

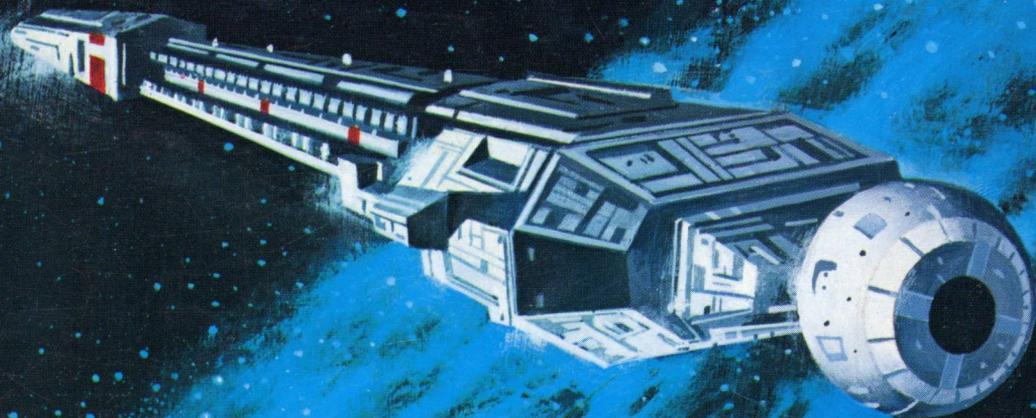
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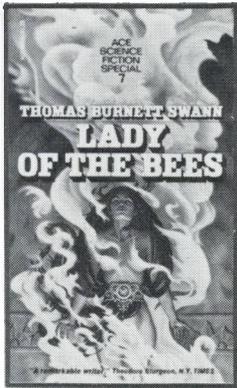
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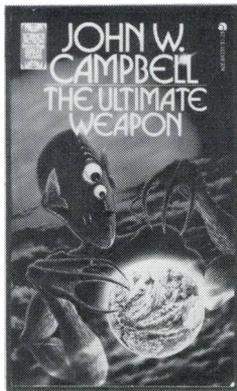
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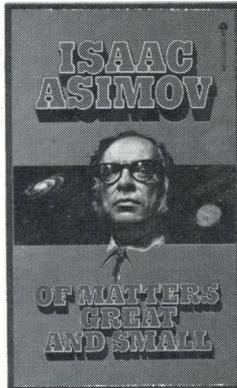
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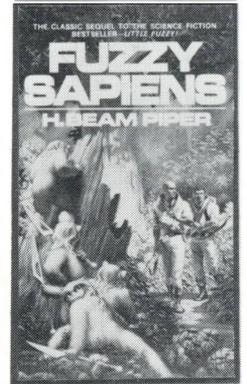
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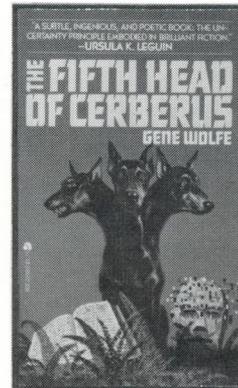
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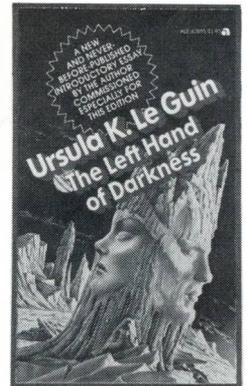
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ALGOL

THE MAGAZINE ABOUT
 SCIENCE FICTION

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AVON

There are changes being made this issue. The first and most obvious is raised by the fan in the back of the room: "What happened to the beautiful slick paper?" he asks. "It has gone away," I reply, solemnly. "It may return at some future date, but right now, this must suffice."

What's happened is a number of things. First, although I dearly loved using silky-slick paper inside ALGOL, the stuff costs a lot of money. It also weighs a lot—it's not called 60 Pound stock for nothing—and last issue's weight put the magazine into a higher postage bracket. (Imagine going over into another income bracket and finding yourself owing the Internal Revenue Service an extra \$500.) This meant more postage per copy mailed, and with the circulation ALGOL has now, postage is one of the largest expenses I have.

The extra postage cost doesn't matter that much on copies mailed at Bulk rates in the USA, though those rates too have been increased. However, perhaps a majority of ALGOL is mailed at single copy rates, supplying new subscribers as they come in. Also, *all* the foreign copies are mailed out at single copy prices (there are no bulk rates for foreign mail), and with the US Postal "Service" determined to penalize anyone who knows and writes to people outside this country, this is very expensive.

ALGOL, of course, knows a lot of people outside the USA. There are many subscribers in Canada, especially since I've begun giving equal treatment to Canadian SF and striving for genuine Canadian Content. I even print letters from Mike Glicksohn, though Ghod knows the price is heavy. (To be fair, precious little of Glicksohn is Canadian: what with his drinking Ballantine Beer's India Pale Ale the last few years, I'd say two thirds of his body weight is solidly American.) If Bill Bowers would just send more quotable letters of comment, I might be able to right the balance. . . .

There are subscribers to ALGOL all over the place, with the UK, Australia and West Germany leading the pack. The West German fans really like ALGOL, perhaps because until a few months ago the subscription prices were lower than those in the US. More, however, on that topic further on.

Even the paper I've begun using is expensive, compared to a few years ago. The Paper Institute, which is what the name implies it is, says that within a year paper prices will rise again because demand will have again caught up with the available supply. Although the paper mills no longer make some of the cheapest grades of paper—including most Twilltone, used by the US fanpress—their capacities haven't increased because it takes many years to build and put on-line new mills.

Something like the old plan for a factory to build star-ships: it takes 100 years to build the first ship, but from then on they roll off the assembly line every five minutes.

To boil the above down, costs are up. Everyone knows that, from heads of nations to heads of science fiction conventions. One way I'm trying to meet that problem is by scaling down costs in ALGOL's production. Another way is to raise outside funds. The result of that method is that effective this issue, the subscription prices for ALGOL, both in the USA and for other countries, have been increased. I'd originally planned to increase prices only for foreign subscriptions due to the great increase in foreign postage rates. Also, through an error the rates for Germany were the best bargain of any existing rate structure. They've now been increased by 33%. Rates for the UK have been increased 33%, mainly because the Pound, worth \$2.20 when last issue appeared, has now shrunk to less than \$1.95. ALGOL is represented in Australia by Space Age Books, who informed me after I announced higher rates that their postage to me had increased as well, and asked for a still higher rate. Compromising, we split the difference, and Australian rates have gone up about 30%.

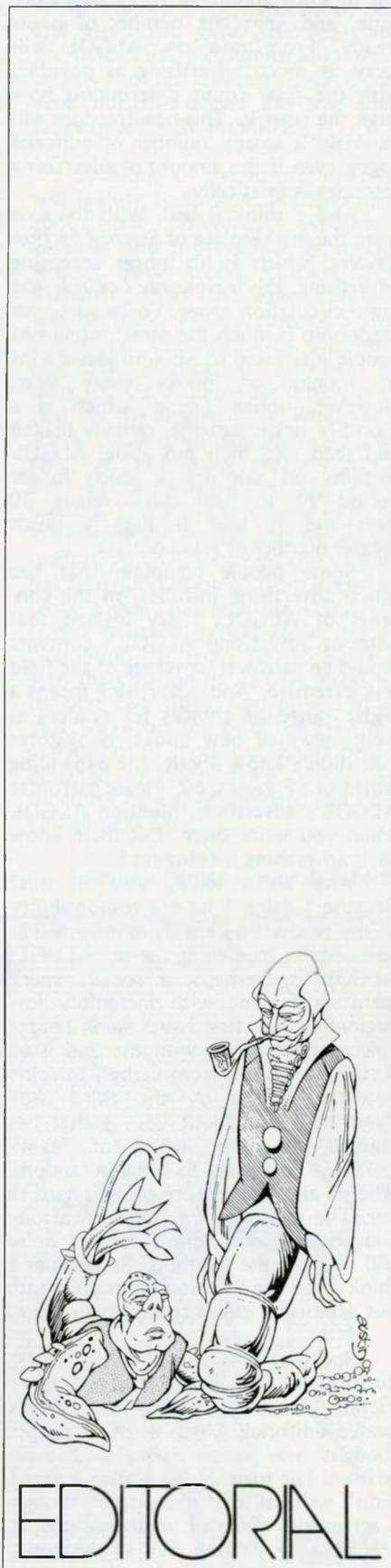
American subscription rates have gone up 25%. To temper the pain, there's a new 4 issue subscription rate of \$5.00, and an optional 6 issue rate of \$7.50. The latter rate is a hedge against further price increases. All current subscriptions will be honored at the old rates (it'd be a monumental pain to go through the books and adjust subscriptions, so I'm leaving them alone). Canadian rates have been increased about 30%, mostly because, like other foreign subscriptions, copies mailed to Canada go at the new and expensive postal rates.

Despite these increases, the cost of a subscription remains a good buy, if perhaps no longer a "bargain." Although the single copy price remains the same, to buy all issues as they appear would still cost \$6.00 for 4 issues, \$9.00 for 6.

I've also raised classified advertising rates from 10¢ a word to 15¢. That rate hasn't increased since ALGOL began to accept advertising three years ago, although circulation has doubled. I think it's still a very good bargain, and so do a number of advertisers. Check out their ads, opposite the 3rd cover.

Finally, display advertising rates are staying the same. If the circulation increases notably with the next issues, those rates will increase also. The common solution in magazine publishing is to raise rates every year, regardless of whether the circulation has or hasn't gone up. That way, even if the number

BEATLEJUICE BEATLEJUICE



EDITORIAL

of pages sold per year stays the same, the revenues still rise. Despite display ad rates staying the same, ALGOL will be operating under slightly different rules. In past issues I've held display advertising to a maximum of 10-12 pages per issue, and kept the number of pages steady. From now on, ALGOL will carry as much advertising as possible, with the final count determining how large the issue is. This new freedom will maintain a steady number of editorial pages, even if the amount of advertising increases dramatically.

And I think it will. With the exit from the marketplace of *Science Fiction Review*, which is no longer accepting advertising, this leaves only *Locus* in the same circulation range. To be sure, our readership is much the same: intelligent people interested in SF who spend a lot of money on books every year. However, unlike *Locus*, which is a monthly newsmagazine, quickly mailed and read and then put aside, ALGOL remains on sale for a much longer period—90 to 180 days versus 30 days—and is sold through a much greater number of retail outlets.

Some people complain that too much advertising intrudes on the contents of ALGOL. I say instead that without advertising ALGOL's contents would be narrower, coverage of the field less extensive. And advertising means a wider range of choices for readers as well: news of new books, bookstores you didn't know about, the expanding world of SF games, etc. Please patronize ALGOL's advertisers. Mention ALGOL when you write them. Let them know their advertising is being read.

Why am I telling you all this? Because I think I have a responsibility to my readers to keep them informed as to what's happening with ALGOL. ALGOL is, perhaps, a social experiment: a fanzine with incredibly low beginnings (the first issues were 2 pages apiece and *terrible*; with the 2nd issue ALGOL switched from carbon to spirit duplication, and by the third issue circulation was about 25. . .) that has entered the hazy world of "semi-prozine," according to some in fandom. Where I and ALGOL are going is hard to say. The path upward has been a long and winding one, and I suspect we're still only in the foothills. Sometimes I think I can see the mountains up ahead, but a blowing cloud covers them again.

Speaking of blowing clouds, I really do think ALGOL is better than *Science Fiction Review*. Witness last issue's heated editorial, which a lot of people thought was rather hasty and over-written. The truth of the matter is that I didn't write all that nasty stuff, though I agree with some of what was said. It was actually written by Ian Andrews,

who was so incensed over the fact that I was casting him out of his exalted position as Art Director for ALGOL that he called Ann Dietz, the typesetter, and by disguising his voice so it sounded just like mine, submitted that phony, angry editorial in place of the one I'd written—a very light and lively one, discussing the place of skimmed milk in science fiction—and the final result was that I was cast as a sour, surly person, the type of editor who goes around bending the spokes and stabbing the tires on Geis's Schwinn two-speed. I'm really not that sort of person at all. "Lovable old Andy Porter," is what they call me at Fanoclast meetings.

However, the facts must speak out for themselves. As far as comparisons of ALGOL with *SFR* go, I have substantial proof that ALGOL is lots better than *SFR*. For one thing, my Ted White contributions are better than Geis's Ted White contributions. The ones I get are written on genuine Twilltone, left over from when Ted was publishing *Void* and *Minac*. *SFR*'s contributions are written on the backs of old A&P shopping bags, with the faint hint of last month's bargains in celery still clinging to the pages.

And my Richard Lupoff contributions! Why, mine are written especially for ALGOL, on genuine blank paper with a cover letter from the College of Marin. *SFR*'s Lupoff contributions are done after ALGOL is filled to the brim with sparkling and wittily illuminating reviews, on the backs of old crudsheets pilfered while collating *Locus*.

But the final proof—dare I say what haunts us?—is that while ALGOL has in the past been printed on slick paper made from the forests of ancient Fangorn (only from the dead branches and rotten stumps, I hasten to add, freely given by old Treebeard himself), I believe that *SFR* has been printed on paper dearly bought in the forests of New Tahiti (from the Rendlep Paper Company, in fact). Paper from New Tahiti is cheap, I am told, and the Creechies—the ones still alive, anyway—don't ask for much in payment.

Ah, the bitter shame of it: this is the fan we have given Hugos to! This man, who lives but a few miles from Ursula K. Le Guin. Go, Geis! Your secret is exposed. Pack your iron bars and your Schwinn and your mimeograph (inoperable but for the kind graces of Jon Singer and his magic fingers) and peddle hastily away, far away from the fanation that gave you birth and voice. The shame of it. *sigh*.

ALGOL subscribers have to write whenever they move, to let me know their new addresses. The Post Office is highly inconsistent on their Official Policies when people move. Sometimes

they forward all first class mail and throw everything else away; or they may forward everything; or, despite instructions, they may return all mail. Or throw *everything* away. . . . What usually happens with ALGOL is that copies get returned, and I get charged 55¢ for this. If a newer address is affixed to the ALGOL, I have to send it out again. What this costs is the initial postage, the return postage, more \$\$ for new postage and another envelope. My policy is to simply deduct one copy from your subscription for all these hassles.

Likewise, if you're a subscriber and want some back issues, say so or I'll type up another card for you. This is not only expensive in the long run: it's also exasperating and time consuming and a Bother. If you want to keep me happy, please help me (or don't help me, but send a bottle of Jim Beam instead) to help you.

Because I'm the one who works on mailing out every issue (assisted on occasion by local fans Steve Antell, who lives in the next building, and Lise Eisenberg), I get to find out who lives where. Several times I've found subscribers and readers who live in the same building, or in the case of small towns, a few streets apart. And so I see patterns where other people may be wondering if there *are* any other SF readers out there. Why, for instance, isn't there a large and active SF group in Portland, Oregon? There must be at least 20 ALGOL readers in the city, and I know of two SF bookstores (Garvin & Levin and The Illustrated Store) located there. Or in Edmonton, Alberta, home of Doug Barbour and half a dozen other subscribers? I've certainly never thought of myself as a matchmaker, but if readers want to contact other fans in your immediate cities, drop a line and I'll see what I can do.

It's Hugo Award time again, and I'd hoped to have a general list of recommendations in ALGOL. However, I don't read everything that comes out, and my collection is in such a disorganized state that recommendations for the fiction categories would be farcical. In some of the other categories, though, I can make recommendations. Do with them as you see fit. For Best Artist, Vincent DiFate has done some fine work. So too has Mike Hinge. Richard Powers continues to be a perennial favorite of mine, and his covers for Berkley and Putnam maintain his high standards. For Professional Editor, Terry Carr and Robert Silverberg have done excellent work in the original anthology field. Ted White working with very little money and Ed Ferman, maintaining a low profile as

always, are also deserving of silver rocketships.

For Best Fan Writer, John Bangsund and Susan Wood continue to be my favorites. John Berry's changing life-style as written in his *Hitchhike*, and Don Thompson's intensely personal essays appearing in *Don-O-Saur* are also fine examples of fan writing.

And for Best Amateur Magazine, I'm voting for ALGOL, of course. But Bill Bowers' *Outworlds* and Eli Cohen's *Kratophany* are also worthy nominees, as is Jerry Kaufman's *Spanish Inquisition*.

With the recent publication of a horde of coffee-table books about SF Art, there are some interesting legal ramifications that have developed. I'd planned to go into this at some length here in ALGOL, but instead I'm happy to announce that beginning Real Soon Now I'll be doing a column on Legal Problems in *Locus*. I'll be delving into the sticky legal situations that are emerging as the SF field grows in size and intricacy.

Just a few pages on, the contents of this issue begin. Thomas Monteleone's article on Roger Zelazny's shorter fiction was postponed from last issue because of the length of Robert Silverberg's autobiography, on which much response has been received (you'll find some of it in "Random Factors," the letter column). One thing I'd like to make clear: some people have misinterpreted some copyright lines running in ALGOL. The interview with Ursula K. Le Guin in ALGOL 24 wasn't

a "reprint" in the traditional sense. It first appeared as a radio program; publication in ALGOL in edited form was its first print publication. Similarly, Gregory Benford's article last issue was also its first print appearance. It was based on a speech and a shorter article in a trade publication. Finally, Robert Silverberg's article never appeared in *SF Horizons*, as suggested by the copyright notice. ALGOL bought US serial rights: the article appears in *Hell's Cartographers*, published in the UK by Weidenfeld & Nicolson, and in the US by Harper & Row. The copyright is held by SF HORIZONS, a legal entity jointly owned by Brian Aldiss and Harry Harrison, who compiled the book.

This issue's "Basement and Empire" by Frederik Pohl (not Isaac Asimov) appeared first in *The Early Pohl*, published by Doubleday. In that case, ALGOL bought *second* serial rights—I told you legal aspects in SF can be complicated—of material which is wittily informative of the early days of SF publishing. I recently asked Fred why he didn't do a full autobiography. "I'm working on the first draft now," he replied. Hopefully it'll be in print soon.

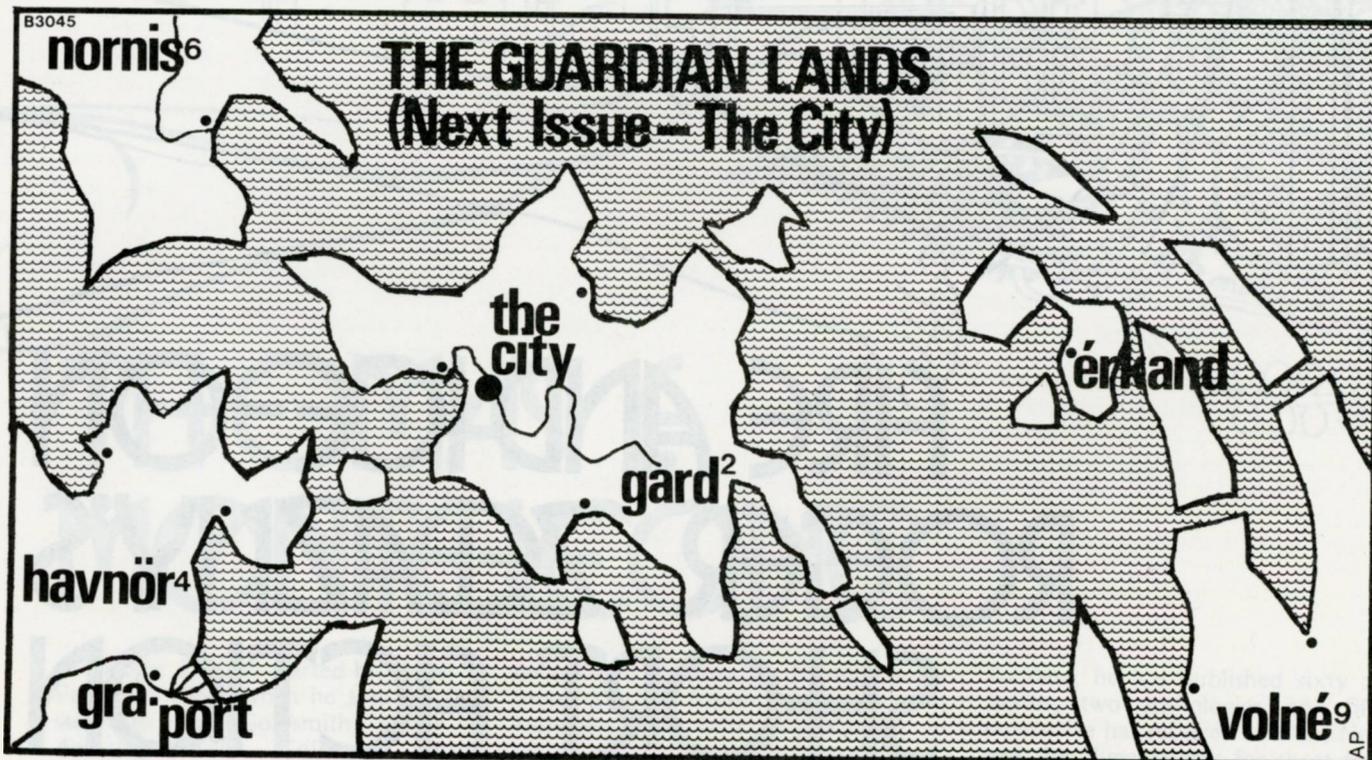
Susan Wood's "Propellor Beanie" begins this issue. Some of ALGOL's readers are fans—and some are casual readers—but for all of you, I think Susan's first column will say a great deal about what fandom and the greater world of SF to which we all belong means to all of us. It's one of the finest things this fine writer has ever had published.

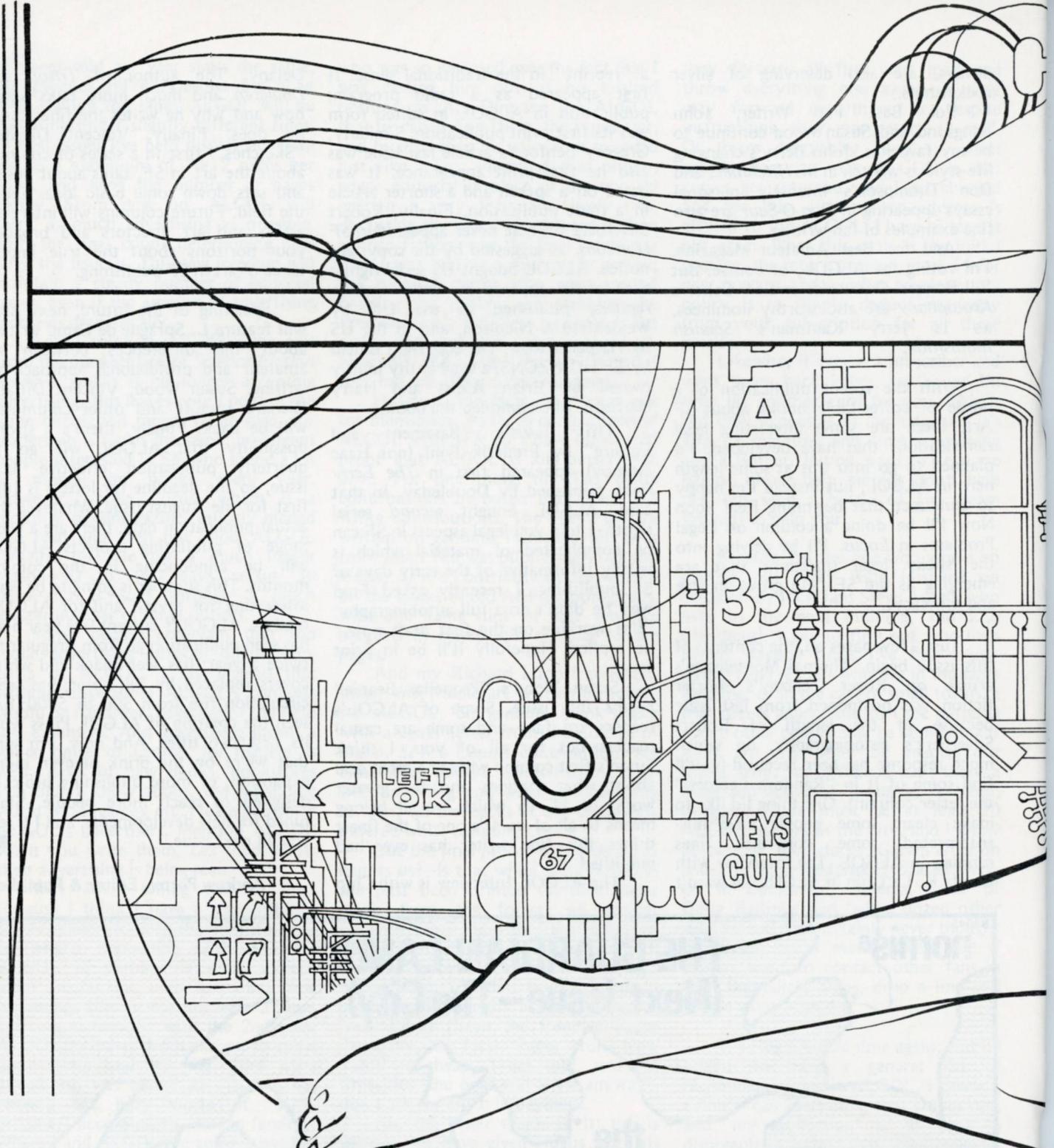
The ALGOL Interview is with Chip

Delany. The author of *Triton* and *Dhalgren* and much more talks about how and why he writes the fine stories he does. Finally, Vincent DiFate's "Sketches," first in a series of columns about the art in SF, talks about design and sets down some basic ideas about the field. Future columns will interview artists and art directors and broaden your horizons about the true importance of art in SF publishing.

