

READERCON 2

PROGRESS REPORT 1

Guest of Honor: Samuel R. Delany
Past Master: Theodore Sturgeon

The Lowell Hilton, 50 Warren Street, Lowell, Massachusetts phone: (617) 452-1200

RATES: \$75 single/\$80 double/\$85 triple/\$90 quad/\$120 suite (plus 9.7% tax)

MEMBERSHIP: \$15 until 10/14/88, \$20 thereafter

November 18-20, 1988

Also Appearing (so far): Richard Bowker, Algis Budrys, Jeffrey A. Carver, Scott Edelman, Janice M. Eisen, Lise Eisenberg, Craig Shaw Gardner, Geary Gravel, Scott E. Green, David G. Hartwell, Dr. Vernon Hyles, James Patrick Kelly, Ellen Kushner, Fred Lerner, Barry B. Longyear, Elissa Malcohn, Martha Millard, James Morrow, Paul Park, Steven Popkes, J. F. Rivkin, Charles C. Ryan, Darrell Schweitzer, D. Alexander Smith, Gene Wolfe, Mark V. Ziesing

INTRODUCTION

Well, we're back for more. Having survived a hostile hotel (as well as our own inexperience in budgeting) last time, we intend to apply our hard-earned knowledge and combine the things you liked best about Readercon I (a stimulating program, a dealers' room dominated by actual books, the Kirk Poland Memorial Bad Prose Competition) with a level of organization that will make things run much more smoothly. We'll also be doing a few things we couldn't get around to last year (as well as some completely new stuff), and extending our programming into Friday evening. And we have once again selected a superb Guest of Honor.

For those of you who were with us in the begin-

ning, we hope you can stick around to see us grow up (we are expecting modest growth which should take us just over 300 in attendance). For those just discovering us, we hope that this type of conference (one that puts the focus squarely on literature, and which gives it the kind of treatment that a significant art form deserves) is just what you've been looking for.

- Robert Colby, Chair.

OUR GUEST OF HONOR

As both author and critic, Samuel R. Delany has spent the better part of 3 decades continually challenging the limits and boundaries of imaginative literature, his work standing as an excellent example of the benefits to be had from a dialogue

READERCON is:

Robert Colby/Chair • Eric Van/Program Chair • Ozzie Fontecchio/Hotel Liaison • Connie Hirsch/Registration • Kathei Logue/Assistant Treasurer • Janis Hoffing/Dealers Room • Adina Adler/Information • Anita Van/GOH Liaison • Merryl Gross/Volunteers • Robert Ingria, Richard Duffy, Alison Sinclair, Priya Mirkin, Stephen Frug/Ministers Without Portfolio

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7/10/88

between "our" literary universe and the formal and critical methods of literature as a whole. This is the kind of activity we like to recognize and encourage here, and we're pleased to have the chance to do so by honoring him at Readercon 2.

Mr. Delany is the winner of numerous accolades and awards, among them: in 1966 the Nebula for the novel *Babel-17*, in 1967 the Nebula awards for "Aye, and Gomorrah" and for the novel *The Einstein Intersection*, and in 1969 both the Hugo and the Nebula for "Time Considered as a Helix of Semi-Precious Stones." He has also been honored by the Science Fiction Research Association's Pilgrim Award.

CONVENTION INFORMATION

ABOUT THE LOWELL HILTON

For various reasons, we've had to change both our location (the immediate Boston area) and our originally-announced (September) dates. What are we getting in return? For one thing, a hotel which promises to be a lot friendlier than our last (it's also completely built, with full dining facilities, etc.).

The Lowell Hilton is located at 50 Warren St. in Lowell, convenient to the city shuttle which takes people from the Commuter Rail station (the station itself is about 2 miles from the hotel). See **Ground Transportation** below for details.

Lowell itself is an attractive and historical town, an early center of the Industrial Revolution. It's an especially appropriate place for any literary event, being the birthplace of American giant **Jack Kerouac**, who is buried here.

Although we are continuing to explore various sites and dates for future Readercons (see **About Our Poll**, below), we're confident that you will find this hotel worth the commute.

Reservation cards will be sent out when available.

