hardly be adequate to describe the social relations of a bunch of flatworms. There are science fiction novels -- whole big fat novels -- built around moral problems that would be instantly solvable by a year-old chimpanzee. I have also, by the way, seen first-rate adventure stories ruined by people who insisted on reading them as if they contained profound moral problems, though the story itself clearly had no such intentions. There is no reason on earth why a story has to be didactic, has to teach an explicit moral. But if you are going to moralize, you had better make sure it's above the kindergarten level.

Anyway, as I said, the barbarian hordes are knocking at the gates. And these people are sharp. I think we're going to open their eyes to an awful lot, but I think the converse is going to happen, too, and sometimes I don't like the idea at all. They're very sneaky and they're very erudite. Unfortunately the academic critics are going to bring along their own brand of nonsense, but not all these people are bad critics, or academic, or even critics at all. There are writers, too, people from other fields -- movie-makers and painters and all sorts of people. And what is important is not what they will like or dislike about science fiction. After all, nobody has to be bound by what ANY critic says, inside the field or outside it -- what matters is that once you've let an outsider into your private preserve, your own personal backyard, the place never looks the same to you again. It's like letting a stranger into your house -- it's not what the stranger thinks, but that suddenly you find yourself looking at your own domain with a difference. You turn into a stranger yourself. You know, "Oh, lovely rug. Oh, beautiful chairs. Nice picture... What, no storm windows?" Things are never quite the same again. This is what's been happening to me, ever since I learned I was going to have to teach Science Fiction this summer. Everybody knows that you don't TEACH science fiction; you just do it. But you do teach it.

So, I picked on one thing for today. There are dozens of others. There are good things, wonderful things too, of course. And I'm not complaining about things I don't like just because there are going to be outsiders analyzing sf and watching what we do and criticizing what we do and so forth. It's the kind of thing I would complain about anyway. I want the stuff to be better. I enjoy reading it even more than I enjoy writing it. I want it to be thrilling, and real, and alive, and about real people. I want it to be complicated and various and difficult, like life; not smooth and predigested and simpleminded, the way nothing is but bad stories. I want my sense of wonder back again.

And I have it all figured out for the summer, what I'm going to do

An Address* by Frederik Pohl

Madame Chairman, fellow fans. I have notes here, but I probably won't be able to read them, so you'll have to suffer with me. If anybody in the back of the room can't hear me, raise your hands. I won't speak louder, but I'll come back later and tell you what I said.

It doesn't say exactly on the plaque** which of my accomplishments it's for; I understand there's some debate. People that read the books think it's for editing *Galaxy*, and the readers of *Galaxy* think it must be for writing. But in any event I am proud, very proud and very pleased to accept it, and I thank you. I thank you all.

At this point it's more or less customary for anyone to say that he's unaccustomed to public speaking. This isn't exactly true, but I am operating under a handicap. I have been doing a fair amount of public speaking in the last few weeks, but in a somewhat different capacity. In Monmouth County, New Jersey, where I live, I have been nominated for a high public office by the Democratic Party. I hesitate to tell you what the high public office is, but I might as well face up to it: I'm running for Coroner.

This has had a great effect on my life. My wife now answers the phone by saying, "This is the residence of Digger O'Daily, your friendly undertaker." On the evening of the primary election I said to a friend, "I'll see you soon." He said, "Not in your professional capacity, I hope." And someone pointed out that it's pretty apt for a coroner to be editing a science fiction magazine in a period when the Hugo-winning fanzine was *What Killed Science Fiction*.

I despair of the possibility of explaining to anyone what a coroner is. Nobody knows, including me up until about two weeks ago, so I won't go into it. Let me get off that subject without explaining, and go on to talk about science fiction a little bit.

I don't think science fiction is dead. I don't think that it's possible to kill it. I admit that there have been many efforts in that direction. But I think that science fiction has a vitality which has nothing to do with the number of readers of science fiction magazines, or the number of fans; although I am impressed by the number who turned out here today, and at the other meetings I've attended.

I think that science fiction has to do with what people think may happen, not what they know will happen, but what they think may happen

**Guest of Honor Speech presented at the Sixth Annual Lunacon held on April 29, 1962 in New York City.*

***Plaque presented to Lunacon Guest of Honor, which read:*

To Frederik Pohl: Whose rise from the rank of science fiction fan to renowned author, and acclaimed anthologist and editor of science fiction has proven inspirational.

in the future; a question which has preoccupied humanity for some thousands of years. It's only about a century ago that an address was made before the Royal Society in England, in which it was said that science had nowhere to go. Everything had been learned. Every basic fact had been identified, the laws had been established, all that was left was a fiddling with decimal points, improving the accuracy of observation.

Well, this we now can see to have been a kind of madness. Because since then science has been stood on its head repeatedly. Einstein came along, the Bohr atom. Nuclear physics couldn't exist at that time because they didn't know anything about the nucleus. And for every fact we've learned, we've found a dozen questions to which we don't know the answers.

Science fiction, if it could have been killed, might have been killed by the atomic bomb, because that was something that was a standard in science fiction stories, and counted for a great many stories written in the field. But as a matter of fact, five or six years after the bomb fell, science fiction had one of its biggest booms. It could have been killed by Sputnik in 1957. But it wasn't, and it won't be. It will not be killed when the first man walks on the face of Mars. It won't be killed when someone visits Alpha Centauri. Science fiction is not concerned with what we do know, but with what we don't. It is the looking-into-the-future, the areas of knowledge that have nothing to do with what is in the daily papers or what has already been established as basic fact.