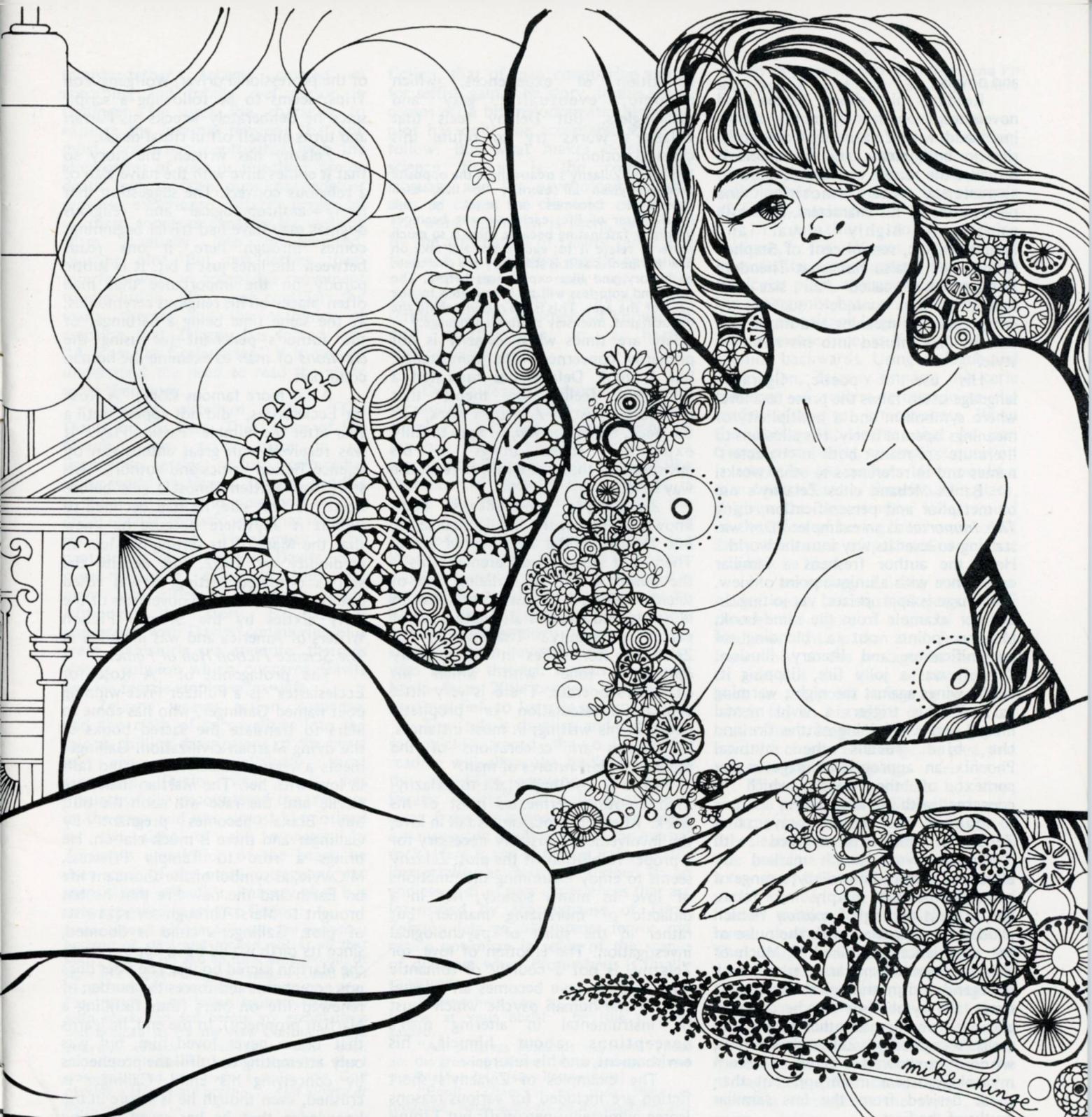
Speaking of the future, next issue will feature L. Sprague de Camp writing about the differences between an amateur and professional approach to writing. Susan Wood, Vincent DiFate, Richard Lupoff and other columnists will be back. Finally, there's a strong possibility that ALGOL will go to quarterly publication effective next issue, so the deadline for letters is July first for the August issue. Whatever the actual publication date, there are a wide range of publishing projects ALGOL will be announcing in the coming months. This summer is going to be very interesting for myself and for ALGOL readers. ALGOL's current five year plan has seen publication go from irregular to twice a year; has seen black and white covers replaced by full color; has seen circulation rise from 500 to 5000; has seen the creation of ALGOL Press with its first two titles. And now, I'm sure that we're on the brink of even more expansion, of more publishing projects designed to reach more people. Stay tuned for new developments, and I'll see you all next issue. ■

Andrew Porter, Editor & Publisher





FIRE AND ICE~ON ROGER ZELAZNY'S SHORT FICTION



THOMAS F. MONTELEONE

Roger Zelazny started his career in February 1962, when he sold his first story to Cele Goldsmith, editor of *Amazing Stories*. Goldsmith greatly

encouraged Zelazny by buying twelve more stories from him that year, launching him into a profession in which he has earned the highest respect.

To date, he has published sixty short stories, two anthologies, and fifteen novels. He has received both the Nebula and the Hugo awards for short fiction

and novels.

Reading his short stories and novelettes, one is almost always impressed with Zelazny's unique style, rich in both simile and metaphor. It provides the reader with ample tools to experience the emotions and perceptions of his characters. Zelazny's prose is highly visual and impressionistic, reminiscent of Stephen Crane. Yet it also has what Theodore Sturgeon has called "all size and speed,"¹ the unique quality of compression of meaning and image that Zelazny has infused into his narrative style.

His use of poetic, figurative language often raises the prose to a level where symbolism and a multiplicity of meanings operate freely. His allusions to literature are many: both in characters' names and in references to other works.

Banks Mebane cites Zelazny's use of metaphor and personification, using *This Immortal* as an example: "Day was starting to lever its way into the world." Here, the author freshens a familiar occurrence with a unique point of view. The image is appropriate, yet jolting. In another example from the same book, Mebane points out a blending of personification and literary illusion: "Oh, it was a jolly fire, flapping its bright wings against the night, warming us..." This triggers a vivid mental image, and the joining of the fire and the bird recalls the mythical Phoenix—an appropriate image in the context of the novel, which is concerned with immortality.²

Samuel R. Delany says that Zelazny's work is imbued with "intensive symbolism," marked by effects of sensory immediacy, a range of emotions coming sharply into focus, and a great feeling of *motion* "which alludes to a closeness with the pulse of the experiences described."³ Much of Zelazny's symbolism can be traced back to legend and mythological sources. At times, the symbolism can be complex and even obscure; at other times, it is easily recognizable. Zelazny's symbols, when borrowed from Western mythology, seem more apparent than those derived from the less familiar myths of the East.

There are several recurring, essential themes, especially in Zelazny's short fiction. The largest and most prominent must surely be Zelazny's treatment of *immortality*. Many of his characters are protagonists of great power and ability, capable of controlling other men or the forces of nature, and aspiring to god-like levels of existence.

How Zelazny handles the immortality theme reflects his generally optimistic world-view. This is opposed to the classical supposition which asserts that immortality is a curse. Eternity *must* transform life into an endless

repetition of experiences, which become, eventually, gray and meaningless. But Delany feels that Zelazny's works try to refute this classical notion:

Implicit in Zelazny's treatment is the opposite premise: given all eternity to live, each experience becomes a jewel in the jewel-clutter of life; each moment becomes infinitely fascinating because there is so much more to relate it to; each event will take on new harmonies as it is struck by the overtones of history and like experiences before. The dour and colorless will be illuminated by the light of the ages. This is the *raison* behind the hallucinated, intensely symbolic language.⁴ There are times when Zelazny is not primarily concerned with immortality, but I think Delany has indicated a subliminal feeling or theme that permeates most of Zelazny's work, i.e., the need, the *obligation*, of man to fully experience those things in his environment that cause him to react the way he does.

Zelazny's characters seek knowledge not in the intellectual sense, but rather in the *experiential* sense. There is a world of difference. This is the author's way of utilizing one of science fiction's greatest functions: to illustrate and explore alternate ways of perceiving reality. The beauty of Zelazny's stories lies in the basically optimistic tone with which his characters operate. There is very little cynical disassociation or prophetic doom in his writing; in most instances, his stories are celebrations of the possible, bright futures of man.

Love is also important to Zelazny. That emotion permeates most of his work. When his protagonists fall in love, the involvement is usually necessary for a proper resolution of the plot. Zelazny seems to enjoy examining the functions of love in man's society, not in a didactic or moralizing manner, but rather in the spirit of psychological investigation. The emotion of love, for Zelazny, is not a courtly or romantic one. Instead, love becomes an integral part of the human psyche which must be instrumental in altering man's perceptions about himself, his environment, and his future.

The examples of Zelazny's short fiction are included for various reasons (some admittedly personal); but I think all of them will successfully illustrate his themes, his style, and his unique view of the world.

For historical and comparative purposes, let's begin with Zelazny's first published story, "Passion Play." Less than 1,000 words long, the piece still shows much of what Zelazny would be doing in later years. The setting is a far-future earth, populated by robots, long after man has disappeared. The narrator is a robot telling his personal experiences as he participates in a religious ritual, the re-enactment of an auto race. The robot, who plays the part

of the professional driver, Wolfgang Von Trips, seems to be following a script, since he deliberately wrecks his Ferrari and turns himself off in ritual-death.

Zelazny has written the story so that it comes alive with the naive elan of a religious convert. The suggestion that many anthropological and religious dogmas may have had trivial beginnings comes through here, if one reads between the lines just a bit. It is subtle parody on the importance that man often places on his religious ceremonies; at the same time being a harbinger of the author's penchant for using the *creations* of man to examine the human condition.

A far more famous story, "A Rose for Ecclesiastes," did not appear until a year after the humble "Passion Play." It was received with great enthusiasm by science fiction critics and authors. This story was written almost a year before Zelazny's first sale; he had declined to submit it anywhere because he knew that the Mars of its setting had lost all credibility by 1962. But despite the story's outdated setting, it was voted one of the outstanding novelettes of the early sixties by the Science Fiction Writers of America and was included in *The Science Fiction Hall of Fame*.

The protagonist of "A Rose for Ecclesiastes" is a Pulitzer Prize-winning poet named Gallinger, who has come to Mars to translate the sacred books of the dying Martian civilization. Gallinger meets a young dancer, Braxa, and falls in love with her. The Martian males are sterile and the race will soon die out; but Braxa becomes pregnant by Gallinger and there is much elation. He brings a rose to Temple Priestess, M'Cwyie, as symbol of the abundant life on Earth and the new life that he has brought to Mars. Through several twists of plot, Gallinger's child is doomed, since its birth would be in opposition to the Martian sacred books. The poet does not accept this and forces the burden of renewed life on Mars (thus fulfilling a Martian prophecy). In the end, he learns that Braxa never loved him, but was only attempting to fulfill the prophecies by conceiving his child. Gallinger is crushed, even though he is secure in the knowledge that he has saved a dying civilization.

The story is filled with many of Zelazny's usual images and themes: immortality, love, religion and myth, and even suicide. There are many allusions to Dante, Milton, Shakespeare, Virgil, and Rilke—all of which impart a richness to the story's texture, intensifying its messages. The story is filled with mirror images of emotion and rationality. Gallinger is the egotistical protagonist, attempting to remain rational, although plagued by a childhood of genius and the fundamentalist preachings of his

minister-father. Zelazny created an absorbing and totally *real* person in Gallinger. He uses the character to explore the internal tensions that one must face when confronted with the alternatives of love or rejection, life or death, logic or faith, pure knowledge or sensitive experience. Zelazny juggles all of these concepts expertly by weaving them gradually into an involved, twisting plot, but not letting them interfere with an acceptable movement to resolution. When one considers the many themes and the extremes of emotion that Zelazny has forced into "A Rose for Ecclesiastes," it is easy to understand the need to read the story more than once.

Another excellent story, "The Doors of His Face, The Lamps of His Mouth," also takes place in an impossible setting: a lush, primordial water-world on Venus. Zelazny handles a story of love and obsession with a crisp, uncharacteristic style that reminds the reader of Hemingway. The protagonist and narrator, Davits, is a super-masculine character who has many similarities to Melville's Ahab. Although the story is basically concerned with Davits' conquering of a great prehistoric sea creature, there is also a subplot which concerns Davits and his female employer/ex-wife.

Zelazny weaves action, suspense, and the clash of personalities into the tale as chilling descriptions of the beast are given in tantalizingly short sequences. Davits, like Ahab, has unsuccessfully encountered the creature in the past, and was almost hypnotized by the sight of the monster. In Zelazny's description of the beast, he uses some of the most outrageous, yet surprisingly effective, imagery that has ever appeared in science fiction:

It was when I got him up above the eight-foot horizon of steel and looked out at all that body, sloping on and on till it dropped out of sight like a green mountain range . . . and that head. Small for the body, but still immense. Fat, craggy, with lidless roulettes that had spun black and red before my grandfathers had decided to try the New Continent. And swaying. Fresh narco-tanks had been connected. It needed another shot fast. But I was paralyzed. It made a noise like God playing a Hammond organ. . . . And looked at me!

But Davits is plagued with memories of his ex-wife and the beast. He struggles to overcome both until to do so becomes an obsession. The sea creature becomes a symbol of his slighted masculinity: Davits realizes that he cannot continue living unless he can destroy it. The plot is resolved when his ex-wife hooks the great monster and needs Davits' help in bringing it onto the deck of the barge. But the real resolution is within the protagonist's mind. He has conquered his pride and his humiliation with rare courage—an uncharacteristic theme in Zelazny's

fiction, that of man conquering nature for selfish gain. The story, in this sense, comes off a bit melodramatic, since the plot has only one acceptable route to follow. But what makes it effective science fiction is the compressed language and the psychology Zelazny uses to create the character of Davits. The usual optimism is there, expressed by the affirmation of Davits' quest, but it is not the figurative, poetic optimism of Emerson—or even of other Zelazny—but rather a shriller, less refined cry for experiential knowledge and confirmation in a hostile environment.

One of Zelazny's shorter, but more successful stories, "Love Is an Imaginary Number," is based on the fiction of myth. The protagonist is a larger-than-life figure, a god-like character of such stature that he is above the forces which control the universe itself. The story is a science-fictional interpretation of the Prometheus myth, but with few of the classical turns of plot. The protagonist is pursued by the other gods because he has repeatedly given new knowledge/technology to man. He is a character from beyond Time and Space who travels through various Heres and Nows—from 20th century Suburbia to medieval fiefs to Jurassic swamps.

The style is dazzling and the action so quickly paced the only careful reading will allow the reader to follow the rapid-fire sequence of images. Erratic "shifts" carry the protagonist away from his pursuers, who are intent on once again binding him to the eternal rock. Here is the character imbued with immortality as Delany described it: an endless rush of new experiences that are intensified by the expanse of Time. Zelazny lets go his intense fervor and raging optimism in some of the scenes of dialogue when Prometheus is finally captured:

"Everywhere you go, plagues and wars follow at your heels!" he (the pursuer) gasped.

"All progress demands payment. These are the growing pains of which you speak, not the final results." (says Prometheus)

"Fool! There is no such thing as progress! What good are all the machines and ideas you unloose in their cultures, if you do change the men themselves?"

"Thought and mechanism advances; men follow slowly," I (Prometheus) said, and I dismounted and moved to his side. "All that your kind seek is a perpetual Dark Age on all planes of existence."

In this manner, Zelazny uses his characters for the symbols of ignorance and knowledge, existing in a world which changes so rapidly that the ill-equipped are in danger of being left far behind. Thus it is not Prometheus, but Zelazny himself speaking when he says:

"Don't you ever give up? Give me a

century of peace to work with them, and I'll show you a world that you don't believe could exist!"

Again the optimistic view of an immortal figure. It is a refreshing, well-written, and thought-provoking tale, which has been infrequently anthologized, and yet is a fine example of Zelazny's talents.

In another story, "Divine Madness," the themes of love and immortality again appear. But in this particular piece, the never-ending life of the protagonist has a unique twist: he is able to experience large segments of his life in reverse-time, as if on a projector running backwards. Using dialogue and description, Zelazny imparts this eerie sensation of reverse-perception to the reader with great effectiveness. When the protagonist learns that he can *change* past events, an implicit question is asked by the author: How would a man undo what has already taken place, if given the opportunity? What would be the effect of having the chance to lift away the curses of past actions? What would it be like?

In answering, Zelazny takes the reader on a hellish, Kafka-esque tour through the rigors of a special kind of madness. Anticipation and fear build inexorably as the protagonist struggles to ride out the wave of reverse-time back to the point before an argument which led to his wife's death in a car crash. The protagonist prays that he will have the chance to change the past, and suspense is truly gripping.

The time reversal does not stop, and the protagonist is given his chance. Zelazny resolves the story with one of the cleanest, most sensitive scenes I've ever read in a science fiction story. With a few short lines of dialogue, (in reverse, yet!) he captures the absurdity of human passion, the terrible fear of human death, and beauty of forgiveness. The imagery is powerful and the compression and experimental style of "Divine Madness" (many sequences are written in complete reverse) is at times dazzling. The story is a writing *tour-de-force* primarily because Zelazny forces the reader to actually *become* the protagonist (the character remains nameless throughout the story). Once again, Zelazny not only urges an experiential search for knowledge in the world, but he also attempts to provide that experience through his fiction.

But Zelazny shows even greater control and breadth of human feeling in the final three stories I have selected for this discussion. It is no accident that these last three pieces may be among the finest short stories Zelazny has ever written. I will go through them chronologically so that the maturation of Zelazny's craft can be seen. The stories all demonstrate a subtle evolution of the author's themes and

style, and a skillful blending of various types of science fiction: extrapolation, speculation, and myth-making.

In "The Keys to December" Zelazny explores the life of genetically altered Jarry Dark, member of a race of "Catforms" who must find a planetary environment that will allow them to survive. A solution is found by physically altering a world populated only by creatures of a low phylogenetic order. The change will take 3 thousand years, so Jarry, his lover Sanza, and the rest of the race of Catforms are placed in hibernaculums where they can sleep through the transformation.

Zelazny's ever-changing treatment of immortality is evident here. Jarry Dark, by means of suspended animation, is in a sense immortal. Awakened at 250-year intervals to monitor the effects of the worldchanging process, he sees the weather growing steadily colder, the geography altered, some species dying off, others adapting. Dark witnesses a world in constant flux—a catalogue of experiences (again resonant of Delany's words) which slowly reveals a startling discovery: one of the lower species seems to be *adapting* to the ever-growing cold by inventing tools and clothing to fight the hostile environment.

Slowly and subtly Zelazny has elevated Dark and his race from mere men into something else: they are becoming gods, they are the *first cause*, giving the impetus to an alien species that will eventually achieve sentience. There is also irony in Sanza's words as she speaks to Dark:

"It's funny," she said, "but the thought just occurred to me that we are doing here what was done to us. These creatures came to life in this place, and we're taking it away. We're turning all life on this planet into what we were on our former worlds—misfits."

So Zelazny sets up a problem involving ethical and philosophical questions. Forcing his character, Jarry Dark, into the "Mythic Mode"—that of a god-like figure—he grapples with the essential questions of responsibility to and for life itself.

As time passes on the changing world, Dark and Sanza eventually wake to find the natives well past the threshold of self-awareness. He and his lover rescue a small band of the now-intelligent bipeds from several large beasts. During the encounter, Sanza is killed and Jarry is left alone, without love and with little hope. He transfers his interests to the natives and tries to ensure their evolution will not be thwarted by the rapid change that his race is forcing on the planet. His proposal is to slow down the rate of change and increase the time his race must remain in cryogenic sleep.

But the other Catforms do not agree with him. Jarry replies:

"Don't you think that the fate of a race is worth the effort? Especially since we are the ones who forced intelligence upon them? We're the ones who *made* them evolve, cursed them with intellect."

By setting up this dilemma, Zelazny examines the meaning of the word "humanity." In "The Keys to December," Jarry Dark's alternatives are terribly demanding, and Zelazny uses them to ask if there is really such a thing as moral obligation. If so, does that obligation transcend the barriers of intelligence, biological difference, and self-preservation?

Jarry Dark's proposals are defeated by the other representatives of the Catform race. Morally undermined, Dark cannot return to the hibernaculums, and instead chooses to live out his life among the sentient bipeds he has helped to create. Dark's immortality comes to an end. Zelazny, in doing this, feels that a return to cryogenic sleep would be like consenting to the destruction of a new species of man. Jarry Dark cannot commit moral suicide.

The final effect of "The Keys to December" is one of mythic proportions: its fable-like quality, its focus on moral judgment in the face of physical preservation, the tragic downfall of the protagonist. The story becomes metaphor in the traditional romantic sense because Zelazny forces the reader to recognize what the works of men can produce. But recognition is not enough, says Zelazny; with it must come the sense of obligation to perceive the works of men objectively. Life is life. The story is an alternate reality which serves as a myth for technological man; it is a future legend from which man may benefit or suffer.

Jarry Dark was not suited for existence anywhere in the universe which had guaranteed him a niche. This was either a blessing or a curse, depending on how you looked at it. So look at it however you would, that was the story. Thus does life repay those who would serve her fully.

The last lines bring the ironic, ambivalent questions into tight focus which remains with the reader long after he has finished the story.

Not long after writing "The Keys to December," Zelazny wrote what I feel is one of his finest pieces of short fiction. It contains imagination, sincere emotion, eloquent style, and a blend of classic themes with Zelazny's own personal world-view. The story is called "For A Breath I Tarry."

The setting is a traditional one in science fiction—the post-holocaust world in which man has disappeared and the earth has been inherited by machines of his own creation. It is interesting to note the similarity of setting between "For A Breath I Tarry" and Zelazny's first published story, "Passion Play." Comparison of the two

is an incredible illustration of the author's growth and evolution.

The protagonist of "For A Breath I Tarry" is Frost, a gigantic computer/robot/machine who resides near the top of a great pantheon of machines which control the earth. The machines are self-renewing, self-repairing... eternal and immortal. They are omnipotent beings with the technology to construct almost anything.

At the top of the machine-god pantheon are two rival machines, Solcom (Frost's master) and Divcom. With this struggle for dominion, Zelazny suggests the classic dichotomy of good and evil, but never clarifies who is who. There is much subversive activity between Solcom and Divcom, as machines are captured and reprogrammed to perform for new masters, but Frost, who is almost as powerful as either of the major machines, is in no danger from this.