AIR TRANSPORTATION

For plane travel, we have designated **Bishop Travel** in Boston as our official ticketing agent. They have negotiated special airfares with **U.S. Air** and **Piedmont** for our members' travel to and from Readercon (inquire about extended travel dates). In general, fares are lower than you could arrange on your own.

To take advantage of these rates, make reservations as follows: Call Bishop Travel at 1-800-727-

1121 from 8:30 A.M. - 5:30 P.M. Eastern time Mon-Fri. When you telephone, please be ready to provide the following information:

Date of departure and return
Name of traveler(s)
Home and work phone #s
Mailing address
Seating requests (non-smoking, etc.)
Frequent flyer #, if applicable
Credit card # and expiration date

GROUND TRANSPORTATION

Lowell is north-northeast of Boston about an hour's drive, or 40 minutes by commuter rail (617 459-7101). From Boston's North Station, the rail is \$5 roundtrip, and a 30¢ shuttle in Lowell's train station will take you right by the Lowell Hilton. The train runs every hour on Friday and Saturday with last return to Boston about 11 pm, and every 2 hours on Sunday for the trip back. If you're flying into Boston, you'll have the further option of the Hudson limo service (617 395-8080) to Lowell (\$16 one-way, \$28 round trip) which runs every half hour on Friday, every hour on Saturday, and by appointment on Sunday.

If you would like to take part in a car pool (as rider or driver), please so indicate on our response coupon (page 5).

PROGRAM

By Eric Van, Program Chair

We were pleased with Readercon 1 programming and we expect its sequel to be even better. Two directions we're moving in:

— increased group participation in panels: we plan to have an extra mike with a cord long enough to reach well into the audience, and moderators will be urged to open up the discussion as early as appropriate.

— even greater lead time for preparation. Last year we instituted a policy of giving our attendees full program details *before* they arrived in town (in our last progress report). But due to circumstances beyond our control (namely, my wedding two weeks before!), *panelists* only got their assignments a week in advance, and some of the moderators were actually buttonholed at the convention. This year the panelists should have at least a month to ponder, and we hope to correspond with some of the moderators.

As for the content, we're already circulating a *preliminary* list of panels. Here, to whet your appetite

tite, are the titles:

Firing the Canon: The Public Perception of F and SF. (We'll present the results of a survey and we're inviting the book review editor of the Boston Globe – which shuns the genre – to read some classics and appear on the panel!).

See Dick Run, See Jane Reveal Depths of the Human Condition: The Juvenile as Literature. A recommended reading panel and exploration of the phenomenon.

You've Crossed the Reality Barrier, Anything to Declare? What leads a writer beyond the fields they know? Hopefully, we'll get some non-genre writers to talk about their sojourns in imaginative literature, while genre writers reveal what things can be better explored realistically (or argue that nothing can).

Maximum R & D: Rock 'N' Roll 'N' SF. Is SF the rock of literature? How are their fannish subcultures alike and how different? And how does the "C" word fit in? We hope to include some local rock performers who are also SF readers.

Out of the Bomb Shelter, Into the Greenhouse: Writing about the Coming Ecological Crisis. We've made a lot of progress in the last few years -- what with the greenhouse effect, the vanishing ozone layer and the rest, it now seems certain that we'll turn the Earth into a sterile wasteland without having to resort to nuclear weapons after all. Scientists, mass media people and sf writers talk about the problem and its public perception.

People I Can't Read, and Wish I Could. Why does this happen? Any help from the other attendees with your particular problem?

Hugo Gernsback, Chicken Farmer: If SF Had Never Been Ghettoized. Was the ghettoization of the genre inevitable? How might it have been avoided? If it had never happened, would more mainstream writers dabbled in the genre and if so, what might their books have been like?

Who Cares?: Creating Sympathetic Characters.

Elfland Uber Alles: Hidden Racism and Other Isms in Fantasy and SF. Are there reprehensible subtexts in even the best stuff?

How Does a Book Review Mean? Critics discuss the relationship between the critic/reviewer and reader. Warning: May include a deconstructionist analysis of a deconstructionist analysis

Really Heart-Rending: The Horror Novel as Literature. Includes a debate on the literary merit of Stephen King.

The Notion of Lives on Paper: Self-Revelation and Science Fiction, 1926-1988. Should we care who wrote the text? How honest is too honest? Is autobiography another kind of fiction?