I've recently put together a science fiction anthology called *The Expert Dreamers*, which is composed of science fiction stories written by scientists. And, in doing so, I had to read a great many stories like that, stories by people like O.R. Frisch and Norbert Weiner, and many prominent scientists of all descriptions. Many of them, I should say, who are world leaders in their fields, whose names will be remembered for a long time. And a great many of them, it seemed to me, were using science fiction to convey ideas they could not discuss rationally in a scientific paper, because there is no basis of knowledge on which to base their conjectures; there is only a hope that something may happen, or a speculation that something may occur. And this, to me, is what is science fiction.

Science fiction, it seems to me, has to go on to get better, and perhaps bigger too. Bigger in the sense that it will penetrate areas of the people of the world who have never read a science fiction magazine and don't know they exist, but who may see science fiction motion pictures, or read them in big magazines, or see them on television. And I think it will get better because there is an inevitable sine wave in science fiction of ups and downs. And I think we've come through a down, and we're going to an up. I know that, as the editor of two science fiction magazines, I have recently become pretty pleased with myself for having bought some pretty good stories.

In *If* magazine I never quite knew what it was about for a while. It never seemed to have a set policy. I think we finally hit on something; and we've got stories coming up by Hal Clement, a serial by Bob Heinlein. We've got some stories by Lester del Rey if he ever gets around to writing them. The others I already have. We have Poul Anderson, and, what is more important, we have a story called "Down to the Worlds of Men" by Alexei Panshin [July 1963], and a story called "Cap-

tain of the Kali" by Gary Wright [January 1963]. You never heard of either of those people, because I didn't either. But they are, to my way of thinking, as good writers as I have seen in a long time. They're new, they've recently come to the field.

In this magazine, more or less by accident, I've begun a policy of publishing first stories. One of the panelists mentioned Joe Green from Seattle who had made a few sales, a fan who had become a pro. The first sale he made was to *If*. And there's a young fellow in Georgia named Charles Cunningham, I see his name in letter columns from time to time. He has a story coming up in *If* ["The Man Who Flew," Nov. 1962]. I think that every issue of *If* for the next year at any rate will have one story by, perhaps not what we all mean by a fan in the sense of someone who puts out a fanzine, but someone who has been a reader and is now trying his wings as a pro.

In *Galaxy* we also have some pretty good stories coming up. We have Jack Vance, Ray Bradbury, Cordwainer Smith, Fritz Leiber, Judy Merril, Avram Davidson, Brian Aldiss, Gordon Dickson, a great many. There's really no point in my naming them all. But I think that what is important about that list is that many of these writers are people who have said they had left science fiction. They weren't going to write it any more, they were bored with it. But they're back now. And I think that this is a sign of the upswing.

I said, when SaM asked me to comment on fanzine publication, that I wanted to make my remarks later when I had a captive audience. So you're captured now, can't get out, the doors are guarded. Fanzine criticism, it seems to me, is the only worthwhile criticism a writer can get. I am a writer who has always had a great distaste for writers' classes, and even for writers' conferences, for writers' magazines; and for anything else which inculcates in the writer a few monkey tricks, that does not provide him with the first essential of any writer -- something to say.

All it is possible to learn from formal criticism is how well you have complied with certain arbitrary standards. Good stories do not have to comply with anyone's standards, except the standards of the man who writes them. The professional criticism that some of the panelists thought was more important has its value, no doubt about it. But it can't compare in reaching the heart of a story with the man who says, "I like it," or "I don't like it," or "It seems phony to me," or "It seems real," or "I couldn't finish it," or "It made me cry." The reaction that a story produces on a reader is far more important than the degree to which it meets the plot skeleton many writers use, or the formal construction systems that are employed.

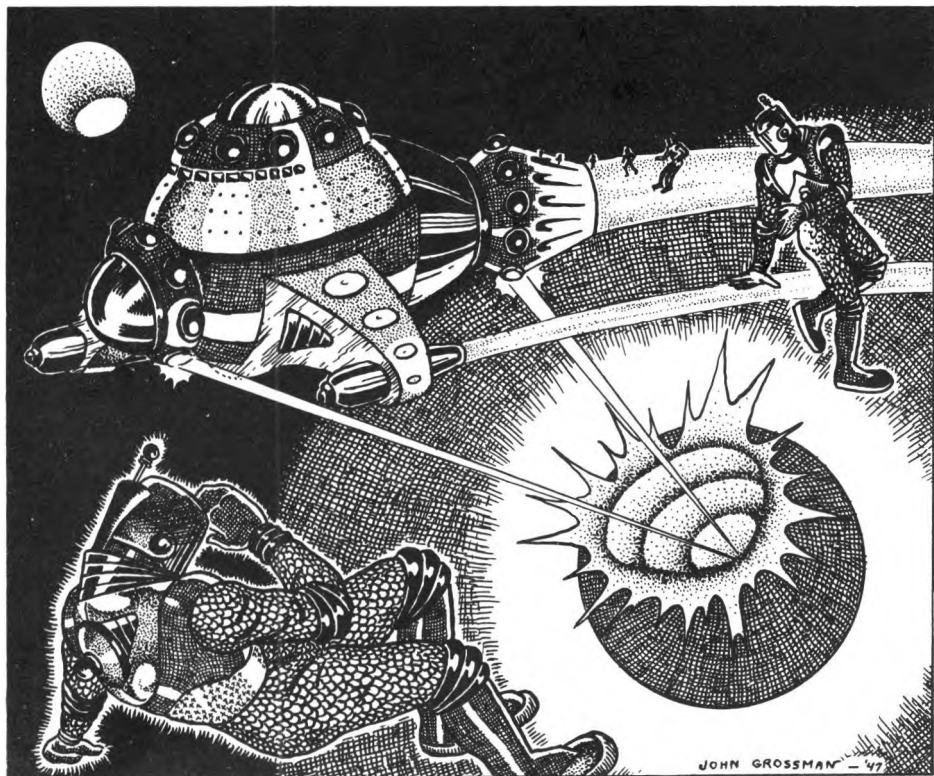
Science fiction fan magazines perform other services than that. I think that was brought out to some extent; that the bibliographies, Don Day and others, have been very helpful -- to me I know. I think probably Lester has made use of them. Don Wollheim has made use of them. I know that in the office at *Galaxy*, when someone calls up to find out where a story appeared, we consult either an American index which was prepared last year, or an English one. If one of them doesn't have it, the other surely does. Their records are far better than our own. And I think that the service that has been done for science fiction writers, anthologists, and editors by the fanzines far outweighs any reward the fans could have gotten for it.