Eventually Frost is asked to decide which of the primary machines should rule the earth. The plot then takes an interesting turn. Frost is befriended by a small robot named Mordel who has been sent by Divcom to sway his decision. A quest ensues which is resonant of the Holy Grail, and Frost becomes fascinated with the notion of the strange creature that was man.

A majority of the story is taken up with ingenious dialogues between Frost and Mordel, in which Zelazny examines some of man's basic characteristics, with brilliant sensitivity and keen intelligence. The primary focus falls upon the basic dichotomy of man's nature: reason and emotion. Frost, a being of pure logic, cannot comprehend emotion; he lacks a sense of aesthetics. Even though he reads all the still extant books of mankind, studies man's art, his histories, etc., he still cannot appreciate what it means to be human.

Once again, several of Zelazny's major themes appear in "For A Breath I Tarry." Frost is an immortal being, who begins a fantastic search for knowledge, and who realizes that intellectual, rational, logical awareness is not enough. Frost must accumulate experiential knowledge. Immortality provides Frost with the opportunity, but not the apparatus. Thus is Zelazny again hinting at the enormous possibilities of ever-changing experience in a universe of mystery.

The style of the story is full of appropriate metaphors. The great machines assume clever personalities, each one reflecting different aspects of Zelazny's natural wit. It is a story beautifully tailored to fit the Mythic Mode, and the graceful, almost scriptural quality of the dialogue, underscores this aspect.

Zelazny also hints at the Faust legend. Frost's name is a loose approximation of *Faust*, and the character of Mordel is obviously modeled after that of Mephistopheles. Also, just as in *Faust*, Mordel takes Frost to all the corners of the earth, acquainting him with every available aspect of *Homo sapiens*. Frost absorbs man's art, his literature, his music, his dance, every conceivable creative endeavor; but he is never able to perceive them as man perceived them.

The story reaches a pivotal point when some of Frost's serving machines discover the preserved bodies of several men and women in the arctic wastes. Seizing this opportunity, Frost uses his technological skills to revive mitotic germ cells and grow new human fetuses. Then the great machine transfers his "awareness matrix" onto the *tabula rasa* of the human body's brain. He becomes a man.

After suffering through the trauma of "birth," Frost slowly acquires the sensations and unique awareness of his humanity. He realizes that the great machines' struggle for control and maintenance of the earth is pointless as long as there are no men. He brings the Beta-Machine, his other-hemisphere counterpart, to his laboratory and transforms it into Woman. The earth receives a second chance to replenish its store of men.

There is the temptation to simply say that "For A Breath I Tarry" is a beautiful story, wonderfully conceived and finely written. It is Zelazny's attempt to solve the illogical riddle of man himself. This is a monumental task, almost assuredly doomed to failure, but I think the tale of Frost and his experiential quest is one of science fiction's more noble failures. The story is a reflection of many of the highest ideals and purposes of modern science fiction. If SF is going to survive, carrying on as a modern version of Emerson's transcendentalism, it must continue to produce such works: a blend of sensitive emotion, scientific extrapolation, an almost mystical kind of speculation, and a vivid brand of optimism. Zelazny is telling us in this story that man's spirit is not dead even in the face of total annihilation. Just as the brilliance of the Greeks still survives in the artifacts they left behind, so too may the technology of the present and the future provide a testament to man's indefatigable, inquisitive nature . . . and possibly a re-affirmation of his spirit.

The final story to be discussed is one of the last pieces of short fiction Zelazny wrote before giving over most of his energies to novels. "The Man Who Loved the Faioli" is much shorter than the preceding two stories, yet is just as finely crafted, and emphasizes many of

the same ideas and themes that are important to Zelazny.

It is written in a delicate, poetic style which gives the story compression and a density of symbols and images. Immortality is the basic premise once more as protagonist John Auden survives indefinitely by means of cyborg devices. When these life support systems are operating, his body is "dead"—no heart beat, breath, aging, nothing. His brain remains active and he moves by means of machine parts, while he awaits the discovery of a cure for his terminal illness.

His task during the interim is to serve as caretaker to a planet that is the graveyard of all worlds. He lives and

walks through places bearing mythic names: "the Canyon of the Dead," or "the Valley of the Bones." Auden has no contact with the rest of humanity except through the robots which periodically land to unload their cargoes of corpses. This is a strange setting for a Zelazny character. Auden is immortal, yet he is "dead in life" and he has been denied his right to wisdom through an ever-changing current of novel experiences. His life is a completely externalized, intellectual awareness; he is isolated from the world of experience. His life-support system ironically serves as symbol of his existential imprisonment.

And then by chance, Auden

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encounters a creature of obscure galactic legend—a member of the Faioli, a goddess-like being said to visit man in his last month of life to offer herself in love. This concept of the Faioli must surely be one of Zelazny's most interesting and appealing creations. She is a frail, delicate creature of exquisite beauty; she is unable to perceive anything that does not live. She is a symbol for the celebration of life itself.

The Faioli's name is Sythia. She sits upon the graveyard, unaware of the Canyon, the Valley, the bones, or even John Auden himself, because he has his cyborg system operating to keep disease from destroying his body. But he sits down beside her, touching the switch which brings his body to life again. The Faioli, Sythia, perceives him when he does this, and senses that he will soon die. She agrees to spend her month with him.

Zelazny describes their appointed time in poetic lines which capture the sensuousness of their relationship:

Sythia was mother-of-pearl, and her body was alternately cold and warm to his caresses, and her mouth was a tiny flame, igniting whatever it touched, with its teeth like needles and its tongue like the heart of a flower. And so he came to know the thing called love for the Faioli called Sythia.

The month of love eventually draws to a close; Auden knows that Sythia will soon leave him. He wants to tell her that he need not die, yet he does not want her to know that she has been deceived.

When Auden explains the electro-chemical nature of his immortality to Sythia, she does not understand. In a moment of naive curiosity, she touches the switch which turns off his body. He disappears from

her sight. He does not switch back again because "he knew once again the icy logic that stood apart from emotion." Auden loses the Faioli forever and spends the rest of his life-within-death wondering about the judgment that he was forced to make.

"The Man Who Loved the Faioli," is a fine example of Zelazny putting some of his major themes under an extremely tight focus. John Auden's curse of immortality is dispelled by his experiencing love. Again the basic dichotomies of reason and emotion are brought into play as Zelazny juxtaposes the images of Auden's strange existence:

... his life took upon it a dreamlike quality, filled with the pleasure of Sythia and shot through with certain inevitable streaks of pain. Often, she saw him wince, and she asked him concerning his expressions.

And always he would laugh and say, "Pleasure and pain are near to one another," or something like that.

At another point, the contrasting images are even more apparent:

She turned him into a flame, an iceberg, a little boy, an old man.

But there is no real solution to Auden's dilemma; there are only alternatives with both advantages and drawbacks. Both choices involve different kinds of "life," different kinds of "death."

"The Man Who Loved the Faioli" is a parable for technological man. It outlines the boundaries of life and its relationship to love. Perhaps Zelazny himself best sums up the basic theme of the tale in the last lines:

It is that way, and the moral may be that life (and perhaps love) is stronger than that which it contains, but never that which contains it. But only a Faioli could tell you that for sure, and they never come here any more.

One can almost immediately see the similarities between this story and "The Keys to December." Jarry Dark and John Auden, both having been granted an almost immortal existence, realize that an endless life of cold rationality may not be enough. Both characters are forced into choices they do not want to make. Interestingly, both choose differently—Jarry choosing to live in the worship-love of the evolving native species, John Auden giving up the ephemeral love of Sythia—yet they are both drawn to their decisions by the same dynamic forces of love, compassion, true human awareness.

Zelazny's short stories and novelettes encompass a vast chunk of Space and Time, yet they are all concerned with similar problems, they all ask similar provocative questions which attempt to define what it is like to be *human* in a reality of constant flux. Time and again, he brings the reader back to one of his most primary concerns—love. Without that basic emotion, life, even eternal life, may not be worth living. It is no accident that John Auden has the same name as the famous British poet, who once said that we must all love one another, or die.

Roger Zelazny also believes this to be true. ■

NOTES:

1. Theodore Sturgeon, "Introduction," *Four for Tomorrow* (New York: Ace Books, 1967), p. 11.
2. Banks Mebane, "Gunpowder i' the Court, Wildfire at Midnight," *Algol 13* (1968), p. 39.
3. Samuel R. Delany, "Faust and Archimedes," *SFWA Forum*, (1969), p. 18.
4. Delany, p. 21.

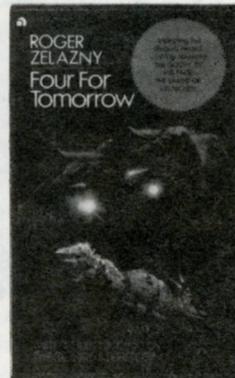
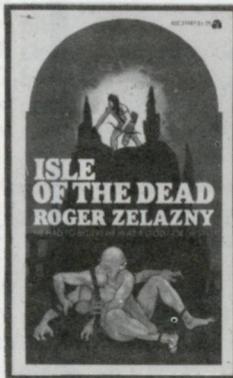




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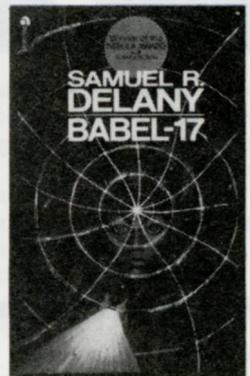
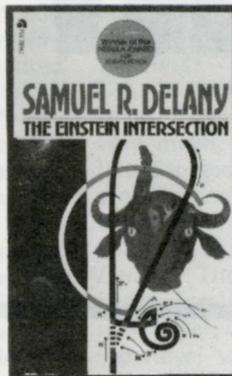
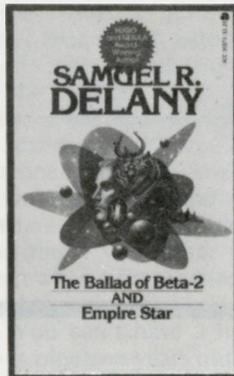
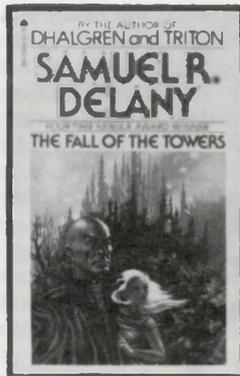
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ALGOL INTERVIEW



SAMUEL R. DELANY

INTERVIEWED BY

**Darrell
Schweitzer**

Interviewer: In some of your essays you've stated that style and content are inseparable, if not identical. Would you expand on this?

Delany: What I meant is that style and content are two critical categories. What you've got on paper is a series of words. If the style is what the words are actually doing, you simply cannot cut the paper between the lines and say, "Well, that's the content." You'd have something with no words on it. The actual story itself is a coherent string of words which you cannot slice and have the top half be the style and the bottom half be the content. Almost everything you're willing to talk about in terms of one can fit into the other. If you stretch the definition of content you've got the style. If you stretch the definition of style you've got the content. They're two directions of a spectral line, and there's no clear division between them. They're not two things that are sharply bounded.

Interviewer: Suppose Henry James were alive today, and he were to rewrite one of your books in his style rather than yours. Would this be the same book?

Delany: No, it wouldn't be the same—I assume not! [laughs] No more than if I decided to rewrite one of his.

Interviewer: I mean if he were to tell exactly the same story, only phrase it differently.

Delany: It just wouldn't work that way. When we read a story we tend to forget that the order we experience it in is the exact opposite of the order in which we remember it. The *last* thing you find out about the story is what it's about. The *first* thing you find out is the nature of the language, because that's what you get after you've read the first paragraph, the first page. Most people will pick up the story and read the first page and decide from that whether they want to read it or not. They are not judging what the story is about. They're judging what the effect of that first burst of language is on them, which sometimes indicates things about the structure of the entire story, but they are not experiencing the entire structure itself. They're experiencing that first burst of language, and again the same way the *last* information you get from the story is the plot, for want of a better word. So when people start to talk about a story they talk about it ass-backwards. They talk as if the first thing you know about the story is what it's about, which it's not, but the last thing, and that somehow the last thing is the language, which is of course the first thing.

Interviewer: From your essays and from the introductions to the chapters in *The Einstein Intersection*, you seem to be one of the most meticulous writers in the business. Is this why you worry so much over each line?

Delany: One of the reasons I worry is that I was a remedial reader. I didn't learn to read easily. I was dyslectic, and reading was very difficult for me. I've always wanted a lot out of what I read. It wasn't easy. I didn't really learn to read until I was about eight years old. The only way you can get a lot out of a book is, I think, if the writer puts a lot into it. That's actually why I take time, because I assume that whoever is reading my book is somebody vaguely like me and who therefore wants a lot out of it, whoever this bizarre ideal reader is who picks it up and starts reading.

Interviewer: I find it interesting that you're writing for someone like yourself, a hypothetical friend. You're not writing just to please—

Delany: I'm writing to please that person. It's something that I have said a number of times, that essentially I write books that I would like to read and cannot find. Therefore I must write them myself.

Interviewer: With your careful revisions, how do you account for the writer who writes everything first draft and it comes out beautifully? Lord Dunsany is a good example. He used to write a short story every morning before breakfast, and novels in three weeks.

Delany: It's a kind of talent. I think there are two ways to account for it. One is a natural talent this kind of person has. The other is the fact that usually anyone who writes his work first draft, like Lord Dunsany or Trollope or any author, is writing in a different *kind* of language, a different mode of language. Dunsany, especially, was writing in a very formalized language where the conventions and what-have-you are much more set than someone who is writing heavy foreground stuff. These people tend to write racy—beautiful conversation. The style is essentially a conversational style where the laws of balance and proportion are the laws that you use in a certain kind of speech, and the person who writes this kind of heavy foreground is trying to give you the texture, the *feel* of the experience. They're trying to analyze the front, the absolute, what your psyche is rubbed into when you go through the experience. The one-draft people are writing, in a way, a much more artificial language, a much more literary language. What we call literary language is the kind of language that a Dunsany writes, but essentially the more truly literary language is the language that is invented, created for the situation at hand. The language is practically being re-invented for each sentence.

Interviewer: Have you ever tried to write in the more formal literary mode?

Delany: From time to time I've played with it, but my approach has been very much as though that's a different kind

of foreground that one wants to deal with. That's just because it's easier for me to do it that way. I don't know if that makes sense or not.

Interviewer: When you write a story, do you then start with the language?

Delany: Like every other writer it depends on the story. Sometimes it may be a whole idea, sometimes a character, sometimes a setting. Or two settings. I want to use both these settings in the story and I have to invent a story that will get some people from one to the other. Sometimes it may be a practically didactic theme to pound over people's heads, and then I have to figure out how to write a story which will pound this into the reader without *sounding* like it's pounding.

Interviewer: Do you plot it all out consciously, or is this a subconscious process?

Delany: A writer has to spend most of his time taking care of the conscious part of the story, because the unconscious part will by its very nature take care of itself. That's what it's unconscious for. So there are too many things going on in a story which you do have to deal with very consciously, or at least I do.

Interviewer: How much of your work is autobiographical? I notice that most of your novels have the same lead character, and from *The Jewels of Aptom* onward he seems to be getting older. How much of yourself is in this wanderer character?

Delany: Again it's very hard to say. Just sort of anecdotally I was in a room full of people, some of whom knew my work, some of whom didn't and I was asked this question, "How autobiographical are your stories?" And I was about to say what I quite honestly thought, and that is not autobiographical at all. If a story is set two hundred years in the future, how autobiographical can it be? And somebody else said, "Oh scandalously!" So I thought, well, from one point of view perhaps they are. On the other hand you talk about the characters getting older. When I started writing I was rather young. I was nineteen when I first started writing novels, and I thought to myself, "This is ridiculous. You can't have a hero of a novel who is nineteen years old. No one is serious at seventeen or nineteen, and I've got to have a serious person." So I made a point for about the first five years I was writing always to make the character two or three years older, because somehow I was convinced when I was nineteen that somebody *twenty-three* was serious. That was grown up, you know. So my characters were traditionally three years older than I was, because I thought that was an age that somebody could take seriously. Then when I started *Dhalgren* the character is somewhere in the vicinity of

twenty-seven. I'm now thirty-three so the character is now younger than I am, so I have grown from younger than the character to older. So their actual progression of chronological age is certainly not on the same slope that my own age is. It was very much a conscious decision when I decided that I wanted the characters older than me. Then is that autobiographical, or is that a conscious decision on the part of the author?

Interviewer: *Dhalgren* differs from all your other novels in that it is the only one that isn't a rigidly plotted story, and the only one that isn't readily identifiable as science fiction. Do you deliberately set out to write science fiction, or do you just see what comes out?

Delany: You're asking a hard-edged question which has several very spectrally related answers. *Dhalgren* may not be recognizable as science fiction. It is perhaps not rigidly plotted, but it's very rigidly structured. In the same way, if it's got rocketships in it you know it's science fiction. If it doesn't you think, "Hm! Probably somebody is going to wonder whether this is science fiction or not." Again, is that setting out to write science fiction or not?

Interviewer: A lot of great science fiction doesn't have rocketships in it.

Delany: And a lot of it does.

Interviewer: How do you feel about science fiction as a field? Do you think of yourself as a science fiction writer?

Delany: Yes, very much so. Yes. I think of myself as doing that, and I think the things that even at least resemble science fiction will be more accessible to someone who has a science fiction background than someone who does not.

Interviewer: Why were you drawn into this field?

Delany: Somewhat by accident. I liked some of the science fiction that I read very much. Again at that time writers like Sturgeon and Bester simply sentence by sentence gave me more.

Interviewer: Do you ever find yourself commercially typed?

Delany: The closest this has come to happening is between *Dhalgren* and my new novel, *Triton*. My original title for the novel was *Trouble on Triton*, and the publisher's absolutely staunch approach was, "Well, your last book was a one word title, and your next book is going to be a one word title, and you'd better resign yourself to having one word titles, young man." So it's *Triton*, although I'm not unhappy with it. I'm not screamingly jumping for joy either. It doesn't misrepresent the book.

Interviewer: Also the title "Trouble on Triton" has been used before. I think it was Alan Nourse.

Delany: No, it wasn't. I looked this up in the *Day Index*. There is a Simak

Trouble with Tycho. There is a Henry Kuttner "Trouble on Titan"; there are several "Trouble on Titan." And there is indeed one "Trouble on Triton" which was a short story that appeared in something like *Startling Stories* in the late 1930's. One of the things I wanted for this particular book was a title that sounded like twenty-seven other science fiction novels. I wanted a title that would evoke a sense of "Haven't I heard of this before?" and the title would sort of slip between your fingers before you actually grasped it. The book is not a funny book, but it has some humorous elements in it. It's a book about people trying to live their lives by cliches. So I wanted this kind of title on the cover. Also, some of the best prose that's ever been written in America is Raymond Chandler's and it comes out under such titles as *Farewell My Lovely*—which is quite marvelous, that sort of interplay you get between that sort of thing. I wanted to do the same sort of thing there, you know, perfectly clunky. But *Triton* doesn't misrepresent it. It is a science fiction novel, indubitably so.

Interviewer: Have you ever thought of doing something completely outside of the science fiction field, like a mystery?

Delany: No, I haven't. I think that one of the things you get out of science fiction, one of the ways that science fiction does what it does, is that it uses

the scientific discourse to literalize and retrieve for the foreground presentation all sorts of sentences that would be nonsense if they appeared in any other mode of discourse. You know, "The door dilated." There's a whole implied scientific discourse about the engineering of large scale iris apertures. This is what makes this sentence—it's from Heinlein's *Beyond This Horizon*—mean something. Then you get other things which in other modes of discourse would just be emotionally fuzzy metaphors like "Her world exploded." That's just a cliché in a gothic sense, but in a science fiction novel it could mean that a planet, belonging to a woman, blew up. Or, "He turned on his left side." That doesn't mean he's tossing and turning. No, in science fiction there's a little switch. These sentences are suddenly cast into the foreground of their literal meaning. Or, for example, there's that incredible pyrotechnical scene at the end of *The Stars My Destination* where the guy is going through synesthesia and he's experiencing smell as sight and sight as smell. And it isn't some sort of metaphorical poetry. This is what's happening. When the taste of lemons raked his skin, that's what happened. Science fiction literalizes the language and it casts it into a sort of real mode that you just don't have with any other kind of discourse. There are so many *new sentences*. The actual gallery of sentences is much much larger than you have in mundane fiction or any other mode of discourse. Once you have been working in this field with this infinitely larger range of just combinations of words you can put together and *mean something* with them in a clear, foreground mode, to suggest that a writer go back and work in some mundane mode, naturalistic mode, is like saying to a twelve-tone composer who's used to working with the entire scale, who has begun to hear his music and the sounds around him in this twelve tone range with all the notes that are possible to use, that he should go back and write something diatonic. You're saying cut off your right hand and your left hand, and leave your foot behind and now do a dance that way. Nobody is going to want to. What you're asking them to do is work with a much smaller vocabulary. That's one reason why I don't think science fiction writers are too terribly tempted unless they want to do it as some sort of *tour-de-force*, look-see-I-can-do-it. But when they want to say their serious thing they want to work with a full range of their possible vocabulary. This is one of the reasons I like science fiction, because it gives me that much wider range. I can put more words into more bizarre orders.

Interviewer: Why do you think it is then that until recently science fiction

writers have been noticeably limited in their use of language?

Delany: I don't think this is really true. You do have Sturgeon's Law: 90% of everything is indeed crap. But the best of Sturgeon's writing is *better* sentence by sentence than anything that was being done contemporaneously with him. When you look at where mundane fiction was in the fifties, you see it was pretty uninteresting stuff. We hadn't had the sort of thing that you get with Barth and Barthelme, and all the experimentation of Faulkner and Dos Passos was far in the past. Just in terms of Bradbury, Bester, and Sturgeon you have more exciting language being done in science fiction in the fifties than you have in all of the serious mainstream put together. Yeah, the majority of it was pretty ham-handed stuff, but we don't judge any art by the majority of what is done. We judge it by the best.

Interviewer: From talking to a lot of people today it seems to me that readers don't hear language any more. They're not really aware of it.

Delany: In a sense you don't hear language—you read it. One of the hugest things that I've learned from writing is how different oral language is from written language. They're just two entirely different modes. The eye asks for different information in a different order, presented in different intensities than the ear does. The ear wants to hear things repeated again and again and again. It wants things to be reiterated; it wants things to come back in different forms. The eye wants the information once, quickly, precisely, and that's it. It wants to go on to the new thing. You may want to bring up a tone of voice in writing, but it's a whole different medium.

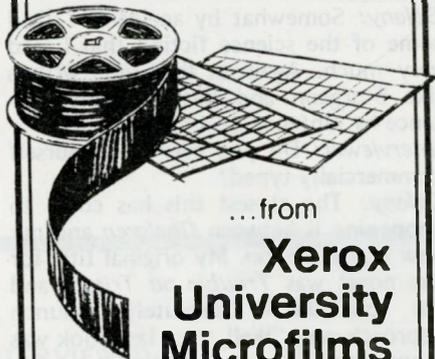
Interviewer: They are related in—

Delany: Yeah, they use the same words. But they use different words too. There are a lot of grammatical constructions that are only literary. "The man walking down the street was wearing a red hat." That's purely literary. We don't use the present participle any more in speech adjectivally. You either say "this guy who I saw," or you'd break it up somehow. You'd say "you know," and all those noise nodes that we punctuate our speech with.

Interviewer: The point was that the way to tell if a story is well and smoothly written is to read it aloud to somebody, and if you stumble over a sentence there's something wrong with it. Would you agree with that?

Delany: No. I've tried too many smoothly written stories out loud. Action—a good action sequence is meaningless read out loud. Just take anybody who writes good action sequences. First of all, paragraphs tell you an amazing amount of what's going on. In dialogue for instance, you learn

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the change of speaker by the paragraph. So you don't need to identify the speaker in each sentence, especially if you've just got a dialogue going between two people. You read this out loud in a single voice and it's complete confusion. One of the most exciting written stories that I know of is Roger Zelazny's "The Doors of His Face, The Lamps of His Mouth." I've read that aloud to people. They have no idea of what's going on. They cannot follow it. It's pretty much pure action, and I remember when I first read it to a bunch of people they thought it was experimental writing, this quintessence of the action story, because he's telling us so much with those little indentations for paragraphs—now we're moved over here—and you can't follow that when you hear it out loud. As I said the ear wants its information presented differently, wants it with reiteration and a lot of repetition and underlining. So stuff that's extremely exciting to read and just reads like greased lightning turns into sort of verbal salad when you read it out loud. It doesn't seem smooth at all. It seems very very choppy and practically surreal. Then, of course sometimes it doesn't. If there's a tone of voice doing a lot of the real work, that will come across when read out loud. If the tone of voice is not doing all that much work and it's the actual juxtaposition of the words, the images, and what-have-you, which is giving the information, that very possibly is not going to work when read out loud.