Rare Deal or Raw?: Small Press Limited Editions. Collecting versus speculating.

Unfortunately Still Too Sensitive a Topic for a Silly Title: Alternative Sexual Lifestyles in SF. How have gay, lesbian and bisexual characters been portrayed in imaginative literature? In portraying a non-homophobic society, what are the pros and cons of a different approaches (didactic, understated)?

Is Chip Delany the Woody Allen of SF? (or, I Really Like your Books, Especially the Earlier, Simpler Ones...). Pre-Dhalgren Delany versus post-Dhalgren, with an extended look at Dhalgren (optimum psychological profiles of Dhalgren-lovers and Dhalgren-haters will be constructed, if possible).

Caviar: A Ted Sturgeon Appreciation.

And then there's our late night programming:

The Kirk Poland Memorial Bad Prose Competition. Our version of "Fictionary", named after the pen name of the hack protagonist of Barry N. Malzberg's *Herovit's World*; contestants have completed actual putrid passages from the genre, and the audience tries to spot the real ending. This year, the contestants will have several weeks before the con to tarnish their prose...

Lifestyles of the Poor and Obscure. The real lives of fulltime writers -- not work habits or word processors, but dating patterns and checking accounts.

The Bohemian Poetry Club. Writers and fans read their favorite poems or short prose passages (not their own).

The Alternate History Chain Letter. Premise: P.K. Dick has a breakthrough success in 1955 with *Mary and the Giant*. Result: Fidel Castro becomes a big-league pitcher. Result of that: Martin Luther King is not assassinated. Each participant has one segment of a crazy timeline devised by the committee, and has to fill in the connecting logic.

Bookaholics Anonymous Meeting. Actually, a half serious workshop on book-buying/collecting/reading strategies. How do you attack the immense pile of books you've bought but haven't read?

In The Future, Everyone Will Be Obnoxious for Five Minutes. An hour of five-minute harangues from pros, on any topic they're hot on.

Plus the usual (and perhaps some unusual) GoH stuff.

The above will change, of course. (For one thing,

we already have enough ideas backlogged for Readercon 3!) Your suggestions are more than welcome (and in fact several of the above are your requests); write us.

You'll notice a new name among our guests: Theodore Sturgeon as Past Master. After the success of our Philip K. Dick discussion group last year we realized that Readercon could focus each year on a different author who's no longer alive. In this case, Sturgeon is an easy choice; besides the many obvious reasons, he's one of our GoH's literary heroes. In addition to our Sturgeon appreciation panel, we plan a late-night dramatic reading (if not an actual dramatization).

"If You Love X, You'll Love Y" lives! This was one of our most eagerly-awaited programming features at Readercon 1, right up till the time we had to cancel it for lack of a venue. We've solved that problem this year in what we think is a novel fashion.

Saturday night at six, you can join any one of a number of discussion groups, each based on a favorite writer. But the group talks mostly about *other writers*, gathering hot leads to new reading (and exploring that odd beast known as "taste"). And since formal programming resumes at eight, you are urged to go to dinner together.

OTHER PROGRAM ITEMS

MINI-TRACK

This is our name for a collection of small, non-panel items (organized by you, the membership) that will include readings (fiction, poetry, and critical papers), discussion groups, and workshops (we already have a request to run a workshop from Hugo and Nebula award-winning author Barry B. Longyear, and Elissa Malcoln will be repeating her popular 'persona' workshop from last time).

Your involvement is critical in putting all this together, and we expect this track to fill up quickly. So, if you'd like to to organize a discussion group or a workshop, or have been published and would like to read, please get in touch!

DEALERS' ROOM

This year we will have 16 tables in our dealers' room. 12 of these have been sold as of this writing, and there is a chance that the room will be sold out by the time this PR is mailed out. Dealers (publishers and booksellers only, please) should send inquiries to our main address (Attn: Janis

Hoffing). As before, we require that the majority of what you sell be literary in nature (a side item or two such as art prints would be OK, media-specific paraphernalia wouldn't); this will be enforced. As there were some no-shows last time, we will be maintaining a waiting list after selling out the room (table fees for no-shows will be refunded if we can resell your table, so if you can't make it, please let us know). A Dealers' Progress Report will be issued shortly before the con.