There's a woman I know who's compiling a list of all American nov-

els translated into French, not just science fiction. But she has found that it's much easier for her to complete the science fiction section of her list than any other, because the fanzines have better records of American stories translated into French than the Bibliotheque nationale has. She's very bitter about many other fields, but science fiction has been a joy to her.

Say, there's one other thing about fanzines: I like them. I like to read them. It may be true, as someone said, that only five, or ten, or fifteen percent of them are good in this respect or another. But Ted Sturgeon has made a statement which is now called Sturgeon's Law. He says 90 percent of anything is junk. And this is pretty true. It may be that many science fiction fanzines aren't worth reading, perhaps not even at the time they're published, much less a year or two later. But there are some which I reread from time to time; and there are also a good many which I hope some of you will, because I've donated them to the auction.

But I won't speak very much longer, because I'm merciful, if nothing else. There is one other thing that I wanted to say, that I hope I do get elected coroner in November. And if any of you live in Monmouth County, I will ask you to vote for me if you possibly can. If you're underage, vote anyhow. But I do promise that if I'm elected coroner I will never sign the death certificate on science fiction. Nobody will, because it will outlive all of us. Thank you.



WHITHER WORLDCONS?

A PANEL DISCUSSION* BY

Anthony Lewis, Bruce Pelz and Jay Haldeman

Moderated by Ted White

TED WHITE: Our first order of business today is closely tied up with the Worldcons. Our panel consists of Bruce Pelz, Tony Lewis and Jay Haldeman. Jay represents Washington, D.C., Tony Lewis represents Boston and Bruce represents the West Coast. The main purpose of this discussion is that recently there has been considerable agitation about the general flavor or context, let us say, of the World Convention, the annual World Convention which this year is in St. Louis and next year might very well be in Heidelberg, Germany. There has been considerable agitation to either make this the truly international and genuinely world con or conversely to keep it in this country, predominantly, and/or create a truly national annual conference. Now a committee is set up to investigate all this and two of its members are here on our panel, being Bruce Pelz and Tony Lewis. And Tony is going to tell us a little bit about what the committee has investigated thus far, more or less give us a progress report on what they have found out.

ANTHONY LEWIS: At the Baycon the committee was set up to study the desirability, the feasibility and the possible ramifications of holding a national or North American continental convention in the years the Worldcon wasn't in North America. We have met at various regional conventions on the East Coast and West Coast.

The general consensus of opinion has been first: that if there is a national convention, there should be no national convention held in 1970 because this would look like a deliberate attempt to undermine the Heidelberg convention. In fact there should be even no attempt to do any sort of action that would appear to undermine Heidelberg. This is the general consensus of the committee and of most people we talked to. Second: the general consensus of opinion is that if there is a national convention it should be called the North American Science Fiction Convention, and we could make up whatever acronym we choose. Further than that there should be a change, that the convention we have is a North American continental convention; it isn't really a world convention. And that we should attempt to set up a true international congress of science fiction, possibly starting with the Heidelberg convention. I think that is essentially the consensus to date. I'll pass it to Bruce for any additional comments he'd like to make.

BRUCE PELZ: Most of this is predicated on the idea that Heidelberg will win 1970. A foreign world convention needs all the support the United States can give it because the majority of science fiction fans are in the United States; that is, organized fandom as such. And should we let them do something like exaggerating one of these regionals to look like a national convention, thereby pulling in people who are sort of on the borderline of being able to go to Heidelberg or not, it would be very

*Presented at the 12th Annual Lunacon, on Sunday afternoon, April 13, 1969, in New York City.

bad for international public relations. This is why the committee and everyone else that has been talked to on this, including the Boston regional conference, is of the opinion that nothing should be done that would look like we're taking away from Heidelberg.

As for the international science fiction congress, Heidelberg has already announced that it is presenting an international science fiction congress in 1970. This is because it was necessary for the Heidelberg convention committee to reserve the town of Heidelberg, the entire town, for the weekend. If by some weird freak of luck they should not get the World convention, due to some sort of bidding at St. Louis, they would still put on an international science fiction congress. They are committed to do so. And this looks like the best time to start a truly international get-together. The same affair is going to be held no matter what. The idea would be that United States fans should go there and offer their help -- assistance and suggestions -- but not try to dictate because there is no one pattern for a truly international get-together. Then after Heidelberg it could be admitted what is de facto: that the World Science Fiction Convention is really a North American science fiction convention. We could term it such in name as well as in fact; and we should be out from under the many claims, which are getting much louder, of chauvinism and bad public relations with the foreign fans. The current attitude of "we will send you the world convention overseas either every 4 years or every 5 years, or if we change our mind with St. Louis maybe every 7 years, then we change it back again" has gotten extremely bad reactions and quite reasonably so. But if it were admitted that it's only our national convention, there is no longer any possible reason why we should send it overseas at all. I'll pass this back to Ted and go on from there.