Interviewer: Do you think your own fiction is more printed-page oriented?

Delany: Yes, I do, although from time to time I have given readings and I know that some things simply theatrically work better, and they're not necessarily the ones that are the most popular in terms of general readership.

Interviewer: When you write, do you build a story from the images and then justify it logically, or do you take the time for the build-a-planet-from-the-gravity-up approach?

Delany: One of the Australians, I think it was John Foyster, said that science fiction should not contradict what is known to be known, which is a nice way of putting it. I can't conceive of myself writing a science fiction story that violated something that I *knew* was a scientific fact, and I've been known to pick up the average *Scientific American* article and sort of glance at it to make sure I wasn't doing something completely dumb. Although on the other hand, there's something like "The Doors of His Face, The Lamps of His Mouth." I think Roger was once telling me that the thing that inspired writing the story was the fact that one of the Venus probes had come back and said, "no there is no water on Venus. These are all hydrocarbon gases." And as a sort of a

farewell gesture to the science fiction Venus of vast oceans and misty clouds, he had written this story about hunting sea monsters on Venus. It was sort of a "so long" to that whole set of images which were now rendered obsolete. We now knew that Venus was not ocean. That's the kind of impetus that just by temperament I'm not inclined to, but I can appreciate it, and I still think the story is science fiction even with that kind of purposeful violation of the scientific fact.

Interviewer: In *Nova* you have people going through a donut-shaped star. Is that scientifically valid?

Delany: Well something that I didn't realize at the time was that there should have been a Schwartzchild object in the center of the donut, but the donut itself is feasible for a certain kind of nova.

Interviewer: Did you do a lot of scientific study for that?

Delany: No. Very seldom do I actually sit down and research a story. What happens is that I tend to read popular science articles, and I'm a regular reader of *Scientific American*, and *The New Scientist* and things like that. And I pick up the odd book. A book that is just a straight mathematical treatise that I've found fascinating in the last couple of years and re-read a couple times is G. Brown's *The Laws of Form* which is just deriving the calculus for the Boulelean algebras. I'm interested in this kind of thing just as a general reader. Eventually what I have read will just sort of coalesce together when I need it. Also from time to time when I'm sort of stuck I'll go and check over something, or ask somebody an odd question just to make sure that I'm not doing the wrong thing. There's a section in *Triton*—after the book was written I gave it to a guy named Jack Cohen who is an embryologist and is also working in birth-control, and he suggested a couple of ways of condensing this rather long and rather clumsy expository passage, which was also pseudo-science, with some real science that cut out about a paragraph. But it was something that was real, that would do the job of my pseudo-science a lot more elegantly, and I was very glad for it, and I used it. But remember that by this time the story had already been written anyway. I didn't go out and research the thing.

Interviewer: What kind of reading most influences your own writing?

Delany: That that I do [laughs] as opposed to that that I don't do. I think science fiction writers tend to be people who are mildly interested in everything, and the same temperament keeps us from ever getting too terribly interested in anything. You want to be interested enough to be able to ask intelligent questions and understand the answers. How interested is that?

Interviewer: Are you that interested?

What intensely interests you?

Delany: Well today it's one thing; tomorrow it's something else. Six months ago it was René Thom's catastrophe theory. I've got a copy of a study by Jacques LaConde, the French psychiatrist, on my desk, reading "The Purloined Letter" as the archetypal form for the psychoanalytic encounter which is fascinating. You know, whatever you happen to pick up if it's interesting. I've just got a new calculator: the instruction manual is fascinating. It's whatever happens to come along. And three weeks later you might think, "well, gosh that was nice," and go on to something else. It's sort of a magpie tendency—an intellectual magpie.

Interviewer: What is your attitude toward science in general? How do you feel about what Alexei Panshin says about science fiction being sort of a subjectivization of science?

Delany: Panshin's ideas are one of the things that from time to time I am intensely interested in. One of the things I was hoping he would bring up is the fact that there are whole branches of science where the kind of intuitionism that he's talking about under the name of intersubjectivity is essential. Without it the science wouldn't exist. Things like psychiatry, sociology. Any time when the encounter is between two subjects you cannot use a mechanistic model. The fact that you have two subjects, both of whom have something that the other recognizes as volition means that you're dealing with an entirely different type of reality. It's only when a field like psychiatry comes to realize that the ontology of its object is different than the ontology of the object in physics or chemistry, that it becomes a science at all. It is finally beginning to grow up and take some sort of scientific cognizance of itself. The same thing in sociology. An anthropologist coming to a culture to study it is not like putting a catalyst in a chemistry compound. It's a different thing, and this is why anthropology, psychology, and the other soft sciences are finally beginning to get interesting because they're beginning to outgrow these mechanistic models and realize what the nature of their object of study is.

Interviewer: Have you noticed that most people are divorced from the hard sciences and even pride themselves on their ignorance?

Delany: Most people are divorced from sociology as well. There is always a sort of fear of hard-edged things, which is sad because we live in a universe that has a lot of hard edges in it. We've made it, so I think it is better to try and understand it than to go around pretending it isn't there. This is the sort of thing that is always with us. It is sad

that people are terrified of technology, because by being terrified you simply abnegate your power before it, and

that's not the way to deal with the matter. Tools are not what is evil. It's the use they're put to that makes the

problem, and to be terrified of the tool because of the use it's put to gets you nowhere. ■



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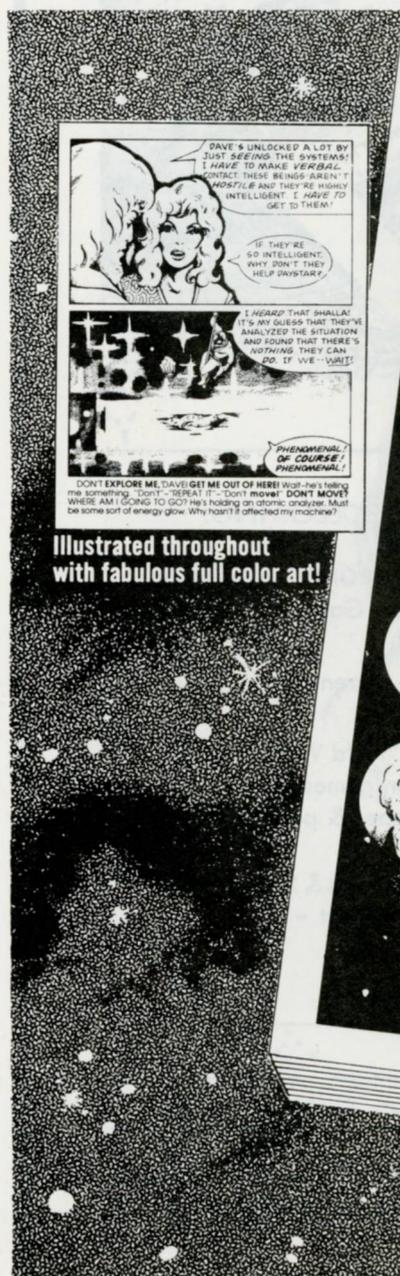
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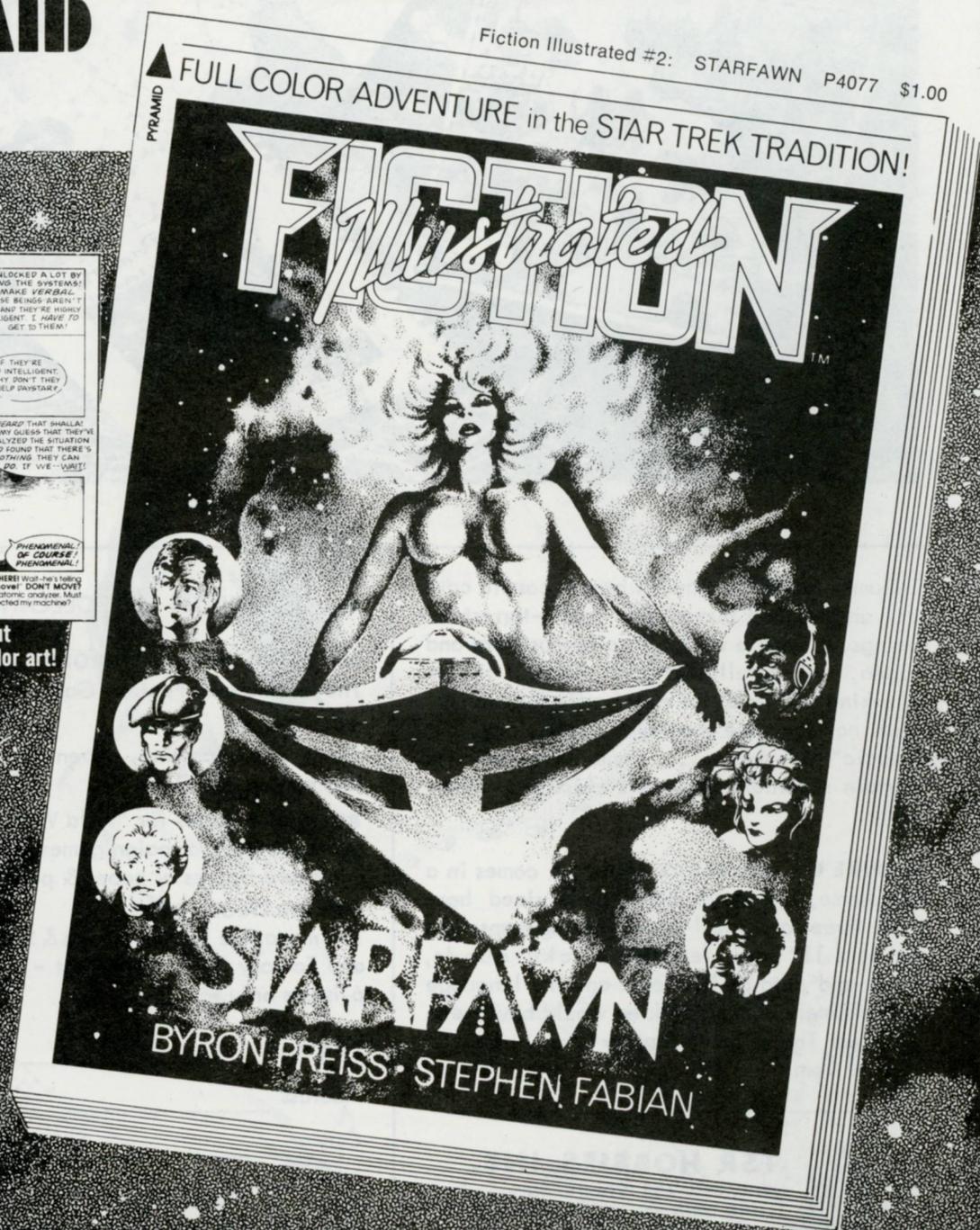
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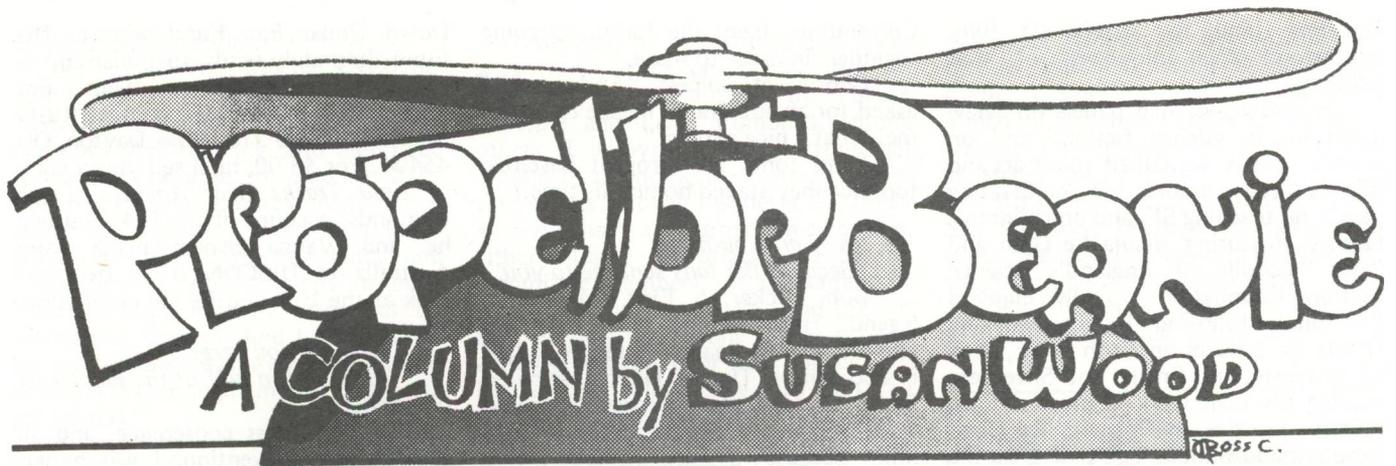
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A COLUMN by SUSAN WOOD

ROSS C.

"Why are you here?" asked Jan Sharpe, the elegant blonde from the Australian Broadcasting Commission.

"We've come for Aussiecon."

"Here" was the State Suite on the 15th floor of the Southern Cross Hotel, Melbourne, Australia, Aug. 14, 1975. Robin Johnson, chairman of Aussiecon, had hauled me away from helping to register convention attendees to attend a press conference where he was introducing convention notables to each other and to assorted reporters.

The basic "why" translated as "What's an Aussiecon?" with faint undertones of "Why here?" (Australians are so used to believing that everything important exists in the places where they're tourists that they find it hard to believe North Americans would want to cross the Pacific and the dateline to see them, their wombats and their Opera House. In fact, they're most courteous, hospitable to visitors, and have an amazing country. This may be the first time ALGOL has given a rave review to a continent.)

Since 1939, we explained, and annually since 1946, science fiction fans have gathered at "world" conventions to talk; swap ideas and fanzines; sell each other old pulp magazines; look at masquerade balls, art shows and, especially of late, movies; meet writers who are meeting editors; give each other awards; eat dinner together; and... anything two fans do together is fanac. This is the 33rd of these "world conventions." Since it is supposed to be a "world" convention, it has been known to move out of North America, to London and Heidelberg, and so an Australian named John Bangsund thought... Well, yes, of course, we hear writers give speeches, but it's not really like an academic conference. No, not like the sheepdip sellers' sales meetings, or the American Legion reunions, either. It's been called a gathering of the tribes, and a family reunion... but they were puzzled already, these people come to interpret us.

Media coverage of science fiction conventions tends to be sensational. The first TORCON in 1948 earned headlines like "Zap! Zap! Atomic Ray is Passé with Fiends," and one of the sensational Melbourne tabloids proved nothing has changed—they concentrated on the scanty skirts of the hired models promoting the WANG computers, loaned to the convention for Star Trek games. "Sci-fi." Sigh.

Most reporters, though, listened with interest as Robin stressed the respectability of science fiction, the educational and cultural nature of the convention, the funds from the Literature Board of the Australian Council to run a writers' workshop before the con, the videotaping of the convention for schools and libraries. (If you're interested in sound or video tapes, write to Aussiecon, GPO Box 4039, Melbourne, Vic. 3001, Australia.)

More important, Ursula K. Le Guin emanated, inspired, intelligent interest in this "Aussiecon."

"I have a question, a serious question to ask you. What on earth are we here for?"

"Well, I think we have come to celebrate."—Ursula K. Le Guin, Guest of Honour speech, Aussiecon, Aug. 14, 1975.

Reporters thought they could understand why Ursula Le Guin had come to Aussiecon: for professional reasons. The Guest of Honour was fittingly chosen: an acclaimed writer of science fiction and fantasy, winner of Hugo, Nebula and National Book awards, author of the Hugo-and-Nebula-winning *The Left Hand of Darkness*, the Nebula-winning-and-Hugo-nominated *The Dispossessed*. She must have journeyed half round the world to accept the admiration of her fans.

Admiration, however, makes Ursula Le Guin nervous. She changes the subject. She was lured from Oregon, en route to London the long way, by the chance to lead a writing workshop for

20 aspiring SF writers. She remained after the workshop, not to lecture to the fans, but to share with them her delight in SF: to "celebrate" SF.

"SF is pretty well grown up now. We've been through our illiterate stage, and our latent or non-sexual stage, and the stage where you can't think of anything *but* sex, and the rest of them, and we really do seem to be on the verge of maturity now. When I say I'd like SF to be self-critical, I don't mean pedantic or destructively perfectionist; I mean I'd like to see more SF readers judging soundly, dismissing the failures quietly, in order to praise the successes joyfully—and to go on from them, to build upon them. That is maturity, isn't it?—a just assessment of your capacities, and the will to fulfill them. We have plenty to praise, you know, I do think SF during the past ten years has produced some books and stories that will last, that will be meaningful and beautiful many years from now." (Ursula K. Le Guin, GoH speech, Aussiecon.)

Most of us responded enthusiastically; a few people wondered where the fun of reading forbidden trash would go; and the reporters took notes. But Ms. Le Guin had more to say:

"When I say the ghetto walls are down and it behooves us to step over them and be free, I don't mean that the community of SF is breaking up, or should break up... The essential lunacy that unites us will continue to unite us. The one thing that's changed is that we're no longer *forced* together in a mutually defensive posture—like a circle of muskoxen on the Arctic snow, attacked by wolves—by the contempt and arrogance of literary reactionaries. If we meet now and in the future, we writers and readers of SF, to give each other prizes and see each other's faces and renew old feuds and discuss new books and hold our celebration, it will be in entire freedom—because we choose to do so—because, to put it simply, we like each other."

I'm not altogether sure the

reporters (and the attendees) fully understood the uniqueness of that liking.

Thursday, we had panels on "new directions in science fiction" and on science; Friday we talked about art and SF; Saturday found me moderating panels on teaching SF, and on children's fantasy (featuring Ursula Le Guin and Peter Nicholls of England's Science Fiction Foundation—I really enjoyed this one), followed by hardworking Ursula on a panel on myth in SF, then SF criticism, and finally Bob Silverberg reading his own work—a most serious, literary day this, ending with the Hugo banquet; and Sunday had panels on the media in SF, reading SF, and writing SF: it *looked* like a literary conference. (But what was that panel about "fanzines"—and this item, "The Role of Sheep in SF"—and all the announcements of the Test Match scores—and this "business session" where Orlando won the 1977 worldcon? What's this "fandom"?)

So the reporters assumed they'd dropped into a literary gathering, where Ackerman, Bova, Foster, Le Guin, Silverberg and Tucker had flown in to meet their Australian counterparts like Chandler, Harding, Turner and Wilder, their critics like Nicholls and Foyster. Off they went to interview Captain Chandler (and report, with pride, the presentation of an Invisible Little Man award to him at the banquet): a gentleman dignified, courteous, proud of his craft, and as thrilled as any of us to be at Aussiecon. The papers and the radio didn't report on that last trait. We call it Sense of Wonder. It knows no limits of age or distance; and it unites us.

"Why have you come to Aussiecon—from Perth, and Hobart, and Waihere Island, N.Z.?"

"To meet science fiction writers, of course."

Aussiecon was, first of all, a science fiction conference, for writers and readers. As such it attracted 604 attending members, some 500 or whom were Australians who had never heard of worldcons or fandom—who probably didn't understand why some 1,400 other fans, most of them North Americans, paid to become supporting members of a convention they couldn't attend. (Even with this support, Aussiecon may have financial problems, especially since Australian hotels, unlike most North American ones, charge for the use of function space.)

These readers, like the reporters, soon learned that what Ursula Le Guin said held true: "we like each other." The SF world tends *not* to split into an elite of Doers, sitting on platforms lecturing, and a supportive mass of Receivers or fans, sitting adulating.

Convention: from the Latin, to come together: in order to share.

Chorus of voices: "And when I asked for an autograph, he/she *talked* to me! What a nice person!"

(And some are arrogant bastards, too, but they stayed home this time.)

"Why are you here?"

"Because the fans sent me to you."

Bob Tucker, a First Fandomite, legend, Hugo-winning fan-writer, and admirer of Jim Beam and pretty ladies, is also Wilson Tucker, Hugo-nominated SF writer. He flew to Aussiecon because a lot of us in the fan community love him; because a lady named Jackie Franke organized "The Tucker Bag," a special fund which collected some \$2,500 from fans to pay his way. During his first panel, on SF writing, he sat silent and fidgeting under the spotlights, feeling that only a handful of us were responding. "They're a cold audience," he complained to me. Since I was to interview him the next day on the programme, we considered the problem. The spotlights for videotaping panels were too bright, the hall too dark: speakers and audience were cut off. Easily remedied. Vital, though, since we wanted to establish the lack of barriers.

"Bob," I said, "I remember my first worldcon. You were up on a stage trading one-liners about 'Rosebud' and 'Courtney's boat' and picnic tables—and I walked out. People kept talking about fandom; I didn't understand, and I was bored. We've got to introduce you properly—as Wilson the writer (Robin didn't make it clear who you are) and Bob the fan, and talk about why you're both."

Introduce fandom-as-a-Tucker creation in 50 minutes? We tried. Soon Merv Binns of Space Age Books was selling out of hardcover editions of *Ice and Iron* and *Year of the Quiet Sun*; the local bottle shops were selling out of Tucker's elixir, Jim Beam; and Tucker was handing out Rosebud buttons and calling cards to bebies of femmefans. By Sunday, he had a hall full of people on their feet going "smoooooth," an arcane ritual you'll only understand if you attend a con with Bob, Wilson and Jim.

By Sunday, that is, Australia had a lot of people not only delighted to discover somebody else read "That stuff" (remember the thrill?) but also a lot of people happy to discover the subculture of fandom. (A good introduction is Tucker's own *Neofan's Guide*, 25¢ from Linda Bushyager, 1614 Evans Ave., Prospect Park, PA 19076.)

"Why are you here?"

"The fans sent me to keep an eye on Bob, there."

Rusty Hevelin (who drinks milk) travelled with his "son" Bob as the

Down Under Fan Fund winner. The Fund alternately sends Australians up to visit us, us down to them. For information and ballots, contact Rusty Hevelin at 3023 Troy Pike, Dayton, OH 45404. For \$3.00, he'll sell you a copy of *Emu Tracks Over America*, Leigh Edmonds' account of the Epic Journey he and Valma Brown made from Australia to DISCON II—an excellent look at the U.S. and its fan population.

"Why are you here?"

"Because I'm half of the Fan Guest of Honour."

At that press conference, and all through the convention, I was hyper-aware that few people would understand what role Mike Glicksohn and I were playing as "Fan" GoHs. What novel had we written? What had we published? What did we mean, we'd published a fanzine called *Energumen* which won a Hugo, articles from me that won another, and letters from him that made him a legend (though the beard, boa constrictor, bheer and Bill Bowers helped)? What's a "fanzine"? Back to square one.

Mike and I figured that while Ursula represented the professional concerns, and he represented the fans (with a *duty* to sample local brews for them), I was an interface between SF and the subculture of fandom. After organizing a fanhistory display at the Toronto worldcon, I'd had some practice explaining fandom (especially to reporters, with Bob Tucker's help!). Besides—as Robin Johnson and the programme book kept pointing out—I had lovely respectable literary interests, having taught SF and finished off a PhD (now I can go back to reading fanzines). I was able to meet a lot of Australians through that "professional" interest in SF: librarians, teachers, students who wanted to set up SF courses—people like me who wanted to take SF seriously, but not take the joy out of it. (I spent one panel on Sunday trying to have the best of both worlds!)

Yet when I introduced myself, I tried to talk about Susan the fan, about why fandom interests me as much as the SF which lured me into it.

"Why are you here?"

"To have dinner with my friends."