BOOK AUCTION

This was one of the most popular items last time (and very helpful in keeping our losses low enough so that we could do this again). Once again, we are looking both for commissioned sales (we will sell for you and take 10%), and donations.

SMALL PRESS AWARDS

We didn't manage to get this off the ground last year, but we fully intend to award the first Independence Awards for Small Press Excellence (Indies for short) this year. Details are still being worked out; we'll keep you informed.

SOCIALIZING

As before, we will be having at least one reception designed to provide you with a congenial place to meet both program participants and each other. In addition, we will be having a Con Suite, which will be open for as many hours as we can schedule staff to cover it. Information about room parties will be available at the Information desk.

ABOUT OUR POLL

This will no doubt seem premature, but we need your help **now** in determining when and where to hold Readercon 3. As most of you are aware, the World Science Fiction Convention† is coming to Boston in September of next year, and though we're a different sort of gathering, a check of the respective membership lists reveals that a lot of you (including the out-of-staters whose hotel rooms help to keep our function space rental affordable) will be attending it. This poses some obvious questions and problems for us in deciding how close to the Worldcon we can schedule Readercon 3 (simply put, if we lose enough out-of-state members, we lose our shirts as well). There are a number of ways we could go with this (including a full year skip), but we need your frank answers now to keep us from making a mistake with Readercon 3 that could mean **no** Readercon 4, ever. We have enclosed a poll, and would appreciate it very much if you could return it to us ASAP (whatever it is that we finally do, we would

† "World Science Fiction Convention" and "Worldcon" are service marks of the World Science Fiction Society, an unincorporated literary society.

like to avoid some of this year's confusion by having a firm announcement to make when you show up at Readercon 2 this November). Thank you for your help!

WE NEED VOLUNTEERS!!!

Conferences of this type are usually run almost entirely on the efforts of volunteers (the kind with paid staff also tend to have very large membership fees). If you would like to get involved, check the box on the response form. You will be sent a Volunteer PR once we determine our needs and have our program schedule finalized; this should give you an idea of which times are convenient for you. However, if you decide to volunteer at the door, rest assured that there'll be work for you.

ABOUT THE T-SHIRT

That's right, merchandise. This particular number was designed by Readercon 1 artist Joe Shea (aka Joey Zone). It's a 100% cotton, 2-sided (our logo in front, and the message "Follow the Reader" on the back) silver-gray shirt, offered in Large and X-tra Large sizes. It's available from us at

\$10 plus \$2.00 shipping (first class)). NB: because of the method used in printing these shirts, we recommend washing in COLD water, inside out, and with only moderate drying (if convenient, washing in Woolite™ and hang-drying is best).

FUTURE PUBLICATIONS

October will see the publication of PR2, which will have updated information on everything we've talked about so far. For those of you who were members of Readercon 1, we hope to be bringing out the long-overdue Final Report for that conference before you show up for this one. Our Program Book this year should be the same size (16 pages plus cover) as last time, and Readercon 2 will get its own Final Report if finances allow (i.e. we break even).

This Progress Report was designed and laid out by Connie Hirsch, Adina Adler, and Robert Colby, based on a Ready, Set, Go! template designed by Ken Meltsner and Janice M. Eisen.

READERCON RESPONSE COUPON

Please mail to: READERCON, P.O. Box 6138, Boston, MA 02209 or call us at: 617-576-0415

Enclosed is \$_____ for the following:

- ___ Attending membership (\$15 to 10/14/88)
- ___ Attending membership (\$20 after 10/14/88)
- ___ T-Shirt Check Size: ___ Large ___ Extra Large
(\$12; includes \$2.00 for first-class shipping)

Please pay by check or money order/no cash (payable to READERCON)

- () I would like to organize a discussion group or workshop.
- () I have material for the auction.
- () I would like to take part in a car pool as ___ driver ___ rider.
- () Please send ___ Volunteer info ___ Dealer's Room Info

Name _____

Address _____

Home Phone/Hrs _____

Work Phone/Hrs _____

Have you read Dhalgren? _____ If so, how many times? _____

Has your address changed since the last time we wrote you? _____



P.O. Box 6138
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