TED WHITE: Well, Jay, do you have some thoughts on this?

JAY HALDEMAN: I wasn't connected with this particular committee, but I was on the fringes of one that was established at Nycon to look into much the same problem. About the same conclusions were reached. It is essentially a North American convention now, even with the rotation plan as it is presently set up. It appears like we're more or less throwing Europe a bone, so to speak. They get conventions when we allow them to have them. This keeps it from becoming an international convention. I believe that with the current state of fandom as it's growing in Europe these days, you don't have to worry about rotation plans much longer because they're going to be so big soon that it'll truly be an international convention. You're going to have to wake up to this fact that the North American convention is just too limited. It's going to be a much broader thing. Travel is getting increasingly easy across the ocean; it's no problem making an international convention. That's my comment.

TED WHITE: It seems to me that one of the principal problems we have here is that of paranoia in both this country and overseas. I have seen, I imagine everyone on this panel has seen -- I believe it is a Spanish fan or an Italian fan -- has written letters to any number of British and American fanzines or they've been circulated to American fanzines, protesting the chauvinism with which we deign occasionally to toss them the crumb of a convention. I think this is a very mistaken notion on the part of this individual and inasmuch as it represents an

attitude held in Europe, it's a dangerous one.

The fact of the matter is that the United States has never rejected any bid for an overseas Worldcon. I can see annoyance with making it rigidly a case of every 4 years or every 5 years, but thus far there have been 2 bids from England -- both of which were accepted -- and the bid from Heidelberg has been more or less unanimously backed. It is my impression that the fans in this country are rather altruistic about it, that very rarely is any serious bid entered against a foreign bid. Whereas bidding where there are no foreign bids has quite often been rather cutthroat and ruthless between American cities. I speak as one who has dealt in a certain amount of this. Therefore I am somewhat perturbed at the notion that we're just throwing bones. I personally would like to see a genuine World Science Fiction Convention.

Now when we start talking about the enormous numbers of European fans and how they may well be soon the body of the dog and us merely the tail, I have to point to actual figures of European and any other overseas participation in American conventions by way of supporting memberships and/or balloting. It's lamentably low. I spoke last night with Ray Fisher who is the chairman of the St. Louis convention this year and he was quite worried about the lack of foreign participation in the St. Louiscon. And this is the con at which the Heidelberg bid will be presented. He said that he had literally a handful of members from England and Europe and a little more than that from Australia. And this hearkened me back to the Nycon when we had, and Andy Porter can give us more accurate figures, something like a dozen or two dozen Australian members; and something like one dozen English and European members.

ANDREW PORTER: "None from Spain.

TED WHITE: Considering this fact one wonders why there is such a tremendous complaint by these fans that we are not allowing them to participate. Because the fact is, they have considerable voice in any American con that they choose to join. The one inequity which does exist is that they cannot vote for the consite unless they show up at the American con (and there has been some talk about that and I think we'll go into that in a minute about proxy bids or mail bids). But they can participate in Hugo voting, which was another complaint which was marked by this same Spanish fan, that Americans controlled the presentation of Hugos. That no European, for instance magazine, publisher, book, author, etc., has ever won a Hugo. It's certainly true that practically no European etc. has ever won a Hugo and I can't for the life of me think of anyone who has ever been put forth for one. I'm not thinking of British -- British participation in American fandom has always been stronger -- I'm talking about European, not English language. That being the case, it seems to me that these people really ought to put their money where their mouths are. But let us get back to the idea of foreign participation in the American con.

BRUCE PELZ: I don't think the complaint is not being allowed to participate. The complaint is not being allowed a share of something called a World convention. And it would appear that changing the name of the thing, and admitting it's a national should do away with this. Now I'm quite aware that it probably won't. But it should be merely a question of getting our national convention and doing what we like with it and then setting up something that everybody can have a share of.

GEORGE NIMS RAYBIN: At this point, if I may as a member of the committee I would like to add one small point. What is proposed is not something which will change the character of the conventions that we're holding. The change of name will merely recognize in words what has been actually the case in fact: That it has been our national convention all these years and changing the title to the national convention will merely put into words that fact. And that in reality if the British and the European continental and the other fans from other parts of the world as well as our own fans wish to consider that the first real World Science Fiction Convention is the one in Heidelberg, then the fans who are present there will be free to do this.

TED WHITE: Well, George, are you ruling out the Torcon and the two Loncons as Worldcons?

GEORGE NIMS RAYBIN: No, I merely consider that they were national conventions which were held outside the United States. To the same extent that the American Bar Association has held its convention in London on various occasions, but it still remained an American Bar Association convention. The fact that we encourage fans throughout the rest of the world to participate in our national convention being held both in the United States and elsewhere doesn't change the basic fact that it has been our national convention.