I explained, at the opening ceremonies, that years before when I was a neofan, a friend lent me some amateur SF magazines: fanzines. Most contained discussions of SF, book reviews and such; yet one, *Rataplan*, consisted entirely of someone named Leigh Edmonds in Australia talking about having dinner with someone named John Bangsund, and... "Richard," I complained, "what's going on? This isn't even about SF! Who cares?"

"Oh," he replied. "That's fannish."

You'll understand someday."

So in 1975 I left Regina, Saskatchewan; and I arrived in Melbourne, Australia; and I met Ursula Le Guin at the Nova Mob meeting, and didn't fall at her feet because she said she'd be embarrassed; and the next night I had dinner at Degraives Tavern with Leigh Edmonds, and John Bangsund, and Valma Brown who happens to be a sister of mine, not by birth but by choice and fandom. And I understood: for me, fandom was a communications network that brought me together with my friends.

It was hardly a unique message, but it was as simple, and honest, as I could make it. At the panel following the introductions, "How to Really Enjoy Yourself at This Convention," Mike and Rusty and the Aussiefen repeated the same thing: "Talk to people. That's why we're here. Talk to people." And we did. From platforms and panels; in groups over coffee, supplied by DISCON II, bless 'em, in the lounge outside the meeting room; at the parties by the Magic Pudding Club and the Science Fiction Writers of America (and Australia) and the '77 worldcon bidders; at Leigh Edmonds' pie-and-sauce party, that vast end-of-con tribute to Australian cuisine; in ones and twos and tens: we discussed, debated, disagreed, chattered, gossiped, heavyrapped, and got to know each other. And then we wandered back into the main ballroom to watch Sonar Graphics' unique light-and-sound show, preceding each major programme segment (Aussiecon's most impressive innovation), and listen to someone else talk.

What else is there at a worldcon? There's an art show—Aussiecon's was small but impressive, highlighted by Karel Thole's work—hucksters' tables, selling books and magazines and the like; and auctions of collectable material. There's usually a masquerade, this one capably organized by Shayne McCormack, with your hardworking GoHs to judge the costumes—far simpler than the elaborate North American presentations of late, but fun. A movie programme has become standard; Aussiecon premiered *Solaris* but I was too busy visiting. At larger conventions, there are often two or more concurrent programme items: on SF, fantasy, science, films, writing, editing, fan publishing, anything. Of course, it all leads up to the Hugo banquet, and the presentation of awards voted on by the members of the convention. Some people fall in love at conventions, and some get pros to autograph their books. Lots of things happen at worldcons. The 1976 worldcon, in Kansas City, may be over when you read this, but you can always join the 1977 SUNCON, chaired by Don and Grace Lundry, Box 3427, Cherry Hill, NJ 08034.

Anyway, at *this* convention there was an excellent, smoothly-run programme, organized by Bruce Gillespie and Leigh Edmonds, among others. I enjoyed it, and I rarely get around to attending the formal convention events (though I've never felt that I was on half the programme before, either). Carey Handfield, one of the committee members, set an example of stunning efficiency by day; and then in the evening, everyone relaxed and actually enjoyed their own convention. Remarkable. I just hope they don't all gafiate. (That's "get away from it all," leave fandom, a feeling you understand after running a worldcon.)

Oh yes. A large chunk of my convention was spent talking to reporters. Taping a half-hour programme on Canadian literature (my specialty, one reporter discovered to her delight) was an odd experience, but easier than trying to explain fandom as a subculture to Jan Sharpe for her "New Society" programme.

"But what are you doing here? Talking to your friends—but you're a successful woman, surely you have real friends?"

On Saturday afternoon, I sat trying to tell Jan's tape recorder (because I wasn't reaching Jan) what I valued about fandom: the chance to meet, to become friends (not just acquaintances: friends) with a wide and wonderful circle of people. Look, I said, at the people you found me with today: Bob Tucker, who's a legend, and Jillian Miranda Foyster, who's an Australian schoolgirl, and her mum Elizabeth who teaches and paints lovely watercolours, and John Alderson who raises sheep (and, I thought, I want to get back down to the ballroom and talk to them). But she didn't understand—not even when I turned around and interviewed *her* for an article I'm writing on Australian women (I was busy, this trip, playing pro writer; scholar, too, visiting at University of Melbourne in hopes of coming back).

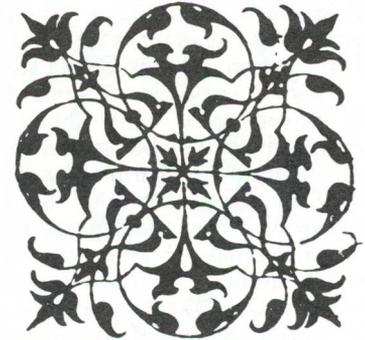
Young, intelligent, hip, a single mother, Jan complained she had no one to *talk* with, could feel at ease only with a small, elite group of people her age who shared her ideas. Yet she couldn't believe that fandom gave me exactly what she lacked, that I had flown here for a sort of giant family reunion. (It has its quarrels, but it's not a bad clan.)

I passed Jan on to Tucker, and went off to interview an advice-to-housewives columnist and the German chambermaid. Not even Mr. Smooth could dent the preconceptions with which she edited me, and Bruce Gillespie, and Eric Lindsay, though. The radio programme presented the stereotype of fans as social misfits, shy, introverted, able to communicate only

on paper (some of my second-year English students should be so handicapped!). Shy? Introverted? That raving bunch of lunatics munching daffodils, waiting for the train to Ballarat, and chattering away?

We come together because we value SF. We stay, because we value each other. We celebrate fandom because it is the bond that holds us together.

Well: when we talked to Malcolm Maiden—frizzyhaired freak, writing for



LITERATURE OF CANADA: Poetry And Prose In Reprint

THE HOMESTEADERS

by Robert Stead

Introduction by Susan Wood

Robert J.C. Stead was a Manitoba journalist, sometime poet, and novelist familiar to most Canadian readers fifty years ago, mainly because of his lively, detailed accounts of western Canadian life in the early part of the twentieth century. In *THE HOMESTEADERS*, one of Stead's most popular novels, he explores through two conventional love stories two important themes: the pioneer settlement of a typical prairie community and the difficulties encountered in its development, and the ironic impact upon the pioneers of dreamed-of prosperity and civilization.

Susan Wood, Hugo Winner for her fan writing, is on the staff of the University of BC at Vancouver, and publisher of the well-known Canadian journal *Amor*. Ms. Wood is author of a definitive study of Canadian literature, currently in production.

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the Australian edition of *Rolling Stone*—about “tribe” and “celebration” and “communications network,” he understood.

And the latest issue of Leigh Edmonds' *Fanew Sletter* reports that SF clubs and fanzines are mushrooming all over Australia. Fans coming together, talking with their friends.

“Why are you here?”

“Because John Bangsund has a bottle of Kaiser Stuhl Bin 1426 in his wine cellar for me.”

Several years ago, John Bangsund, Publishing Giant, wine critic, and all-round legend of Melbourne fandom, proposed that Australians bid for a world convention, inviting Ursula K. Le Guin as GoH. They did. A somewhat erratic career took John away to Canberra, where he became a civil servant, married a charming woman named Sally, and generally Settled Down—except for producing a steady flow of outrageously brilliant fanzines. (John Bangsund, P.O. Box 434, Norwood, SA 5067, Australia.) The cosmic wheels continued to grind, of

course, and they brought me, one August night, to sit in John and Sally's living room, curled up by the heater with cat Dylan, sharing conversation and wine with them, and Carey Handfield, and three more North Americans: John Berry, Mike Glicksohn, and Sheryl Birkhead.

Now John Bangsund happens to be one of the best personal journalists (synthesizing ideas, emotion, experience, into words—OK, have you got a name for it?) existing today. Not “existing in fandom.” Existing anywhere—though he chooses to distribute his material through fandom's network. Through that writing, its intelligence and insight and quirky humour, he'd earned our admiration; through it, and our writing, and lots of letters, we'd formed a friendship, which gained an extra dimension as we sat talking with him.

John Berry, in San Francisco in July, figured he couldn't go to Aussiecon: he had just enough money to find a place to live, exist til he could live by writing. “Bangsund has that bottle of

Kaiser Stuhl waiting for me,” he explained, as he wrote the cheque to the travel agent. Translation: we have a friendship to confirm in person. This will never happen to any of us again. Translation: impossible in words, possible only in the feeling we share as Bangsund pulls out the July 1972 issue of *Amazing*, with the “Clubhouse” column in which Berry reviews (glowingly) Bangsund's *Scythrop* and incidentally (not so glowingly) Mike's and my *Energumen #10*; and the July 1975 *Amazing* in which I review (glowingly) Bangsund's *Philosophical Gas* and the defunct *Scythrop*. So we sit and praise each other's writing; and we mean more than praise because it touches us, and we wish we'd written it; and we try not to feel silly.

“What is the purpose of your visit?”

“Tourist.”

Sixty of the North Americans (six Canadians, including two GoHs, the TORCON II chairman, and a retired Mountie) went to Aussiecon because of Grace Lundry, who with husband Don organized a group flight and kept us organized. After the con, they'd left us time to play tourist. Genie DiModica saw Ayers Rock. Alan Frisbie was bitten by a wombat. Don and Grace took lots of trains without 58 other fen. I found myself, one chilly spring night in August, in Ken and Marea Ozanne's garden waiting my turn at Ken's 10" telescope. Freesias scented the air, a cat purred in the long grass, a stream chuckled in a vast country silence: and suddenly the normal, lovely scene shifted. Polaris wasn't there in the clear north sky. The stars were strange. On the southern horizon, there at last were the five points of the Southern Cross! Alpha Centauri, nearest neighbour, new. *Different stars.*

We call it a Sense of Wonder.

Two days later, Australia's fabulous femmefan Shayne McCormack was handing us daffodils in Sydney airport, so we could concentrate on something besides the reality of saying goodbye several months too soon. Fans hugged fans, hiding emotions under the ritual exchange: “See you next year in Kansas City.”

“Where're you from?”

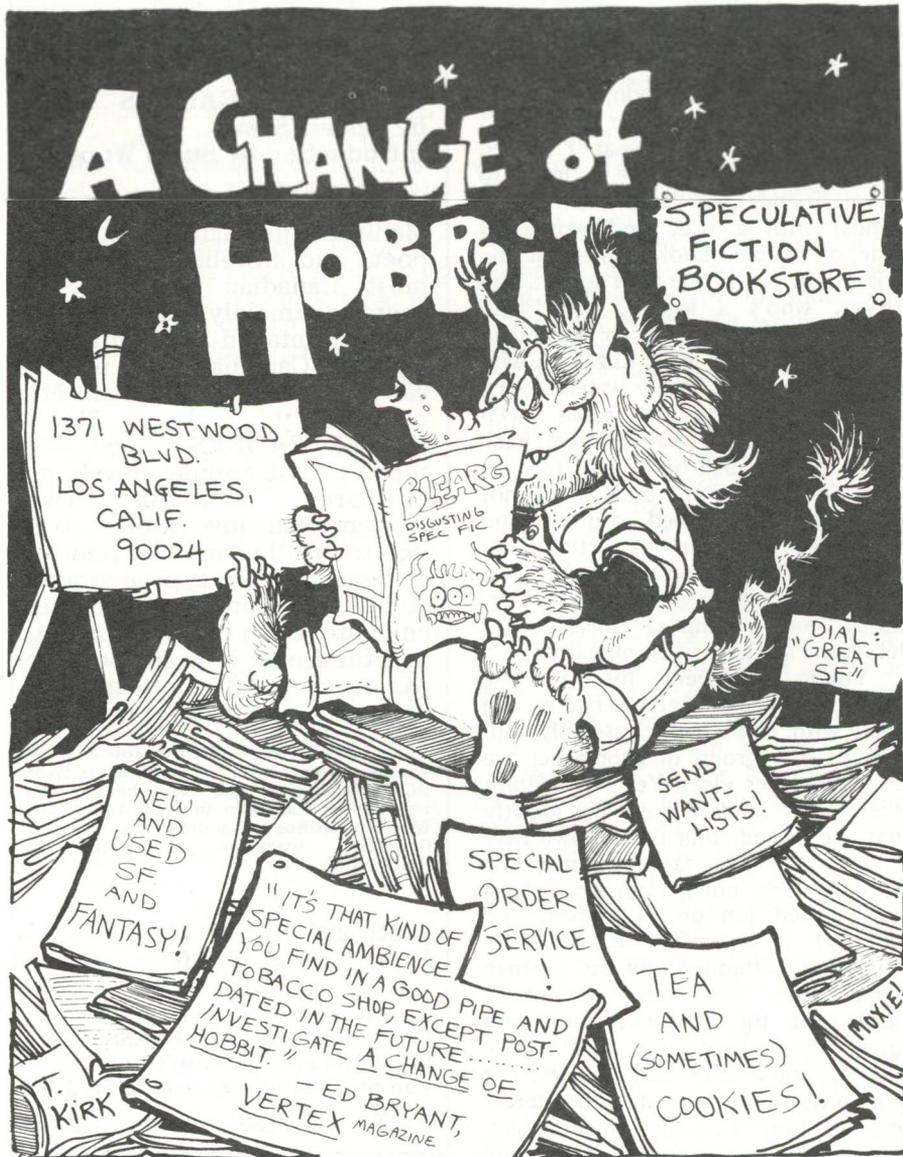
“Australia.”

“Purpose of visit?”

“To have dinner with my friends.”

Oh yes. Eric Lindsay is collecting pre-supporting members (A\$2) for the next Australian worldcon. Sixty or more of us are members already. Sydney Cove in '88? Beaut! ■

—Susan Wood
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Dept of English
2075 Wesbrook Place
Vancouver BC
CANADA V6T 1W5





V. Di Fate '76

sketches Vincent Di Fate

On a pleasant spring afternoon some eight years ago, when I was just a fledgling, I met Leo Ramon Summers for the very first time up at *Analog*. Leo is a rather handsome fellow, deceptively youthful in appearance and quite articulate and down to earth, so far as artists go. We exchanged amenities (he was so amiable and uninhibited that I was green with envy) and at one point Leo placed his hand on my shoulder and, turning to John Campbell who was seated before us at his desk, he said, "There was a time when guys like Vincent and me could make out very well just illustrating for the pulps."

The pulps. I hadn't thought much about the pulps up until that time and I'm not altogether certain that I was more than mildly aware of what they were then. You see, my first introduction to science fiction hadn't been through the magazines. I distinctly remember at the age of four being taken by my parents to see *Rocketship XM* which was playing at a local movie theatre. At that tender age movies held

little fascination for me, but I was impressed by the curious bullet-shaped vehicle with fins that kept appearing in the film and I remember my mother telling me, with inexhaustible patience, that it was a rocketship. I don't know when I began to read science fiction, but I do recall that the very first book I ever read from cover to cover was Robert A. Heinlein's *The Puppet Masters*, which left quite an impression on me. No, I didn't start reading SF magazines on any regular basis until I was in high school, and by then the pulps were dead and long forgotten.

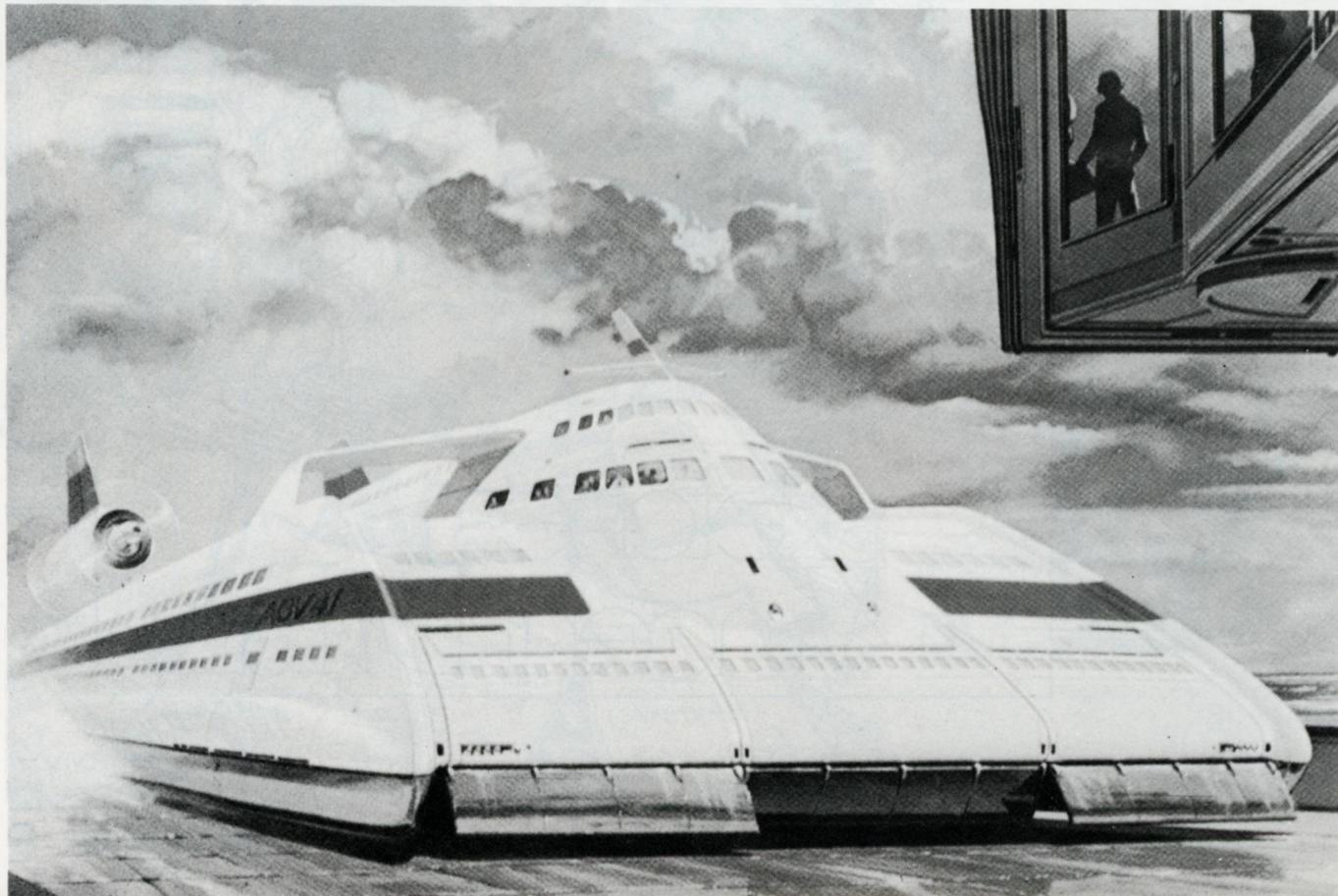
Leo and I left Campbell's office together, I recall, and spoke briefly in the lobby of the Graybar Building before we parted. Much to my surprise, I learned that Leo had been at SF for at least as long as Kelly Freas and was once the art director for *Amazing Stories*, when that publication was based in Chicago. I remember asking Leo why he hadn't gone on to paperbacks after the pulps dried up. Then he told me something about himself that is rather

remarkable. You see, Leo Summers is color blind, which is quite a dreadful handicap for any illustrator to deal with. In spite of that, I feel that Leo has done some splendid work over the years.

In the years that followed that brief meeting, I thought often about the pulps. I wondered what there was about them that had so captivated Americans for nearly four decades, and why, as if stricken by some mysterious plague, they died so swiftly and thoroughly, leaving so few remains behind. I started going to conventions as often as my work schedule would permit, and, eager for creative input, I spent a good deal of time poking around hucksters' rooms trying to get as much absorbed into the whole "genre mystique" as possible. I got to know the pulps pretty well, inside and out, and what I saw there is really rather wonderful in an artistic sense.

First, let me state with dangerous directness that I do not agree with the

A recent advertisement for Alcoa Aluminum is a fine example of how "speculative" illustration has filtered down into our daily lives. The advertisement, which featured Sidney Mead's evocative interpretation of an air cushion vehicle of the near future appeared in *Time* and a number of other national magazines.



view that science fiction art is at a low ebb. To hold that view is to focus so narrowly on one facet of the genre as to ignore the vast abundance of speculative illustration that surrounds us. One need go only as far as the nearest newsweekly to see glimpses of the future glistening through the harsh realities of the present. Ads for Alcoa, Rockwell International, U.S. Steel, Otis Elevator and others often display artists renditions of technological developments just beyond the horizons of modern science. Not only are these works of extraordinary craft, but they are strikingly inventive as well, and they qualify as SF art by anyone's definition. Science fiction has come of age, but the absorption of it into our culture is so subtle that we are often not even aware of it. The aerospace art of Sidney Mead and Robert McCall is as much an inspiration to the literary genre as the works of Emshwiller or Freas.

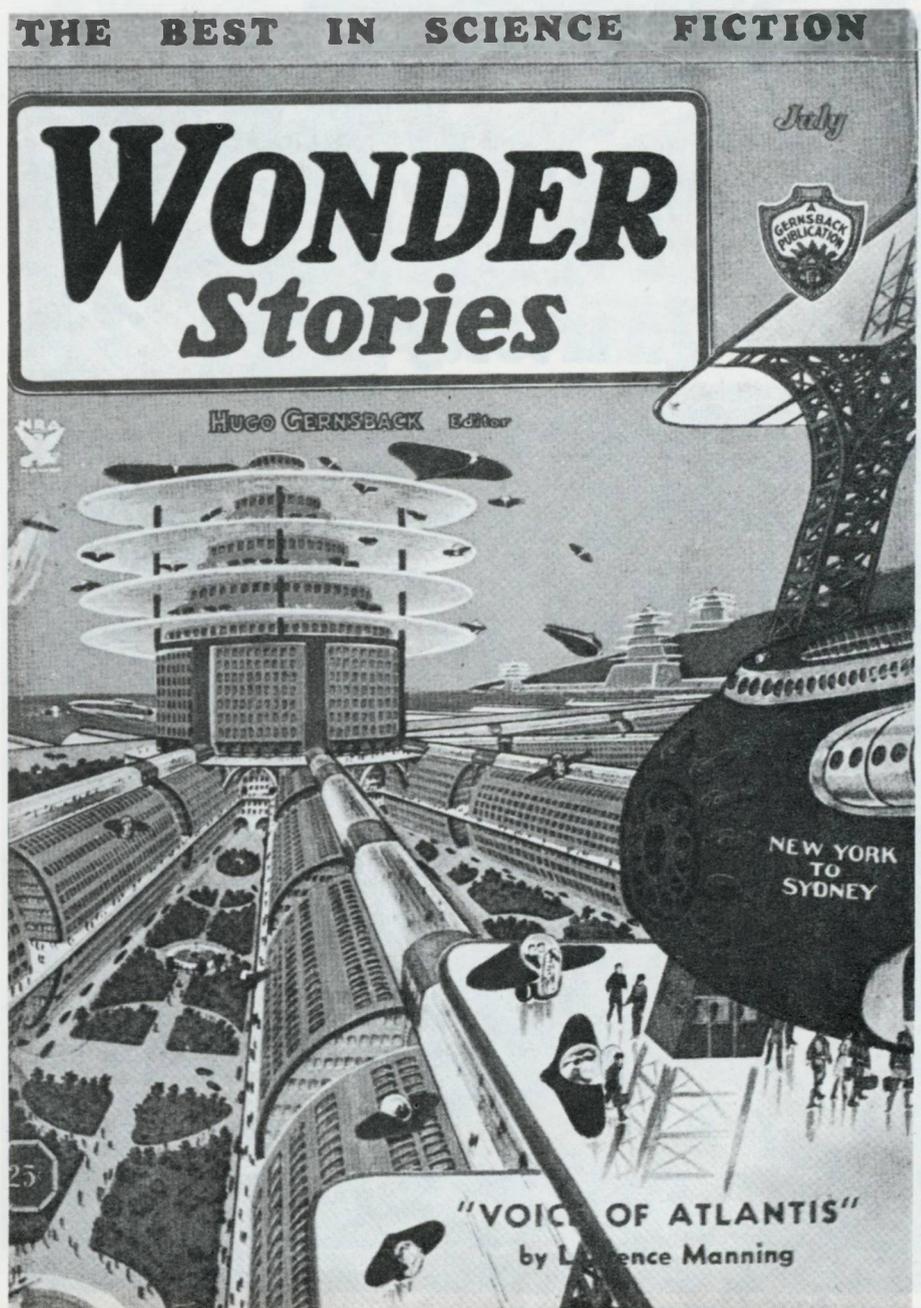
If we are to confine that harsh view, then, to the areas where science fiction must, of necessity, maintain a rigid separation from other literary categories, it would still be incorrect. I will concede that, for the most part, the magazines are an aesthetic wasteland, for the magazines are dying the slow death, but the paperbacks are almost literally exploding with a burst of artistic energy. Paperbacks today are what the pulps were twenty-five years ago; they comprise one of the largest art consuming markets in America, and they're still growing. As for science fiction art, specifically, the paperbacks have provided us with a level of technical competence and imagination unsurpassed in the brief, but eventful history of our genre. I will now proceed to spend the rest of my natural life defending that sweeping statement.

In the beginning when there was only Frank R. Paul, emphasis on technology was overt. I think of his work and, in fact, Gernsback's early magazines, as throwbacks to the Victorian Age and man's once great fascination with machines. The "what" was the important focus then, not so much the "how" or the "who," and Frank R. Paul was an inexhaustible source of "whats." When compelled to look critically at his work, I must confess that I am hard put to find much of true artistic merit in it. While his

background in architecture was a valuable asset in many aspects of his art, it no doubt contributed to a distinctive "rivet gun" mannerism in the way he

applied paint. In contrast, his interior illustrations display a flow and sense of rhythm which is disturbingly absent in his cover work. The interiors also show

In Frank R. Paul's painting for "Voice of Atlantis" by Laurence Manning for the July '34 issue of *Wonder Stories*, the artist attempts to capture the illusion of depth almost entirely through his knowledge of perspective. The virtual absence of lighting (save for a few cast shadows, which are inconsistent at that) and other atmospheric effects, however, does not destroy the three-dimensional feeling of the work.



sketches Vincent Di Fate

a much higher level of draftsmanship with respect to his people than do his paintings. He was a dreadful colorist and his uncompromising linear style only accentuated the garishness of his palette.

In Frank R. Paul's cover illustration for Ray Cummings's "The Mark of the Meteor" Paul has placed the spaceship almost directly on the diagonal axis of his painting, with the bow of the ship pointing into the corner. Presented as counter forces are the path of the meteor and two vertical jets of flame coming from the stern. Note that Mars, rather than being a luminous disc in the distance, is clearly defined with explicit surface markings.



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What redeemed him were three rather remarkable assets: first and foremost, Frank R. Paul somehow, and perhaps by virtue of his failings, was *Sense of Wonder* personified. His gadgets might have strained our credulity a bit, his directness and clarity certainly encouraged us to expect more of him than of others, but close observation reveals that his gadgets were well thought out. His machines were a marvel of human resourcefulness, and this *marvelousness*, this sense of the way things fit together mechanically, was Frank R. Paul's greatest strength as an illustrator. He had a fertile and inventive mind and an almost wide-eyed conviction that science would someday come to enrich the quality of human life, and that conviction shows through in every nuance of his work.

Second, there is a startling quality to his cover art because of his directness of treatment (flat, highly saturated colors and linear patterns) and also because of the placement of large objects on or in the proximity of the diagonal axes of his paintings. The net result is a dynamicism that is at once unsettling to the eye while at the same time attention-getting and compelling.

Third, his grasp of perspective (an obvious result of his architectural experience) is almost uncanny, for through his understanding, Paul was able to create an illusion of depth and a feeling of scale that enhances the fantastic aspects of his work, without relying on the common devices of lighting and diminishing detail to achieve this effect. In every aspect of his work, the emphasis never deviates from his machines: the machine is the ultimate consideration to which all others are subservient. Satisfied to give only the briefest attention to such atmospheric details as lighting and the reduction of chroma as objects recede in the distance, Paul focused on his precious gadgets and paid heavily the price of artistic integrity.

Frank R. Paul's product is, without question, the most annoying, unsettling, inept body of work that I have yet seen in our genre, yet it is quite extraordinary and effective. It is *good*—my inclination is to say *great*—SF illustration. What's more, Paul's art is the principal inspirational source of a "school" of thinking about science fiction art that is very much alive, a half

century after his prime years of production—a “school” that still dominates the look of the magazines, and to a lesser extent, the paperbacks. The laws of conservation being what they are, there is, of course, another fairly well polarized school of thought with an equally important and enigmatic personality at its center, which I will get to next issue.

I begin this column with great reservations, for unlike the other columnists in ALGOL, I do not make my living with words, but rather with pictures. I don't want to create the impression that artists are feather-headed, inarticulate morons, for that isn't true either. I have an awkwardness with the written word that has made this exercise less than easy, but I do welcome the opportunity to express my views about this unusual and exciting field.

I have an earnest belief in the value of science fiction, not simply as entertainment, but as a unique tool for the development of ideas and the exploration of human potentials. I see, too, the usefulness of the illustrator in visualizing the “wonders” that our future with technology may hold: to erase the fears from that future by showing man living in peaceful co-existence with his technology, or to alert us to the dangers of it by showing man running in fear of his creations. Pictures go where words cannot. And slowly, by degrees, the message is learned.

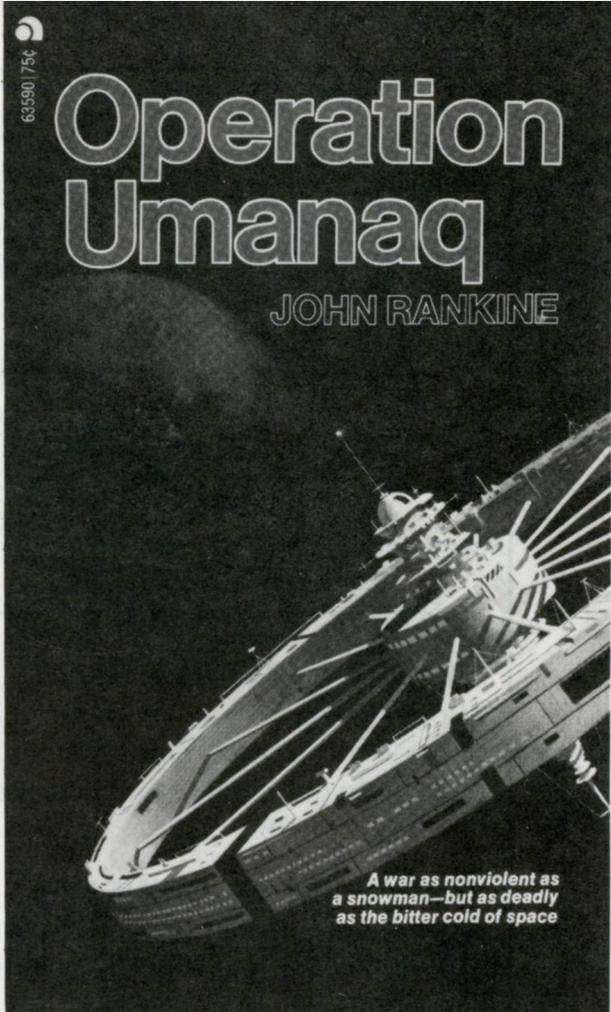
This column represents my views. Not the Gospel truth necessarily, but the truth as I see it. Fortunately this is all happening at a time when SF is experiencing enormous growth. And fortunately too, many of the most influential practitioners of SF art are still alive and very much accessible. With luck, I will be able to provide you with some stimulating interviews and some of the much needed historical detail to enable you to put SF art in its proper perspective.

I'll be back next issue. ■

—Vincent DiFate



One of the finest practitioners of the “gadget” school in modern times is Dean Ellis who here demonstrates a “Paulesque” keenness for machinery for the cover of John Rankine's *Operation Umanaq*. The composition is almost identical to Paul's *Wonder Story Quarterly* cover, with the counterbalancing force being provided by the central “hub” of the spacestation. Note, however, that Ellis' painting is an orchestration of the component elements of his picture to create a convincing whole. Lighting and atmosphere abound and there is an overwhelming impression that all the rivets are in the right places, though none are visible.



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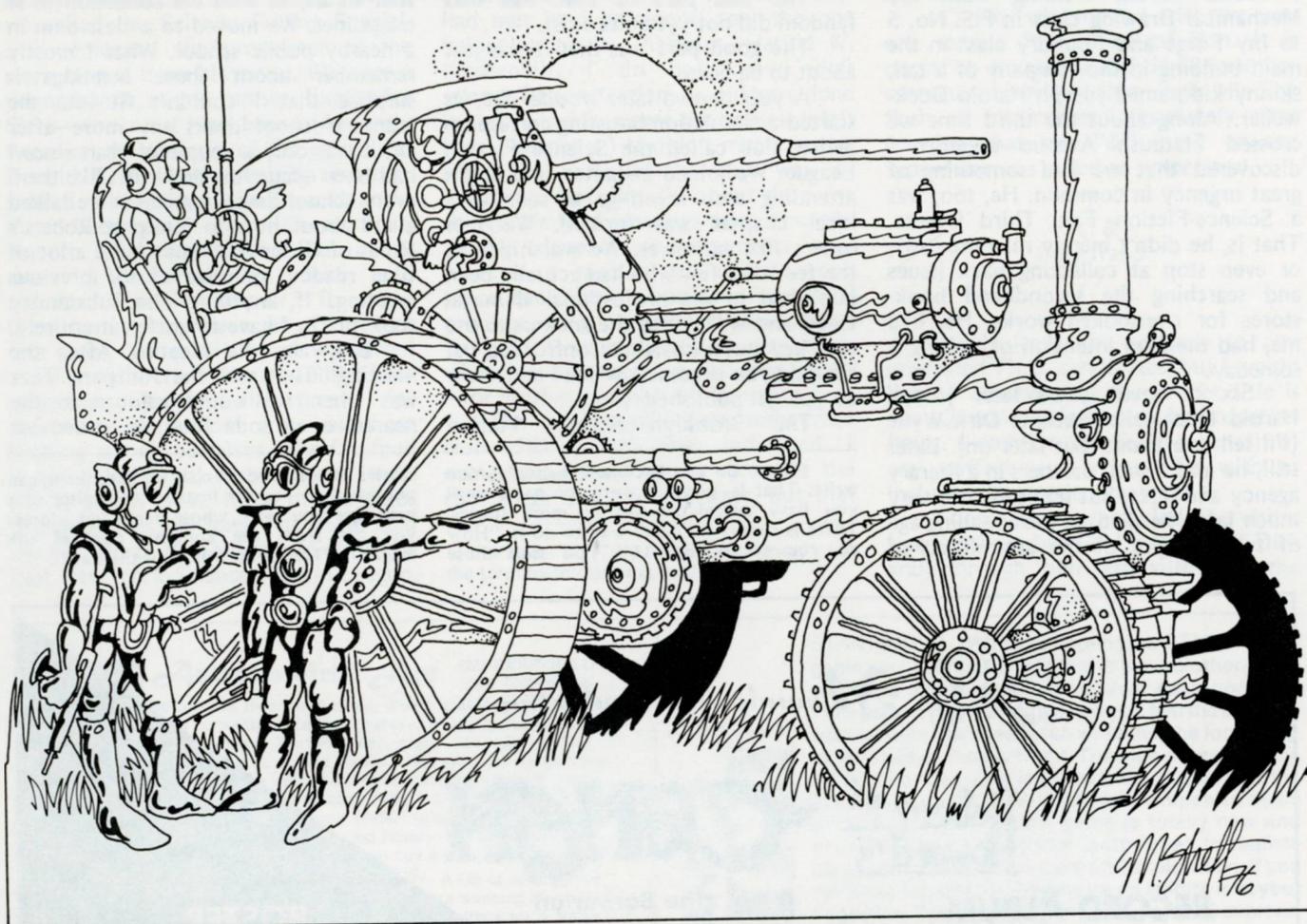
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BASEMENT AND EMPIRE



FREDERIK POHL

In the winter of 1933, when I was just turned thirteen, I discovered three new truths.

The first truth was that the world was in a hell of a mess. The second was that I really was not going to spend my life being a chemical engineer, no matter what I had told my guidance counselor at Brooklyn Technical High School. And the third was that in my conversion to science fiction as a way of life I Was Not Alone.

From the book **THE EARLY POHL**,
Copyright © 1976 by Frederik Pohl.
Published by Doubleday & Company, Inc.

All of these new discoveries were important to me, and in a way they were all related. I had just started the second semester of my freshman year at Brooklyn Tech. It was a cold, grimy winter in the deepest depths of the Great Depression. There was not much joy to be found. Men were selling apples in the streets. The unemployed stood in bread lines and prayed for snow—that meant there would be work shoveling it off the sidewalks. Roosevelt had just been elected President but hadn't yet taken office—Inauguration Day, still geared to the stagecoach schedules of 1789, had not yet been moved up from

March 4. Banks were going broke.

There was not much money around, but on the other hand you didn't need a lot. Subway fare was a nickel. So was a hot dog at Nedick's,* which was enough for a schoolboy's lunch. You could go to the movies for a dime or, sometimes, for a can of soup to be donated to the hungry.

Brooklyn Tech was an honor school, which is possibly why I decided to go to it in the first place. Like many

*I bought one of those nickel hot dogs at Nedick's the other day and it cost fifty-five cents.

of my colleagues, I regret to say that as a kid I was always something of an intellectual snob. (I do not wish to discuss what I am now.) Tech had been born in an ancient factory building, next to the entrance to the Manhattan Bridge in the grimmest part of Brooklyn's industrial riverside district. It had outgrown that and was now spread around a clutch of decrepit ex-grammar schools in the same area. We commuted from building to building, class to class. I found myself walking from my Mechanical Drawing class in P.S. No. 5 to my Forge and Foundry class in the main building in the company of a tall, skinny kid named Joseph Harold Dockweiler. Along about the third time we crossed Flatbush Avenue together I discovered that we had something of great urgency in common. He, too, was a Science-Fiction Fan, Third Degree. That is, he didn't merely read the stuff, or even stop at collecting back issues and searching the secondhand bookstores for overlooked works. He, like me, had the firm intention of writing it someday.

Six or seven years later Joseph Harold Dockweiler became Dirk Wylie (I'll tell you about that later on). Later still, he and I went partners in a literary agency and later, but tragically not very much later, he died, at the appalling age of twenty-eight, of the aftereffects of

his service in the Battle of the Bulge in World War II.

Dirk was the first person I had found like myself. Having learned that we were not unique, we contemplated the possibility of finding still others who would be able and anxious to compare the merits of *Amazing* vs. *Wonder Stories* and discuss the galaxy-ranging glamour of E. E. Smith's *Sky-lark* stories. In a word, we went looking for science-fiction fandom.

The bad part of that was that fandom did not yet quite exist.

The good part was that it was just about to be born.

A year or two later *Wonder Stories* started a circulation-boosting correspondence club called the Science Fiction League. We joined instanter, and began attending club meetings as soon as a local chapter was formed. We met others like ourselves. We worshiped at the feet of a few who had actually been published in the professional sf magazines, and we learned the answers to the two key questions that confronted us: How do you become a writer? and, How do you get published?†

The Brooklyn Science Fiction

League met in the basement of its chairman, George Gordon Clark. He was an energetic fellow. When *Wonder Stories* announced the formation of the SFL Clark did not waste time, he sent in his coupon at once and consequently became Member No. 1. When the SFL announced it was willing to charter local chapters, he acted instantly again, and so the BSFL was Chapter No. 1, too. We outgrew Clark's basement pretty quickly; there was only room for about four of us, in with his collection of sf magazines. We moved to a classroom in a nearby public school. What I mostly remember about those meetings is surprise that I couldn't fit into the grammar-school desks any more—after all, it was only a couple of years since I had been occupying desks just like them every school day. I remember we talked a lot about how to interpret Robert's Rules of Order and spent quite a lot of time reading minutes of the previous meeting. If anything else substantive took place, I have forgotten it entirely.

But, ah, the Meeting After the Meeting! That was the fun part. That was when we would adjourn to the nearest open soda fountain, order our

†"How do you become a writer?" You write. That is, you put words on paper until you have completed one or more stories. There is simply no other way to do it. "How do you get published?" You send those

stories to someone who, if he likes them, can publish them—as for instance the editor of a magazine you read, whose name and address you get from the contents page of the magazine. That is the Whole of the Law.



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sodas and sundaes and sit around until they threw us out, talking about science fiction.

It was always a soda fountain. Not always the same one; over the years we fans must have staked out and claimed dozens of them, all over the city. But we were addicted to ice cream concoctions, so much so that a few years later, in a different borough of the city, after the meetings of a different club, we finally designed our own sundae, which we called the Science Fiction Special, and persuaded the proprietor of the store to put it on his menu. We were a young bunch, as you can see. Except for Clark, who must have been in his early twenties, the old man of the group was Donald A. Wollheim, pushing nineteen. John B. Michel came with Donald; and a little later, down from Connecticut, Robert W. Lowndes; the four of us made a quadrumvirate that held together for—oh, forever, it seems like—it must have been all of three or four years, during which time we started clubs and dispersed them, published fan magazines, fought all comers for supremacy in fandom and wound up battling among ourselves. The fan feud is not quite coeval with fandom itself, but it comes close. None of the clubs seemed to live very long. The BSFL held out for a year, then we moved on to the East New York Science Fiction League,

a rival chapter of the parent organization which seceded and renamed itself the Independent League for Science Fiction. That kept us engaged for another year, then it was the turn of the International Scientific Association (also known as the International Cosmos-Science Club). The ISA was not particularly scientific, and it certainly wasn't all that international; we met in the basement of Will Sykora's house in Astoria, Queens. (The ENYSFL-ILSF had met in a basement, too, the one belonging to its chairman, Harold W. Kirshenblit. I do not know what science-fiction fandom would have done in, say, Florida, where the houses didn't have basements.) It didn't much matter what the name of the club was, or where we met. We did about the same things. We held meetings once a month, mostly devoted to arguments over whether a motion to adjourn took precedence over a point of personal privilege. We got together between times to publish mimeographed magazines, where we practiced our fledgling talents—for writing, and also for invective.

The fan mags‡ were sometimes club efforts, sometimes individual. I managed to wind up as editor of the club mags a lot of the time, but that

‡ Now they are called "fanzines," but the term hadn't been coined then.

wasn't enough; I published some of my own. The one I liked best was a minimal eight-page mimeographed job measuring 4¼" by 5½"—a standard 8½" by 11" mimeo sheet folded twice—called *Mind of Man*. Since it was my own I could publish anything I liked in it. What I liked best to publish was my own poetry, which at that time was highly sense-free, influenced in equal parts by Lewis Carroll's *Jabberwocky* and some of the crazier exhibits in *transition*.

... Oh, why not? I will give you one sample from *Mind of Man*. It is meant to be read aloud. If I remember correctly, I wrote it in a single blinding flash of inspiration immediately after learning that the "&" mark on my typewriter was called an ampersand.

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I will leave the exegesis to any interested Ph.D. candidates, but I would like to observe that the proper title is not *Question Mark* but *Interrogation Point*. I mention this for the benefit of any coffeehouse artists who wish to include it in a poetry reading.

I don't know what kind of a writer I would have been if I hadn't met Dirk and, through him and with him, the



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Because of increased costs, I will not be sending art to most conventions in the future--I do expect to be at the Westecon and Worldcon this year, with sales tables, and possibly in the art shows. But most paintings from now on will be sold directly to collectors thru my periodical illustrated catalogs with 2 1/4" sq. color transparency showing 12 new 16x20" paintings priced at \$30 to \$60. Send \$1 for the next issue--1/3 its actual cost-value. Second one free if you buy a painting, of which I have sold nearly 1500 since 1950. A bit of apology for slow service during late 1975--I was working 90 or so hours a week doing some 3 dozen paintings for a NASA film, depicting a receding view looking back at Cape Canaveral, travelling above the Earth, thru the solar system, and several others, out of the Milky Way Galaxy and into others. Slides from this series and many of the original paintings (mostly 3x4ft) are for sale---inquire with SASE. COLOR SLIDES of most of my paintings are available -- an illustrated catalog of early views is \$1, many with the nostalgic-classic streamlined rockets. Slides are 35¢, less in quantities. Later slides at present are only available thru sets of 100 for \$25, plus \$1 postage, or \$2 airmail. Mixed thru out all subjects, no rockets in these--just scensics and space views. First set now ready. Other smaller sets soon of spaceships, and some depicting scenes suggested by stories such as City, Nightfall, Arena, Oz, etc. RADIO PLAYS of science fiction on tape and cassettes--catalog is \$1, lists hundreds of stories for trade or custom copying. Many classics--Dimension X, Buck Rogers, Bradbury, etc. To replace low convention income, I expect to finally get my publishing going in 1976 -- the Arts and Infinity magazine and news bulletin, my biography Dogstar, an art instruction book, and many others. SASE for information when ready. Possibly more greeting cards and illustrated letterheads later. Write: MORRIS DOLLENS, P. O. Box 692, Gateway Station, Culver City, CA. Phone: a rea 213-398-9097. Zipcode 90230.

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whole world of science-fiction fandom. Much the same, I imagine. I almost certainly would have been a writer—I'm hardly fit for anything else. And I had been trying to write sf at least a year before I met Dirk, in idle moments in classes in the eighth grade. But it would have taken a lot longer. I owe a lot to fandom. From Wollheim, Michel, Lowndes—later from Cyril Kornbluth, Dick Wilson, Isaac Asimov and others—I learned something about what they were learning about writing; we all showed each other our stories, when we weren't actually collaborating on them. In the fan mags I acquired the skills necessary to prepare something for public viewing—and the courage to permit it.

What I am not as sure of is whether all the things we learned were worth learning.

Science fiction was purely a pulp category in those days. Sometimes the emphasis was on gadgetry, sometimes on blood-and-thunder adventure; when it was best the high spots were vistas of new worlds and new kinds of life. In no case was it on belles-lettres, nor was it a place to look for fresh insights into the human condition. What we learned from each other and from the world around us was the hardware of writing. Narrative hooks. Time-pressure to make a story move. Character tags—not characterization, but oddities, quirks, bits of business to make a person in a story not alive but identifiable. So I learned how to invent ray-guns and how to make a story march, but it was not for a long, long time that I began to try to learn how to use a story to say something that needed saying.

In fact, when I look back at the science-fiction magazines of the twenties and the early thirties, the ones that hooked me on sf, I sometimes wonder just what it was we all found in them to shape our lives around.

I think there were two things. One is that science fiction was a way out of a bad place; the other, that it was a window on a better one.

The world really was in bad trouble. Money trouble. The Great

Depression was not just a few million people out of work or a thousand banks gone shaky. It was *fear*. And it was worldwide. Somehow or other the economic life of the human race had got itself off the tracks. No one was quite sure it would get straight again. No one could be sure that his own life was not going to be disastrously changed, and science fiction offered an escape from all that.

The other thing about the world was that technology had just begun to make itself a part of everyone's life. Every day there were new miracles. Immense new buildings. Giant airships. Huge ocean liners. Man flew across the Atlantic and circled the South Pole. Cars went faster, tunnels went deeper, the Empire State Building stretched a fifth of a mile into the sky, radio brought you the voice of a singer a continent away.

It was clear that behind all this growth and acceleration something was happening, and that it would not stop happening with the *Graf Zeppelin* and the Empire State but would go on and on. What science fiction was about was the going on. The next step, and the step after that. Not just radio, but television. Not just the conquest of the air, but the conquest of space.

Of course, not even science fiction was telling us much about the price tag on progress. It told us about the future of the automobile; it didn't tell us that sulphur-dioxide pollution would crumble the stone in the buildings that lined the streets. It told us about high-speed aircraft, but not about sonic boom; about atomic energy, but not about fallout; about organ transplants and life prolongation, but not about the dreary agony of overpopulation.

Nobody else was telling us about these things, either. A decade or two later science fiction picked up on the gloom behind the glamour very quickly, and maybe too completely. But in those early days we were as innocent as physicists, popes and presidents. We saw only the promise, not the threat.

And truthfully we weren't looking for threats. We were looking for beauty

and challenge. When we couldn't find them on Earth, we looked outside for prettier, more satisfying places. Mars. Venus. The made-up planets of invented stars somewhere off in the middle of the galaxy, or in galaxies farther away still.