TED WHITE: Well, George, it seems to me that we need to take a slightly historical perspective here. At the time the Worldcon was initially called a Worldcon, which is to say the first Nycon (and I stand to be corrected, of course I wasn't there. I believe that it was even then being called a World convention), you could both say that this was a case of typical Americans arrogating the rest of the world in the same way we do the World Series; but you could almost as easily say it was an example of fannish idealism. At that time I think the one world idea was pretty big in fandom no matter what your political stripe was and that to a large extent it was in the minds of the people who started this that ultimately some day we would have a Worldcon in more than name, that something we were starting here in this country, we were starting here in this country because that's where for better or worse fandom started.

At that time there was a relatively small handful of fans in Britain and in Australia, and whatever other fan groups may have existed in embryo they were certainly not in communication with the rest of the world; much in the way we've seen high school science fiction clubs start up in this country and not know there's a fandom. It seems to me we're at a crossroads right now between going beyond these tentative steps we've taken to make our Worldcon a genuine Worldcon, and pulling in and retrenching and saying, "Okay, it never was and we'll never let it be." Now personally I favor the old-fashioned idealistic point of view that we can afford to let this thing pass beyond our greedy control. I certainly contradict you, George, when you say that the second Loncon, which was the only foreign con that I was at, was still an American con. We were outnumbered by British fans. The British fans ran the con, chose the speakers and so forth, set up the program and as I understand it, it was pretty much their con, with our participation much as we have put on cons here with the participation of overseas fans and pros. This is what I should think a Worldcon should be ideally. If

we're going to have a Worldcon, it cannot be somebody's particular national con that year. It's got to be truly international in participation and scope. Now whether it would be better simply to see this international sf congress open up and take this on or not, I don't know. But we've got something like 28 years of calling ourselves the Worldcon which effectively if we just say, "Okay, it really never was. We re-trench. We call it the national con from now on," we'd get wiped out.

BRUCE PELZ: Actually the Loncon II in '65 may have been a world convention in that it was not United States fans running the convention. But it was the previous convention, or several conventions, setting the rules. It was the U.S. convention that set the rules for how we were going to select the next world convention. The British really had no way of electing a German site for after that. And a truly world convention shouldn't be just let out of this country every 4 or 5 years. I think in this case it was a question of the American convention yielding the floor, sort of, to the British national convention. And in that I think George may be right. I've oversimplified, but I think that was what he's been saying.

Now tradition, looking toward the past, has long been a problem with this future-looking, on the face of it, science fiction fandom, and every time we turn around someone else is accusing us of it. Unfortunately it's largely true. And a move to deny the use of the word "World" in connection with these conventions we've been holding since 1939 is going to meet with some reaction. It's just a question of whether or not we wish to really be international in scope as we've professed to be for so many years and make the convention international in scope to go along with the name.

ANTHONY LEWIS: I think you might look at it as if the North American or United States convention when it started essentially assumed the title World Science Fiction Convention to hold this title in trust until fandom in the rest of the world had developed enough to take its turn at this. And I think you can essentially see what George and Bruce were saying. When British fandom reached the point that it was ready, the British national convention for 2 times assumed the title World Science Fiction Convention. One of the schemes that's been proposed has been essentially to divorce the title World Science Fiction Convention from any particular convention and to rotate the title around the world in some sort of zoning rotation plan. And whenever the title is in a zone, which might be North America, Europe, the Pacific, however people want to set it up, the fans within that zone would determine which of the national conventions in that zone would hold that title for that year. This has been one of the plans that has been suggested.

JAY HALDEMAN: I'm inclined to agree with Ted's comment that we're about at a crossroads and we've got to make some decisions. I'm not sure it's entirely up to us again to make these decisions. We seem to be doing this unilaterally. But there is a reason for calling it a Worldcon and I think that Ted brought this out with the idealism and the sense of wonder involved in the whole thing. This whole idea of a World convention, the size we are today is quite exciting. It's something you can really associate yourself with. But the mechanics need to be ironed out. We've got a long way to go yet if it's going to turn into a truly world convention. The rotation plan as it is set up now allows for some of

this but it's a sticky solution at best. It must be considered only a temporary solution.

TED WHITE: There's one additional problem which nobody has mentioned as yet because we've all been too polite. And that is that there are a lot of diehard reactionary fans in this country who will be caught dead before they'll allow what they consider to be their Worldcon ever to leave this country on anything approaching a truly international basis. We have here a copy of a letter apparently. I just saw this now. It is a position paper, pardon me, not a letter at all, although it certainly bears some resemblance to a letter. "World Science Fiction Conventions" by Alva Rogers, on the letterhead of Baycon II in '72 Bidding Committee, the S F Bay Area for the 30th World Science Fiction Convention. Now I have not tried to read this whole thing, however the concluding line was pointed out to me as summing it up and that concluding line is, "We invented it and it is still mainly our club."

Now in one sense that's true. It's not really arguable. I think that if a world census of fans were taken, it would certainly turn out that this country has a vastly greater proportion of fans than any other single country. And that perhaps a solution might be to simply periodically take some sort of census (although I think that'd be very difficult) and apportion the Worldcon directly proportional to that. But apparently the way it's being used here is the notion that we have no business letting this thing out of our hands. It's ours, we made it, we have the right to call it anything we like and too bad for the rest of them if they don't like it.

Which is really an arrogant position but one which is certainly not uncommon in fandom and one which we have encountered at past Worldcon business sessions, wherever topics like this come up. Somebody will stand up and say there are only a half dozen fans in the rest of the world and they certainly are not anywhere near our superior caliber and we certainly have no business letting those inferior morons take over, and my God what would they do to the Hugos -- we wouldn't get our money this year. There are certain pros, who will go unnamed, who regard the Hugo as money in their pocket every year and have actively lobbied for Hugos for themselves and their friends every year and would be totally distressed if it was to go to something like, say, Perry Rhodan. I might be a little bit distressed myself actually.