I think we all believed as an article of faith that there were other intelligent races in the universe than our own, plenty of them.* If polled, I am sure we would have agreed that wherever there's a planet there's life—or used to be, or will be.

Now, alas, we know that the odds are not as good as we had hoped, especially for our own solar system. The local real estate is pretty low quality. Mercury is too hot and has too little air; Venus is too hot and has too much, and poisonous at that. Mars is still a possibility, but not by any means a good one—and what else is there? But in the mid-thirties we didn't know as much as we do now. The big telescopes hadn't yet been completed, and of course no spaceship had yet brought a TV camera to Mars or the Moon. So we believed.

The first sale I ever made came out of that general belief.

It wasn't a story. It was a poem. I am afraid that I don't think now that it is a very good poem, but it contains the first words I ever put down on paper that I actually received real, spendable money for, and so I am going to include it here.

People sometimes ask me when I made this first sale. That's harder to answer than you might think. I wrote it when I was fifteen. It was accepted when I was sixteen. It was published when I was seventeen—in the October 1937 issue of *Amazing Stories*. And I was paid for it (\$2.00) when I was eighteen.

That's how things were in those days. ■

*I still believe it! What puzzles me is why we haven't seen any of them as visitors. I wish I could swallow the flying-saucer stories—I can't; the evidence just isn't good. But the absence of hard facts hasn't shaken my faith that Osnomians and Fenachrone are out there *somewhere*.



E. E. "Doc" Smith

one of the legendary figures in American Science Fiction writing, left behind his classic "Lensman" and "Skylark" novels — plus an unexpected legacy.

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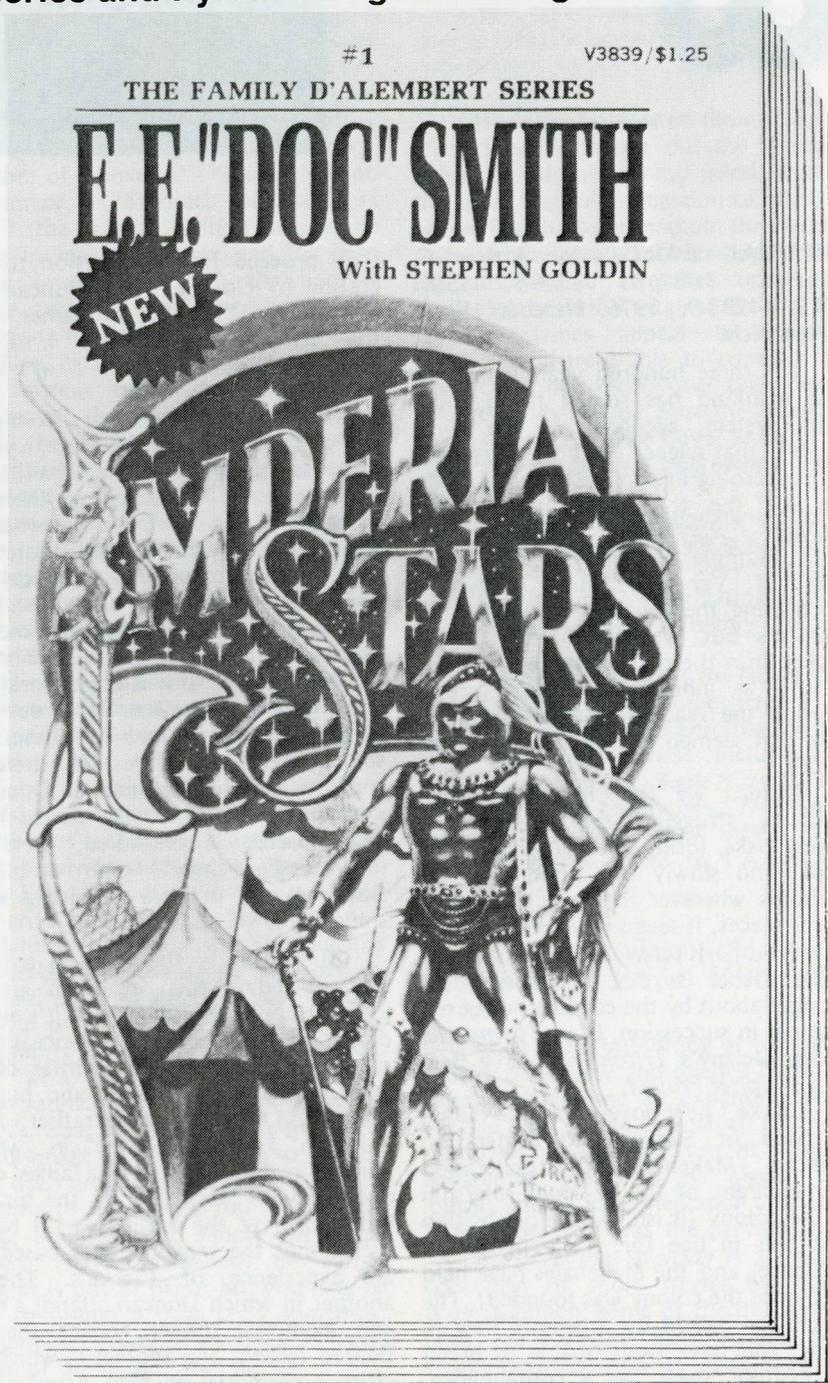
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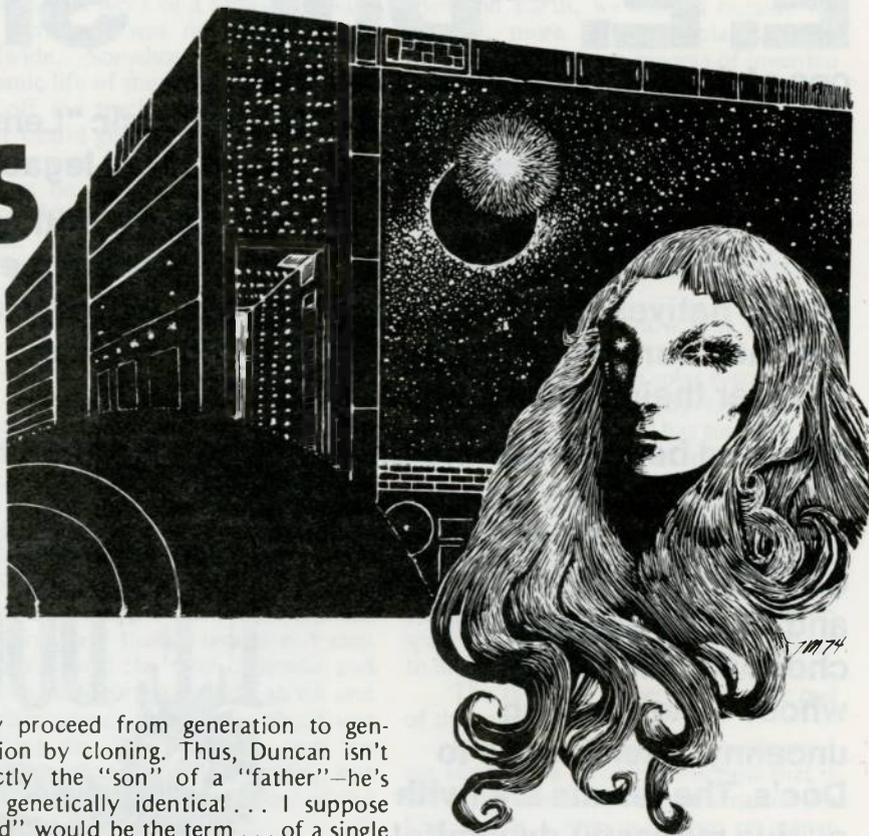
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RICHARD LUPOFF'S BOOK WEEK



IMPERIAL EARTH, by Arthur C. Clarke. 303 pp. \$7.95. ISBN 0-15-144233-9. 1976. Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.

It's three hundred years from now and mankind has spread through the solar system, according to the "new model" that science fiction writers seem to be zeroing in on lately. No more do we see the teeming planets of the *Captain Future/Planet Stories* model, with swampliggers bellying up to the bars of Venusport and sandsifters uncovering the artifacts of the ancient Martians—but we don't seem to be locked into the pessimistic image of the planets as inhospitable rocks forever beyond the reach of human colonization that seemed to mark the SF of the 1960s.

Instead we find human colonies sweating, struggling, making sacrifices, taking risks, losing lives but not losing hope, and slowly but surely wresting footholds wherever they can. The most likely places, it seems nowadays, are the moons of Jupiter and Saturn. Or perhaps this is only my perception, brought about by the coincidence of my reading, in succession, Clarke's *Imperial Earth*, Delany's *Triton*, and Greg Benford's *Jupiter Project*.

Clarke's new novel opens on Titan, a moon of Saturn, and centers on Duncan Makenzie, third-generation heir-apparent of the *de facto* rulership of the colony (it isn't a title or position that he's in line for; it's a matter of influence, and the Makenzies have held that since the colony was founded). The Makenzies picked up a genetic flaw in space, and have been unable to breed successfully since. As a consequence,

they proceed from generation to generation by cloning. Thus, Duncan isn't exactly the "son" of a "father"—he's the genetically identical... I suppose "bud" would be the term... of a single cell-donor.

It's three hundred years from now, as I said, and Duncan Makenzie, a young man, is planning a once-in-a-lifetime visit to earth. He's going there to represent Titan at the quincentennial celebration of the United States, to plead Titan's cause in some delicate economic negotiations, and to undergo the surgical and medical procedures involved in cloning a "son" for himself.

Now, all of this is framework, and the question is whether Clarke develops a valid human story within it; I must say that he hardly even tries. Oh, there are touches—an old romance of Duncan's with an earth-woman who visited Titan years earlier is rekindled, there's a love-triangle, there's even a bit of suspense and mystery involving some smuggled jewels. . . .

But basically the book is a tour, first of Titan, then at much greater length of earth-2276. As such it's nicely done. *Imperial Earth* is unceasingly readable. But it has very little drive, very little human interest and human interaction. There's one rather dull although overlong scene in which Duncan makes a speech to a ladies' club and becomes fascinated by the bizarre hats worn by the audience. I'd bet a nickel that the sequence was based on an experience of Clarke's. There's another in which Duncan attends a tour and memorial dinner aboard the refloated *Titanic*, and another in which he visits a memorial to Neil Armstrong's

first-footstep-on-the-moon. I have to tell you that that last-mentioned sequence in the book brought me very close to the shedding of tears.

But as a *novel*, *Imperial Earth* doesn't hold up. There's just too much grand tour and not enough human interaction and plot development. It's the kind of book Hugo Gernsback would have written if he'd been able to write. Think about that:

Duncan 124C 41+

I'm not really sure whether I'm damning this book with faint praise or praising it with faint damns. The trouble is not that it's a bad book—it really isn't. It just isn't as much of a good book as one hopes for, from Arthur C. Clarke. And even at that, what's wrong with the book isn't what's here; it isn't that Clarke does the things he does badly, it's that he doesn't do *other* things at all, or hardly at all, that leaves the reader feeling unsatisfied at the end of *Imperial Earth*.

Comparison is inevitable with *Rendezvous with Rama*, Clarke's last novel. That too had the goshwow, grand tour, hard-science orientation that *Imperial Earth* has; in fact had even more of it: the characters weren't even drawn in, and they're pretty thoroughly developed in *Imperial Earth*. But *Rendezvous* was such a total *tour de force* that I at least didn't really mind. Somehow, with the new book, I minded a lot. Clarke would take off on the

wonders of a twenty-third century bean sprout sandwich or whatever, and after a few paragraphs I'd be squirming in my chair, muttering *All right, I'm convinced, can't we get on with the STORY?!*

It's that kind of book. Well done of the sort, but. . . . ■

THE SHUDDER PULPS: A HISTORY OF THE WEIRD MENACE MAGAZINES OF THE 1930'S, by Robert Kenneth Jones. 239 + xv pp. \$11.95. ISBN 0-91360-04-7. 1975. FAX Collector's Editions (Box E, West Linn, Oregon 97068).

We all know—or think we know—what we mean by the terms science fiction, fantasy, science-fantasy, weird tale and the like. But do you know what a “weird menace” story is? I didn't, until I was introduced to this peculiar little borderline sub-genre by Jones's very readable, very enjoyable book. The weird menace story as a pulp category had a very short lifespan, rising and falling again in a single decade, and while very few weird menace yarns were technically SF or fantasy, almost all of them contained heavy suggestions of one or the other, and are hence worthy of our attention. Further, as the weird menace magazines—which Jones neatly dubs “shudder pulps”—were mass-produced in the same magazine mills that yielded the mainstream SF magazines of the same era, a study of Jones's book turns up many of the names already familiar to us.

A few examples: Arthur J. Burks, Hugh B. Cave, Ray Cummings, Norman Daniels, Bob Davis, Lester Dent, Bob Erisman, Paul Ernst, Edmond Hamilton, Henry Kuttner, Leo Margulies, Norvell Page, Ned Pines, Nat Schachner, Louis Silberkleit, Richard Tooker, Jack Williamson, A. A. Wyn and Arthur Leo Zagat. If those names don't ring any bells with you, you just don't know your pulp era, and as I keep telling my college science fiction classes, if you don't know your pulp era you don't understand modern SF—even if you think you do!

I saved a couple of names from that list. One is Ejler Jakobsson, until fairly recently the editor of *Galaxy* and *If*, onetime editor of *Super Science Stories*—and, in partnership with his wife Edith, a prolific pulp hack in the 30s, specializing in weird-menace stories. The other name I saved for you is a former house-name, a by-line owned by a publisher rather than an author and hence assignable to one or many persons. Kenneth Robeson is probably the best-known house name in the pulp field, but Jones mentions a delightful one I'd never come across before: *Justin Case*, whose stories appeared in the old

“Spicy” pulp line—*Spicy Adventure*, *Spicy Detective*, *Spicy Mystery*, *Spicy Western*. . . .

Basically the weird menace story was a mystery tale centering on a bizarre element apparently explainable only by superscientific or supernatural means: dinosaurlike monsters inhabiting a gloomy swamp, reanimated dead rising from their graves and stalking the-living, werewolves, mad scientists performing unspeakable experiments on gorgeous virgins, etc.

Speaking of gorgeous virgins, Jones points out that a major element of the weird menace formula was the capture of the hero's lovely and virginal sweetheart who would invariably be threatened with some fate worse than death—most often a forced or drugged marriage to a hideous monstrosity although often a more bizarre doom would be substituted. Despite highly suggestive cover paintings and story titles (“Bride of the Winged Terror,” “Mother of Monsters,” “Golden Nymph of Horror,” “Embrace of the Fire God”) the actual writing was quite prissy in matters of sex and the hero would invariably rescue the heroine before anything, uh, *irreversible* had been done to her.

Also, in the final denouement, the w-m formula called for the fantastic element of the story to be explained away. The monster was a gangster in a rubber suit, the inferno was an elaborate stage-setting in the villain's basement, the ghoul who devoured his victims down to the bone was a secret swimming pool full of piranhas. (Well, sometimes the “rational” explanation was as fantastic as the “fantastic” explanation.)

Jones traces the origin, rise and fall of the weird menace magazine, summarizes and/or quotes from a number of sample stories, offers excellent reproductions of scores of shudder pulp covers and interior illustrations, and as a final bonus tracks down and interviews three surviving authors of the genre: Paul Ernst, Wyatt Blassingame, and Baynard Kendrick.

I have only two complaints against this delightful little jaunt into one of the weirdest byways of the always colorful pulp world, and they are both complaints against errors of omission. First, while there is a fair amount of bibliographic detail scattered through Jones's text, a good bibliography and author-index of the w-m pulps would have been greatly appreciated. A partial response to this need is found in Jones's earlier booklet titled simply *The Weird Menace* (1972). I believe the earlier booklet is out of print, but you may be able to obtain a used copy somehow. The booklet contains an index to half a dozen of the leading w-m pulps.

My second complaint is that for all his explanation and description of the shudder pulp story and the people who edited, published and wrote the w-m magazines, Jones somehow never manages to get to the heart of the subject. In my opinion, this is the question: What kind of mentality created the w-m formula? What kind of mind wrote the stories? And what kind of mind did they appeal to?

The answer to the first is apparently that the formula was discovered more or less by accident, by publishers and editors tinkering with variations on the standard crime-and-detection tale. The answer to the second is: those old pulp hacks would write anything that would turn a coin for them—westerns, mysteries, historicals, war stories, sea stories, aviation adventures . . . and, yes, even science fiction . . . and, yes, weird menace stories.

But the third part of the question: What kind of *reader* did the shudder pulps appeal to? To my mind, that is the most intriguing question of all. Did pot-bellied bankers in their three-piece suits harbor secret fantasies of performing unspeakable atrocities upon the bodies of beautiful virgins? Or did the w-m magazines appeal to drooling degenerates barely able to conduct the transaction of forking over their dimes for the gaudy books? Were they read by Depression-era college boys? Shop girls? Baptist ministers? Congressmen and judges?

Fascinating to speculate on this, but Jones regrettably never goes into it.

Still, the book is very pleasant reading and is quite illuminating, a good combination which I highly recommend.

I might mention that the jacket lists several forthcoming volumes from FAX that whet my appetite and may do the same for yours. These include *The Weird Tales Story*, *Magic Carpet* and *Golden Fleece* omnibuses, *The Great Pulps* and a good many others. You really ought to write to FAX for a catalog. ■

WORSE THINGS WAITING, by Manly Wade Wellman. 352 pp. \$9.50. 1973. Carcosa.

Small press publishing of forgotten classics of fantasy and science fiction is clearly undergoing an expansion comparable only to the one which followed World War II—and the current boom is apparently going to be bigger, last longer, and be fashioned upon a steadier foundation than was the previous one.

Worse Things Waiting is a massive collection of short stories by Manly Wade Wellman; some of the thirty or so tales are straight *Weird Tales* type creepy-crawlies, and as such they are

not particularly exceptional or worthy of resurrection. However, in addition to being a horror-fantastist, Wellman is a fine folklorist, and the majority of the stories contain American folklore that sets them well above the ordinary horror yarn in interest.

One example is the *gardinel*, a tradition that I had never come across before, that Wellman uses several times in differing versions, and that is absolutely enthralling.

The book is lovingly produced in the best Arkham House tradition, with many illustrations by Lee Brown Coye. Again, this is a special taste, not part of the main tradition of science fiction or fantasy, but if it is to your taste, the book will make an excellent investment.

Carcosa's editor is Karl Edward Wagner, and in a recent letter he explained his basis for selecting authors:

"There are a lot of first-rate authors from the pulps who have been neglected by present day publishers and the new generation of fans. Seems every discarded fragment, letter home, grocery list, what-have-you of the "greats" has been rushed into print—generally to the discredit of that "great's" memory. Not to knock this sort of thing, but it's a shame to see first-rate stories by first-rate authors perish into pulp-dust. Carcosa is trying to preserve some of the best works of these less-well-known but equally worthy authors from oblivion. Wish us luck. . . ."

I do exactly that, and I suggest once more that you contact Carcosa. The Wellman book will be out of print shortly, but right now there are a few copies left, and the Price, Cave and others to follow deserve support. Carcosa's address is Box 1064, Chapel Hill, North Carolina 27514. ■

THE ENQUIRIES OF DOCTOR ESZTERHAZY, by Avram Davidson. 206 pp. \$1.25. 1975. Warner Books.

This book is an absolute delight, a joy, a thrill, and a pleasure to read. It has charm, wit, verve, panache. It has vivid and eccentric characters, a setting so real that you are transported there as if by magic, colors and sounds and odors that linger in your senses.

It is a collection of mysterious happenings investigated by Engelbert Eszterhazy, a sort of mitteleuropean Sherlock Holmes, in the mythical mitteleuropean empire of Scythia-Pannonia-Transbalkania in the mythical time shortly before the outbreak of the first World War and the world's headlong plunge into the chaos of the past sixty years. Eszterhazy himself, possessor of degrees in Jurisprudence, Medicine, Philosophy, Literature and Science lives and breathes and jumps from the page. His house is real, his private librarian is real. The cities and

meadows and people of the Triune Monarchy are real. The old emperor, the peoples and history of his realm are among the most vivid and affecting of all the creations of all the writers I have ever encountered.

And the cases that Eszterhazy undertakes—"The Crown Jewels of Jerusalem," "The Old Woman Who Lived with a Bear," "The Case of the Mother-in-Law of Pearl," and most especially "The King's Shadow Has no Limits"—are one and all gems.

Why is this book a paperback original? Search me!

Why is it labelled *Science Fiction*? Search me!

Why does the cover say it's a novel? Search me!

But it's a joy. If you're planning to be marooned on a desert island any time soon, take a copy along with you. If you're not planning to be marooned on a desert island any time soon, take a copy along with you anyway. ■

THE SCIENCE FICTION OF JACK LONDON. 506 pp. \$15. ISBN 0-8398-2307-X. 1975. Gregg Press — G.K. Hall & Co.

CURIOUS FRAGMENTS: Jack London's Tales of Fantasy Fiction. 223 pp. \$12.95. ISBN 0-8046-9114-2. 1975. National University Publications — Kennikat Press.

ANCESTRAL VOICES: An Anthology of Early Science Fiction. 390 pp. \$15. ISBN 0-405-06305-9. 1975. Arno Press — New York Times.

Two of these books—The Gregg and the Arno—are from two of the current major science fiction reprint series. Typically these books are photo-offset from old editions, printed on long-life acid-free paper and sturdily bound, issued in small editions at high prices they are aimed at academic institutions but may be purchased by individual readers and collectors.

The Kennikat volume is set from new type and is one of only two Kennikat books I know of. The other is a critical work, *The Happening Worlds of John Brunner*. The latter book, I might mention in passing, is excellent—the kind of well-rounded, serious study that I suppose most self-styled serious artists hope to have devoted to them but that few are lucky enough to get.

But what draws the three books of fiction in question together is their coincidental inclusion of one story, "The Red One," by Jack London. "The Red One" is a staggeringly effective novelette with interplanetary overtones, to my knowledge the only use that London ever made of the interplanetary theme. (His brilliant novel *The Star Rover* takes its name metaphorically.)

"The Red One" is in all three books at hand.

The two London collections were prepared separately and apparently by compilers working in ignorance of each other. It's a pity—each volume has great virtues, but the percentage of overlapping material is very high, and I doubt that many readers would have reason to buy both—\$28 is a lot of money!

Both books contain such little classics as "The Shadow and the Flash" (an invisibility story), "Goliath" (a future-war tale with socialist overtones), "The Unparalleled Invasion" (a story of biological warfare), and "The Scarlet Plague" (a universal disaster story), among others. The non-overlapping stories are for the most part rather minor; the Kennikat book offers a couple of interesting bits of juvenilia while the Gregg book contains one moderately weighty piece, "The Dream of Debs," that the Kennikat lacks.

But the major difference between the two is in the introductions: the Kennikat volume, which is edited by Dale L. Walker, features an introduction by Philip Jose Farmer. The Gregg, edited by Richard Gid Powers, contains an introduction also by Powers. Farmer's is more popular and writerish; Powers' is more scholarly and critical. Neither is at all bad but neither is really vital to the usefulness of the book.

For my money, it's pretty much a toss-up.

Ancestral Voices is an anthology of ten stories selected by Douglas Menville and Robert Reginald; the stories originally appeared between 1887 and 1918, and they include several real gems. My favorite (aside from London's "The Red One") is John Kendrick Bangs' "A Glance Ahead" (1901). Other authors represented include the legendary George Griffith, Robert W. Chambers, Andrew Lang (a superb fantasist, folklorist, translator, critic, and onetime collaborator of H. Rider Haggard), and Stanley Waterloo.

This is a lovely book. Because of its price, I can't really urge the general reader to run out and buy a copy, but I advise you most strongly to pressure your local librarian to stock the book. And a mass-market paperback edition would not be inappropriate. ■

HOME BREW, by Poul Anderson. 75 pp. \$10. ISBN 0-915368-13-7. 1976. NESFA Press, Box G, MIT Branch, Cambridge MA 02139.