But in any case there is a sort of division here between taking an ideal point of view and taking a selfish point of view. And unfortunately, as Jay pointed out, the mechanics of this are the stickiest part of it. The mechanics are that the way things are set up now these things, to make any change, must be voted on at Worldcon business sessions. And the bulk of the people at Worldcon business sessions are extremely self-centered people who are interested primarily in seeing what they can get for themselves and screw anyone else who isn't there. Under those circumstances, setting these things up in any form of more open and idealistic and international way is going to meet heavy resistance all the way down the line.

BRUCE PELZ: Ted, it should be pointed out that there are awards given by other national fandoms. And that the International Fantasy Award, which was definitely international because it was awarded by a committee, predates the Hugo. But as a national award I believe the Hugo is

the oldest.

ED WOOD: There seem to be two types of things here that are a difficult problem with regard to the World convention. One is money and no one should sneer at it. If you have a rich uncle, I'm sure you hate him. How do you think the rest of the world feels about having 90% of the world's science fiction published in America or at least in English as the original language or in translation? Now most American fans don't read all the science fiction around. How do you figure people in foreign countries to read our science fiction in toto? So if they're going to be voting for a Hugo, there might be a very well-deserving Hugo candidate of American writing and they won't have read it because it hasn't been translated yet or copies haven't reached them. These authors will be unhappy: "Gee, I could have won a Hugo had it been in America or the Americans had voted but here I'm out because the convention is being held in Upper Slobovia."

BRUCE PELZ: Ed, not pertinent. The point I was trying to make was that the Hugo awards are English language awards and that since there are other national awards there is no reason why the United States or the United States and England should not have its own award. And that possibly another international award could be elected.

ED WOOD: What will Heidelberg award? I ask you that, will they award a Hugo or will they award the German science fiction award?

TED WHITE: I don't know. Does anyone really know?

BRUCE PELZ: As it is currently set up? Or as it might be changed?

ED WOOD: Well, I just want to know what their plans were in terms of the awards.

BRUCE PELZ: I can't speak for them.

ED WOOD: Well, of course, and that's a point I've been trying to make. You see, we have not yet come up with the actual mechanics of getting the conventions run. I think in terms of altruism, the foreign fandoms are growing more mature all the time. In fact many of the foreign fans, active fans, have been better than many American fans in terms of their activity and their working out of these things. I would just mention one guy in Tasmania -- a guy who has been in the field since '38 -- he's accomplished more than half the people in this room combined. The point being that we still have to think a little more clearly about the mechanics of world conventions, the awarding of the prizes, the transfer of funds.

The transfer of funds is going to be the real stickler. I refer to Ben Jason who got the 1966 convention for Celveland by going to London. He started out with a few American fans' memberships in his pocket and he had the devil's own time trying to get the funds to run his convention. Now we're going to put a very hard task on the American convention that follows an out-of-the-country convention. We're going to have to find a way of correcting this inequity because it's not fair to the man who follows an out-of-the-country convention compared to the guys who follow -- well, since the West Coast was following New York, New

York transferred all its loot to me and I was really sitting pretty.

TED WHITE: Well, Ed, you brought up two separate points here and I'm going to let Tony answer the second one. As far as the Hugos go, I see no reason why the Hugos should be as closely connected to the Worldcon as they presently are. And I think there has been a movement in the last 5 years or more to set up a separate Hugo-awarding committee structure. I think that this merely brings it a little more to a head, that there's a need to do exactly that.

ANTHONY LEWIS: As far as the transfer of funds goes, I talked to Ray Fisher about that and he said the St. Louis committee plans to make two transfers of funds this year. One to the 1970 winner and another amount to the 1971 winner since both are being chosen. By the time we get around to restructuring the system, which is one of the reasons why we should do it now, we should be able to have made proper financial arrangements so that there shouldn't be any problem with the transfer of funds between countries.

BRUCE PELZ: Part of the idea is that if we set up the international congress, then the transfer of funds would have to be worked out by the people setting up that international congress. Whereas a national convention, a North American convention, would have no problem in transferring funds. But once you've called it a World convention, it seems one is obligated to actually make it so and there admittedly you have a problem transferring funds back again. There's no problem getting it out of the country, but bringing it back in again is another question.

BRUCE PELZ (answering comment from floor, inaudible on tape): There are several possibilities. First of all, each country has its own national awards and if the international convention or World title, whichever, were to rotate among the national conventions then whichever year you have, the world convention would present that particular national award. Another possibility is that in addition to the national award there would be an international award. Again the mechanics would have to be set up. But there is no reason for the U.S. Hugos to be a worrying problem for the people who want it to be their own province. But I think the problem of the awards is not really that important. I think there is already a situation where if it was merely recognized it would handle the whole thing.

RON GRAHAM (extracts from comments almost inaudible on tape): From the point of view of a foreign fan, it seems to me, and seems to the foreign fans generally, that an international convention should be exactly that. My basic idea -- and I know a little bit about international fan feeling -- aside from the idea we should have a national convention in each country, is that there should be some international board set up which will determine where the Worldcon goes. To other than the fans in the U.S., it doesn't seem right that all World problems should be decided in the U.S. There is a considerable local fandom outside the U.S. and not only European. But as everyone knows, U.S. fandom tends to dominate. That is of course the real reason why all worldcons have been held in the U.S.A. In fact I think that there probably wouldn't have been any sort of Worldcon if U.S. fans hadn't done it. Due to that reason it seems that science fiction throughout the world has now reached the status where there could be an international body to decide where World-

cons should go. Let us all have an international and not a national, con as suggested.

Also I think, to my mind, that the Hugo belongs to the U.S.A. An international convention could give an international award perhaps, and the cons except the Worldcon would give national awards. I wouldn't like to dictate to you, but I would suggest however that you do support Heidelberg in 1970. It will be a real Worldcon. They're set to give a great welcome to the fans who do arrive. I think that anyone who visits Heidelberg next year will have the time of their life -- they'll never forget it.

Now I'd also like you to bear this in mind, that one of the great benefits of a Worldcon will be that you will see fans from all over the world, be able to get some of the impressions of fans from around the world. This is something you don't get when the Worldcon stays in the U.S.A. This is the opinion of a fan from Australia. [Applause]

TED WHITE: I think we're going to use that as our summing up statement, and I thank you very much. So this will conclude this panel.



The Origin of Life

A Speech* by Edward E. (Doc) Smith

"In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth... and God said 'Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creatures that hath life... Let the earth bring forth the living creature after his kind' God created man in his own image... male and female created He, them."

Or, to quote the shorter, snappier version as given in the Gospel according to Saint John: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God... All things were made by Him, and without Him was not any thing made that was made."

The question "Where did life come from?" has plagued mankind ever since the first man started to think; and the ascription of life's beginning to an omnipotent Being or beings must be almost as old.

Arrhenius' Hypothesis, of life-spores pervading all space, driven through the void by the pressure of light, answers the question only as far as Earth is concerned. It does not touch the real problem at all.

With due deference to any null-A logicians who may be present, the earliest thinkers must have been driven to an 'either-or' conclusion: Life was either created by a god or it came about by spontaneous generation from simple substances. This problem, as stated, is still with us; and it has not been solved.

If life had in fact been created by supernatural means its explanation lay, by definition, outside the realm of science. That left only the hypothesis of spontaneous generation; which was in fact very widely held. Worms came from mud; maggots and flies from decaying meat, and so on. Few, even among scientists, doubted it. Aristotle, Newton, William Harvey, Descartes, van Helmont; all believed it. Some theologians, notably the English Jesuit John Turberville Needham, could subscribe to it, for Genesis does not say that God created life directly, but that he instructed the waters and the earth to bring life forth.

However, about a hundred years ago, this theory hit the rocks. Sterile mud did not produce anything; sterile meat did not rot. Pasteur, driven to more and more conclusive experiments by the loud-mouthed opposition, knocked the last props out from under the idea of spontaneous generation of life. For, if life had ever generated itself spontaneously, it should still be doing so, and it very definitely was not.

This logic was apparently unimpeachable, and left no tenable theory at all for those scientists who were unwilling to believe in supernatural creation. This was the state of things when I started writing; and the facts that the theory hadn't changed by that time and that it didn't change for thirty years thereafter were due to the state of science itself at that time.

Science was much simpler then than it is now. Everything could be

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modeled in three dimensions. Atoms were perfectly hard, perfectly elastic, and indivisible. Indivisible, that is, except for a couple of elements such as radium, which could be regarded (in a highly oversimplified sense, of course) as exceptions proving the rule. Einstein had propounded his theory, but few people knew of it and of those few only a handful took any stock in it. Einstein, Rutherford, Soddy, the Curies, and a couple of others were tearing the classical physics up by the roots, but practically nobody was listening. Atomic energy was and always would be impossible; physically, mathematically, intuitively, logically, starkly and eternally impossible. Anybody who thought atomic energy possible had simply flipped his lid.

The universe was small. Only the boldest astronomers, such as Shapley and Leavitt, were beginning to think in terms of thousands of light years -- to say nothing of millions and billions of parsecs.

Planets were very scarce items. Rigorous mathematical analysis showed that not more than two planetary systems could exist at any given time in our entire galaxy; with the probability very great that there could be only one. Thus it was practically certain that our solar system was the only one in the galaxy either supporting life or capable of doing so.

Furthermore, since very few scientists would do more than concede the bare possibility of life on either Mars or Venus, it was generally believed that one planet, our Earth, was the only planet in existence upon which life did or could exist. Wherefore life became a very minor and exceedingly fleeting excrescence upon the two-dimensional surface of one submicroscopic bit of the inorganic immensity of the Cosmic All.

In fact, more than one scientist of repute came to regard life as a sort of disease of inorganic matter---a purely accidental infection of this one world.

During the forty years since that time, physics and astronomy were revolutionised; but those studying the mystery of the origin of life made practically no progress for some thirty of those years. Then came a new method of attack, which may have been begun by the Russian biochemist A. I. Oparin; whose book *The Origin of Life*, first published in 1936, was republished by Dover Publications in 1953. At least George Wald, professor of biology at Harvard and one of the world's leading authorities on the chemistry of vision (whose article "The Origin of Life" in the August 1954 issue of *Scientific American* is very highly recommended) gives a great deal of credit to Oparin -- adding, modestly, "Much can be added now to Oparin's discussion."

Wald says: "I think a scientist has no choice but to approach the origin of life through a hypothesis of spontaneous generation. What... (was)... untenable is only the belief that living organisms arise spontaneously under present conditions. We have now to face a somewhat different problem; how organisms may have arisen spontaneously under different conditions in some former period, granted that they do so no longer."

What are the requirements for such an event to come about? They are so fantastic as to justify, at first glance, the word "impossible." For, besides mineral salts and water, we must have a great many organic compounds, ranging from merely complex to exceedingly complex, come together not only in certain exact amounts, but also in minutely exact

spatial configurations. We must have carbohydrates, fats, proteins -- themselves composed of some twenty-five amino acids -- nucleic acids, and, above all, enzymes.

"Ridiculous!" is the first, and justified, reaction; at first glance the probability of the necessary exactitude, quantitative and structural, appears vanishingly small.

But is it, actually? Take, for instance, the supposedly all-important enzymes. They are not, at first, necessary at all. An enzyme is merely a catalyst; its only effect is to speed up a reaction. Without the enzyme, the reaction which now takes place in one second might take an hour or a month. And what of that? Earth had thousands of millions of years.

Whether or not the atmosphere of young Earth contained any oxygen, it is agreed that it did contain methane, ammonia, hydrogen, and water vapor. And S. L. Miller, a student under Harold Urey, subjected a mixture of the above gases to an electric spark for one week. The resultant solution, analyzed by the exceedingly delicate and precise technique of paper chromatography, contained a surprisingly high amount of a mixture of amino acids, the building blocks of proteins!

Now as to probability. Mathematically, in an infinity of time, any conceivable event, no matter how fantastic, not only can happen; it must happen. Of course, life has not had an infinity of time in which to develop; it has had only a couple of thousands of millions of years. The question is, therefore, has it had time enough?

It probably has. For any probability, however small, becomes virtually certain if enough trials are made. For instance, an event having a probability of one in a thousand, after ten thousand trials, will almost certainly have happened at least once; its probability now having become nineteen thousand nine hundred ninety nine twenty-thousandths. (19,999/20,000).

No probability figure can be given for the occurrence of a living cell, since we do not know either what constitutes a trial nor the time covered in the trials. I can say, however, that the opportunities for trials were inconceivably numerous and that the time involved was inconceivably long.

With significant quantities of demonstrable and identifiable amino acids produced in a laboratory in one week's time, it is evident that the probability of spontaneous generation is no longer infinitesimal, but has been increased by several orders of magnitude. For, with large quantities of amino acids and other organic compounds dissolving in the salts-rich oceans of early Earth, the occurrence of carbohydrates, fats, proteins, nucleic acids, and quite possibly even enzymes, becomes virtually certain. If these compounds were stable enough -- that is, if they did not decompose too quickly -- the spontaneous generation of living cells would also become virtually certain.

Were they stable enough? They probably were. The two great destroyers of organic matter are free oxygen and decay. The former, by premise, did not then exist on Earth. Neither did the latter, since decay is caused by living organisms. There remains, of course, the possibility of spontaneous dissolution, which could have been operating constantly against the assumed synthesis. Much has been written -- much too much to go into here -- about the balance of these two factors and

the most probable location of the point of equilibrium. After full consideration of all available data, however, Wald makes out a very strong case for spontaneous generation. To quote one of his conclusions:

"We have no need to try to imagine the spontaneous formation of an organism by one grand collision of all its component molecules. The whole process must be gradual. The molecules form aggregates, small and large. The aggregates add further molecules, thus growing in size and complexity. Aggregates of various kinds interact with one another to form still larger and more complex structures. In this way we imagine the ascent, not by jumps or master strokes, but gradually, piecemeal, to the first living organism."

Now apply the above reasonings and conclusions to the planet Jupiter. It has been held, long and insisently, that life as we know it is impossible there because of the absence of oxygen and the fact that (in spite of the wonderful job Hal Clement-Stubbs did on *Mission of Gravity*) hydrogen at a hundred or so degrees below zero is not chemically acceptable as the reactive ingredient of an atmosphere.

But there is methane on Jupiter -- plenty of it. There is plenty of lightning. Likewise plenty of ammonia and hydrogen and so on. And Jupiter has plenty of time; much more time than our Earth ever had. It is therefore definitely possible -- in fact, it seems now quite probable -- that life as we know it is developing on Jupiter right now; and that life as we know it will come into being on Jupiter, possibly even before Earth becomes a dry and barren ball such as Mars now is.

Finally, let us consider the possible extent of life throughout the macrocosmic universe. Astronomers now believe that there are many millions of solar systems in our galaxy instead of only our one. There are, in all probability, thousands of millions of galaxies. There probably are, therefore, thousands of millions of millions of planets; the majority of which, on cooling, could have atmospheres of water vapor, methane, ammonia, and hydrogen, and could therefore develop life more or less similar to that which developed here on Earth.

When I wrote the old *Sky Lark*, I had not even the faintest suspicion that I would live to see science develop a thing to make Richard Seaton's atomic X-plosive look like a firecracker. Nevertheless, science did just that.

When I plotted the Lensman series I was sure I was on safe ground -- but I wasn't. It has now become more than a possibility that such things as Velantians, Palainians, Chickladorians -- even Lyranians -- do in fact exist. So I am now waiting eagerly for science to come up with Nels Berganholm's inertialess drive.

I want to go out there and see.

JOANNA RUSS *Continued from Page 10*

in the class, I mean. When this keen, studious, frighteningly brilliant graduate student comes up to me and says, "You know -- I've been reading *Savage Orbit*. Now of course I understand the peripety in the last chapter, but I can't quite place the mythic resonance of the objective correlative." Then I will look at him -- and smile, just a little, knowingly -- a sort of Ellisonian smile -- and say, "Read it again. Page seventy-eight. Lithium hydroxide?" And he will be flattened for life!

Thank you.



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