This is a limited edition book (500 copies) issued by the New England Science Fiction Association in conjunction with a regional convention at which Anderson was guest-of-honor; it's their custom to issue these little books each year, presenting works by their featured

Trip Through Ellison Wonderland

CINEFANTASTIQUE Vol 5 No 1

For those who enjoyed seeing a science fiction story portrayed on the screen with some intelligence in *A BOY AND HIS DOG*, savor the experience with CINEFANTASTIQUE Vol 5 No 1 by reading "Tripping Through Ellison Wonderland" our cover article by Don Shay about the film's production. Shay interviews Harlan Ellison and the film's producer/director/writer, L. Q. Jones to learn the reasons behind the changes made in the original story, changes that Harlan calls "incredibly intelligent." Ellison also tells why he didn't write the film's screenplay himself, how in fact, he was unable to write anything during this period, and how he coped with that and eventually overcame it. Harlan has his objections to the film, as might be expected, and it makes for a very interesting article!

A BOY AND HIS DOG is a distinctive example of science fiction films as they should be made, uncompromised by idiot explanations, or diluted for the comprehension of the limited imaginations of the mainstream audience. Its pure evocation of Ellison Wonderland is recaptured by the lavish photographic layouts in CINEFANTASTIQUE Vol 5 No 1, including full-color stills and a beautifully atmospheric full-color cover by west coast illustrator Jim Thomas. CINEFANTASTIQUE is a unique experiment in publishing, a glossy, full-sized 48 page magazine with 8 pages of attractive full-color printing, designed to give the fantasy and science fiction film the serious and informed attention it is due. Order a no-risk trial subscription and see for yourself. You'll be delighted, and if you're not, you pay nothing! Try it.



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guest. The books all go out of print, as do almost all of these small-press books, and once o.p. they become devilishly expensive and hard to come by. So take warning, any Anderson collectors out there!

The book contains a pot-pourri of Andersonia, most of it quite minor, most of it reprinted from the fan press, to which Anderson has been unstintingly kind and generous over the years. There is, however, a new short story included: "House Rule," which Anderson could easily have sold to any science fiction magazine or original anthology had he not chosen to give it first airing here.

If you read Anderson's novel *A Midsummer Tempest*, you're familiar with his interdimensional inn where the famous and talented denizens of the multiple earths meet for pleasant hours of good drink, good talk, and good camaraderie. I must say that I personally found that inn one of the most warm-hearted and heart-warming of all fictional creations, and in a foreword to the present book Anderson acknowledges a debt in the inn's creation to John Kendrick Bangs, Charles Erskine, Scott Wood, Hendrik Willem van Loon, Lord Dunsany and Edmond Hamilton.

Well, so be it. What I have to say is, that inn is my image of paradise, and "House Rule" is a new story taking place there. In it, Albert Einstein meets Leonardo da Vinci, a pair of star-crossed lovers are reunited, and disbelief is suspended for a delightful little while.

Once again, ten bucks is a rather stiff price for a very little book, albeit a fine one. But I don't think it's a bad investment, and it is a most enjoyable book.

NESFA also issues science fiction bibliographies and indices; a catalog of these, plus any earlier guest-of-honor commemorative volumes that are still in print, is available from the Cambridge address. ■

HELL'S CARTOGRAPHERS, edited by Brian W. Aldiss & Harry Harrison. 246 pp. \$7.95. ISBN 0-06-010052-4. 1976. Harper & Row.

This is the American edition of a book that appeared in Britain in 1975; it contains the autobiographies of six leading contemporary science fiction authors: Robert Silverberg, Alfred Bester, Harry Harrison, Damon Knight, Frederik Pohl, and Brian Aldiss. I must say that the fact that one-third of the autobiographers are also the editors strikes me as somewhat incestuous, but log-rolling and self-promotion in this book seem to be minimal so I don't suppose there's any great harm done.

As I was saying, there seems to be minimal damage to *Hell's Cartographers* in the fact that Aldiss is (presumably) Harrison's editor and vice versa. But I don't feel quite comfortable with it.

Still, the book makes fascinating reading, and those who seek to understand the person behind the typewriter (and coincidentally better to understand the story emerging from the typewriter) will find *Hell's Cartographers* invaluable.

Each autobiography is different, not merely in its author's vital statistics but in its tone, approach and the attitudes manifested. Silverberg's "Sounding Brass, Tinkling Cymbal" also appeared in *ALGOL 25*, and accurately—and agonizingly—reflects the inner anguish of a man who set his sights on a goal and achieved that goal, only to find that the achievement brought little joy and less satisfaction. A touching, instructive, painful and affectingly honest self-examination.

Bester's "My Affair with Science Fiction" is a different but equally fascinating piece. Bester spends little time on the kind of soul-searching that absorbs Silverberg; he states candidly that he adopts stage-like personae to entertain guests and associates, and then proceeds to adopt just such a persona and entertain us with marvelously and

painfully funny dialogues and anecdotes from his days as a comic book writer, a science-fiction writer, a television writer.

Damon Knight's "Knight Piece" is largely a memoir of the early New York area fan/pro doings of the 1940s, a forerunner of a book that Knight is reportedly writing about that scene and its members. Again, the character-sketches of such legendary and near-legendary figures of Don Wollheim and Elsie Balter, Harry Dockweiler, John Michel, Doc Lowndes, Phil and Mort Klass, Malcom Reiss and so on and on, are utterly fascinating. Or at least I found them so.

In all honesty I must say that I found Fred Pohl's "Ragged Claws" somewhat less satisfying. What Pohl tells of his own literary credo is worthwhile, but the personal presence of most of the other pieces is somehow missing from Pohl's section, drained away, perhaps, into the autobiographical sections of *The Early Pohl* recently issued by Doubleday. [See "Basement and Empire," this issue — Ed.]

As for Harrison's and Aldiss's pieces, I found Harrison's rather shallow and remote; Aldiss's, not at all so. Autobiography is like psychoanalysis: it's very hard to pierce beneath simple facts and casual observations. To get down to the true self, the deep feelings and the tender places, can be painful. Harrison doesn't take that pain. Aldiss does, to a limited extent, but only a limited one. We receive fine character sketches of the people of Aldiss's childhood, especially his grandfather. But of Aldiss himself? Of his growth and development, particularly with regard to science fiction? Not really very much. This leads me to suspect that if someone not involved in the potentially compromising role of co-editor/author had received Harrison's and Aldiss's manuscripts, there would have been some revisions required. . . .

All of this is rather a matter of

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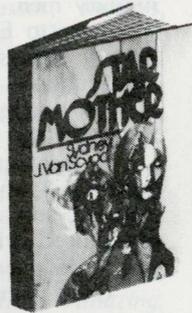
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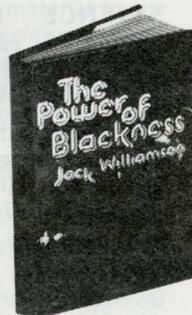
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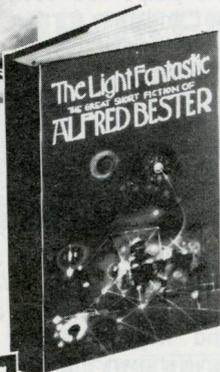
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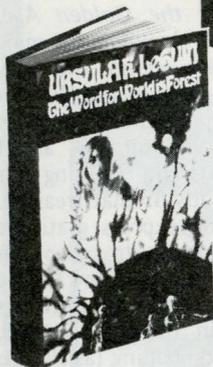
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nit-picking, however. *Hell's Cartographers* is a fascinating and potentially important book; I recommend it highly, and hope to see further volumes of the sort. ■

REFERENCE GUIDE TO FANTASTIC FILMS, by Walt Lee. Three volumes, total 653 pp. \$29.40. ISBN 0-913974-04-8. 1972, 73, 74. Chelsea-Lee Books, Box 66273, Los Angeles CA 90066.

An incredible labor of love, the product of decades of painstaking research and careful verification, covering thousands of science fiction, fantasy and horror films. This is not a history of the fantastic film, in the sense that a narrative text would be; it is, rather, a compilation of reference data.

For each film Lee provides as much credit information as he has been able to accumulate: title, alternate titles if any, year of release, producer, director, author (of original story), writer (of screen-play), cinematographer, film editor, cast. Lee also provides classification by theme (science fiction, fantasy-horror, religious fantasy, etc.) and very brief plot summary.

Thus: *The Crimson Stain Mystery* released 1916 by the Erbograpgh Company, a silent serial in 16 2-reel parts, screenplay by Albert Payson Terhune, science fiction-horror theme, "tries to improve brains but turns people into murderers." By golly, I'd like to see that one!

Lee is scrupulously ethical in his scholarship, giving reference sources for every fact. In addition he includes hundreds of still shots, some of them classic and familiar, others rare and startling. He even includes sections on exclusions, "titles... determined beyond reasonable doubt *not* to be fantastic [but that] were researched because their titles, casts, ads, or reported subject matter suggested they might be fantastic." And a section on problems, films on which Lee has been unable to obtain reliable information but which he suspects might be suitable for inclusion.

Not the kind of thing you would sit down with for an hour's relaxed enjoyment (well, come to think of it, maybe you would)... but surely an indispensable reference tool for anyone seriously interested in fantastic films. Any library—public, academic or private—with a film section should surely have this set.

Any individual with more than a casual interest in fantastic films should at least insist on his local library's obtaining a set, and might do well to consider purchasing one of his own. ■

THE ADVENTUROUS DECADE, by

Ron Goulart. 224 pp. \$8.95. ISBN 0-87000-252-X. 1975. Arlington House.

Here's another in the seemingly endless flow of books about the comics: comic books, comic strips, comic artists. As with Edgar Rice Burroughs, this is a field long ignored by media commentators and historians—but it has been "discovered" for better or for worse and the volumes keep right on comin'. (For that matter, the same is true of science fiction, isn't it?)

Goulart's book, however, is about the best of the bunch. He manages to avoid most of the pitfalls that have trapped others: the breathless "here's-the-whole-inside-storyism" of Steranko, the arrogant intellectualism of Horn, the wallowing-in-nostalgia to which your servant, dear reader, needs plead guilty.

Goulart is detached, witty, objective, perceptive. And, being a specialist in humorous short stories, he manages to get off some of the neatest one-liners I've read in a long while. "The *Brooklyn Eagle* (which was a newspaper, not a superhero) went into the science fiction line..."

Haw!

Goulart restricts himself pretty well to comic strips, with only minimal mention of the associated media: pulps, comic books, Big Little Books, radio, motion pictures. And he restricts himself pretty well to the 1930s (hence the title of the book), slopping over into the 20s for prologues and the 40s (occasionally even the 50s) for epilogues only as required.

Somehow his book harks back more to Colton Waugh's *The Comics* (1947) and Martin Sheridan's *Comics and their Creators* (1942) than it does to the more recent fan-, nostalgia-, or academic-oriented works.

And Goulart has a certain sympathy for losers, a fondness for what he calls "second banana superheroes" (and other second bananas). Anyone who has read his fiction is aware of this. Goulart is the chronicler of the loser, the friend of the little man, the bard of the milquetoast who occasionally rises to triumph but who is far more often steamrollered by forces he is simply unable to cope with.

He's a sort of H. T. Webster.

Thus, in his section on science fiction in the comic strips, Goulart mentions Flash Gordon, Buck Rogers and Brick Bradford—the three all-time champion space strips—but he also tells about Don Dixon, Rod Rian of the Sky Police ("the least circulated science fantasy strip of the thirties"), Jack Swift ("awful continuity... by Cliff Farrell... awful art by Hal Colson"), and Speed Spaulding, the last adapted from the Wylie/Balmer *Blue Book* serial (and later motion picture) *When Worlds Collide*.

There are similarly variegated chapters about cops-and-robbers, aviation strips, Tarzan and his ilk, Terry and the Pirates, Little Orphan Annie and her myriad imitators, comic-strip boxers and cowboys-and-Indians and military men. And there's somewhat of a tribute to Ed Wheelan, originator of *Minute Movies*, along with some choice reproductions that will have to do until a book about Wheelan and his works appears. Hear!

Altogether, a fine job—good scholarship melded with entertaining reading and nicely illustrated with reproduced strips. Also, a very attractive jacket designed by Marge Terracciano.

Good going, Goulart! ■

SCIENCE FICTION OF THE THIRTIES, edited by Damon Knight. 469 pp. \$12.95. ISBN 0-672-5208707. 1975. Bobbs-Merrill.

THE FANTASTIC PULPS, edited by Peter Haining. 419 pp. \$10. ISBN 0-575-02000-8. 1975. Gollancz (England); 1976, St. Martins (US).

Anthologists have been combing the back files of the pulps for the past 35 years at least—starting with Phil Stong's admirable and underrated *The Other Worlds* (1941), on through the pioneering jobs of Wollheim, Conklin, Healy & McComas, and Anthony Boucher. It was, in fact, the notion that the pulps had been thoroughly mined out and that further reprint anthologies would inevitably be mere re-reprintings, re-re-reprintings, and re-re-re-reprintings of the same worthy but overworked stories... or resurrections of inferior works that didn't deserve to be revived... that led to the development of the "original" anthology in our field.

Yet recent reopenings of those musty files, such as FAX Editions' *Famous Fantastic Classics* and *Famous Pulp Classics* series, and Asimov's huge and worthy *Before the Golden Age*, have shown that there's ore in the mine yet, if one digs with energy and care. The two present books are further evidence that there remains treasure in those mouldering old volumes, and I salute both Knight and Haining for retrieving goodly loads of that treasure.

Further, I must express gratitude for the inclusion of old pulp artwork in both books; it has long been my feeling that the omission of those old drawings was a major loss in these reprintings, and both Knight and Haining (as also do the FAX editions) include period illustrations. In Haining's case, it is a ten-page portfolio of Paul, Gladney, Finlay, Wesso, Napoli, Bok, Damon Knight (yes!), Lee Brown Coye, and a couple of anonymous artists. I found these pages gratifying, but was even happier with Knight's use of artwork in

Science Fiction of the 30s, for rather than including a folio, Knight (or rather his excellent designer Paula Wiener) accompanies each story in the book with the drawing used to illustrate it in its original magazine appearance.

Thus we get Wessos, Moreys, Orbans, Browns, Dolds, Thompsons, Schneemans . . . exactly as the original readers of *Astounding* or *Amazing* got them back in those New Deal days when the world was new. Mention of *Astounding* and *Amazing* leads to one point for which I must fault Knight regarding this generally exemplary book: of the eighteen stories in the book, fourteen are from the pages of *Astounding* and four from *Amazing*. While this probably reflects, roughly, the distribution of good material in the era of the 30s (*Astounding* always—always—paid the highest rates in the field, and I am inclined to think that this, rather than the vaunted editorial talents of Tremain and Campbell, was the major factor in its getting most of the good stories) . . . I cannot believe that there wasn't a single story in *Wonder*, *Weird Tales* (which published a good deal of SF along with its more eldritch and gothicky stuff), *Argosy* or any of the other 30s magazines, worthy of inclusion in the present volume—more worthy, for instance, than the almost unreadable Frank K. Kelly.

Further, a more widely cast net might have produced a broader variety of authors, eliminating double appearances, of which there are several.

I think that Knight must be guilty either of bias or of laziness.

But even so, the book must be regarded in its totality, and in this light it is an excellent job. Certainly Leinster's "The Fifth Dimensional Catapult" is a fine, fine specimen of pulp writing at or near its peak; I suspect that as Leinster's regrettable late potboilers are forgotten his superior, earlier work is going to win him a much higher place in the pantheon than he presently occupies.

"The Lost Language" by David H. Keller is a charming, little-known story by another often-underrated writer, and of course Harry Bates' legendary "Alas, All Thinking!" packs as much wallop as ever it did, and is a welcome revenant. (Did you know that it was included in Stong's book?!)

Haining does cast his net widely—over a much longer period than Knight allows himself, and over a far wider range of magazines. Haining maintains that over the years an incredible number of important writers worked for the pulps; some graduated to more respected media, others continued to labor in the pulpwood jungle. And to support his

contention, Haining selects his stories with an eye to by-lines. Well, why not—don't we all select reading matter by by-lines?

Here is the lineup of authors from the book: Stephen Crane, Jack London, Upton Sinclair, Edgar Rice Burroughs, Max Brand, A. Merritt, George Allan England, H. Bedford-Jones, Victor Rousseau, Ray Cummings, Sinclair Lewis, Dashiell Hammett, Mackinlay Kantor, Hugo Gernsback, David H. Keller, Edmond Hamilton, Seabury Quinn, H. P. Lovecraft and William Lumley, C.L. Moore, Robert Bloch, Ray Bradbury.

Naturally, some of the stories are distinctly minor, some of them are of historical interest only—but a surprising number of them are still quite readable.

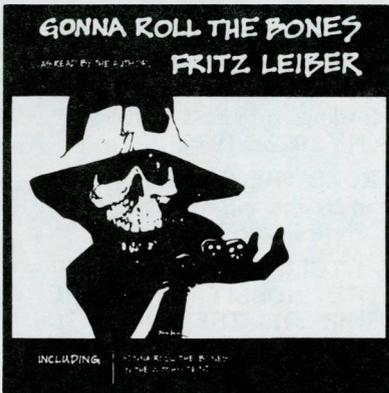
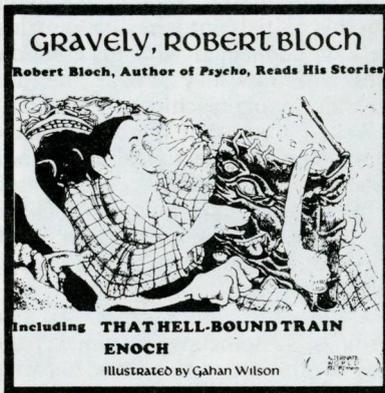
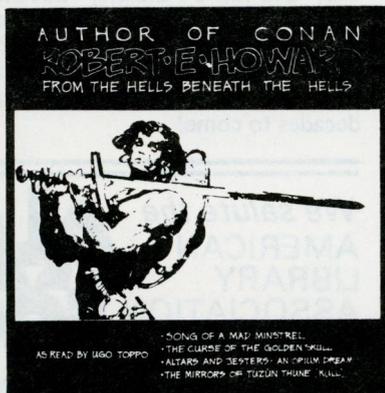
I recommend both the Knight and the Haining books, and I thank them and their editors for helping me to sort out something that has puzzled me for a long while. Anybody who has followed this column for a number of years must be aware that I have a great fondness for the old pulp (and even pre-pulp) stuff. Yet I despise most of the contemporary would-be heirs and imitators of the pulp writers, and among moderns strongly prefer the serious and even experimental authors.

There is an inconsistency here—or

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there seems to be one, anyway—and I have been troubled by it. Somehow, somewhere in the middle of Leinster's "Fifth Dimensional Catapult," things became clarified for me! The diamond-cutter is this:

Those old pulp writers, Doc Smith, David Keller, Edmond Hamilton, Murray Leinster, Seabury Quinn, Lovecraft, Otto Binder, Jack Williamson and all the rest of that crowd—were writing the best they knew how! Their ideas might seem elementary, their technique primitive, *to us*. But to themselves and their contemporaries, the ideas were fresh and startling, the technique the most advanced they were capable of (and very likely the most sophisticated their readers were capable of assimilating).

And that's exactly the case with today's *avant garde*—Delany, Disch, Dick, Malzberg, Moorcock, Aldiss and Le Guin. They're pushing at the boundaries, working at the limits of their capabilities, and sometimes stumbling as a result but also achieving things fresh and excellent. Roger Zelazny did that for a while, and that's why some of his early triumphs are still revered while his later works are disdained and there are people annoyed (or at least disappointed) with him—he's settled back into the easy and the comfortable.

And the people who write "neopulp" are doing that and worse. They're not pushing at the boundaries (this image courtesy of Michael Kurland, by the way) nor even standing beside them, but retreating at speed to the old limitations, the old ideas and the old ways. That's why they're despicable to anybody who's serious about this stuff, for all that they have a large and enthusiastic following among young children and old children.

Take that, Lin Carter! Take that, Alan Dean Foster! Take that, Anne McCaffrey! Take that, Jerry Pournelle! Ah, that's better! Thank you, Damon Knight. ■

FROM THE HELLS BENEATH THE HELLS, by Robert E. Howard, read by Ugo Toppo. AWR 4810. Alternate World Recordings, 148 East 74th Street, New York NY 10021. 1975.

GONNA ROLL THE BONES, by Fritz Leiber, read by the author. AWR 3239. Alternate World Recordings. 1976.

J. R. R. TOLKIEN READS AND SINGS THE HOBBIT AND THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE RING. TC 1477. Caedmon Records, 505 Eighth Avenue, New York NY 10016. No date. \$6.98, Cassettes \$7.98.

J. R. R. TOLKIEN READS AND SINGS THE LORD OF THE RINGS. TC 1478. Caedmon Records. No date. \$6.98, Cassettes \$7.98.

Here are four albums of classic fantasy—no SF in the group—read in the case of Tolkien and Leiber by the authors themselves. Howard, as far as is known, never came within working distance of a recording device, and the Howard record features the voice of Ugo Toppo, a sometime actor and director and "professional voice" who has previously recorded works of Bierce, London, O. Henry and Poe.

In all four cases, it should be noted that these *are* readings, not dramatizations. They don't sound like old radio plays complete with full casts, musical bridges and sound effects. You get just the reader and the material. This sometimes makes for a rather stark effect, but all of these records are worthwhile—although in very different ways.

The Tolkien material is hardly of studio quality—it is taken from a home tape recording made in 1952 and the quality is not much better than you would expect. Yet, we get Tolkien's own voice on these selections from *The Hobbit* and *Lord of the Rings*, and this, it seems to me, is something very important and very precious.

Poul Anderson mentioned recently at a "signing party" that, while he didn't *mind* autographing books, he couldn't quite see the point in it either. The reader reads the book and either likes it or doesn't like it; what does the author's signature on the fly-leaf have to do with that?

Poul set me to thinking, and to discussing the question he'd raised with a number of friends, and as nearly as I can arrive at the "point" of an autographed book, it is this: mass publishing has somehow separated the creator, the author, from his creation. As far as the communication chain from writer to reader, there is too much machinery in between. It's not like the potter who makes a bowl by hand, carves his initials into it, and remains, somehow, connected with his creation. Dishes are nowadays made by the thousands, by big machines.

Well, I think that the touch of the author's pen on the flyleaf of a book re-establishes the link between himself and his creation, and thus, especially if there is any pressing of the flesh, with the reader. It reconnects the circuit between artist and audience.

And in the case of these Tolkien recordings, it somehow reconnects the author with the work, and hearing Tolkien's own reading connects him as creator with us as audience. We are very

fortunate to have these albums. One only wishes that somebody had had the foresight to capture the voices of many other deceased authors before it was too late to do so!

Leiber's reading of his classic story "Gonna Roll the Bones" is precious for the same reason, and even more enjoyable because Leiber himself is an old trouper with many credits to his name, and the recording is of full studio quality. "Gonna Roll the Bones" is of course one of Leiber's very best stories—and that's saying a lot. The album also contains a short selection, "In the Witch's Tent," a Fafhrd and Gray Mouser story that is very enjoyable (though minor) fare.

Robert E. Howard having offered himself forty years ago, the Alternate Worlds people (Roy and Shelley Torgeson) obtained the services of Ugo Toppo to read two short stories and two poems by Howard. I must say in passing that while I am not a great admirer of Howard's fiction I find much of his poetry surprisingly effective, and Toppo's delivery (of both the poetry and the prose) equally effective, although perhaps a trifle *too* rich at moments. This is all a matter of personal preference, of course, and Toppo does a thoroughly professional job.

The question, then, is whether it is better to have a fully professional reading (as with the Toppo/Howard album) or a reading by the author himself, even at the risk of a less-than-professional delivery. The Torgesons have opted to use the latter whenever possible, but to tape the readings under full studio conditions and to edit, process, and produce the end product for maximum technical and dramatic quality.

This is a compromise, of course, but I think it's a good choice and a courageous one. I would, in the last analysis, rather hear Doc Smith read *The Skylark of Space* than any professional voice. Of course I'll never hear that—and more's the pity—but the more significant writers the Torgesons can entice into the studio to record their own interpretations of their own works, the richer we will all be in the years and decades to come! ■●

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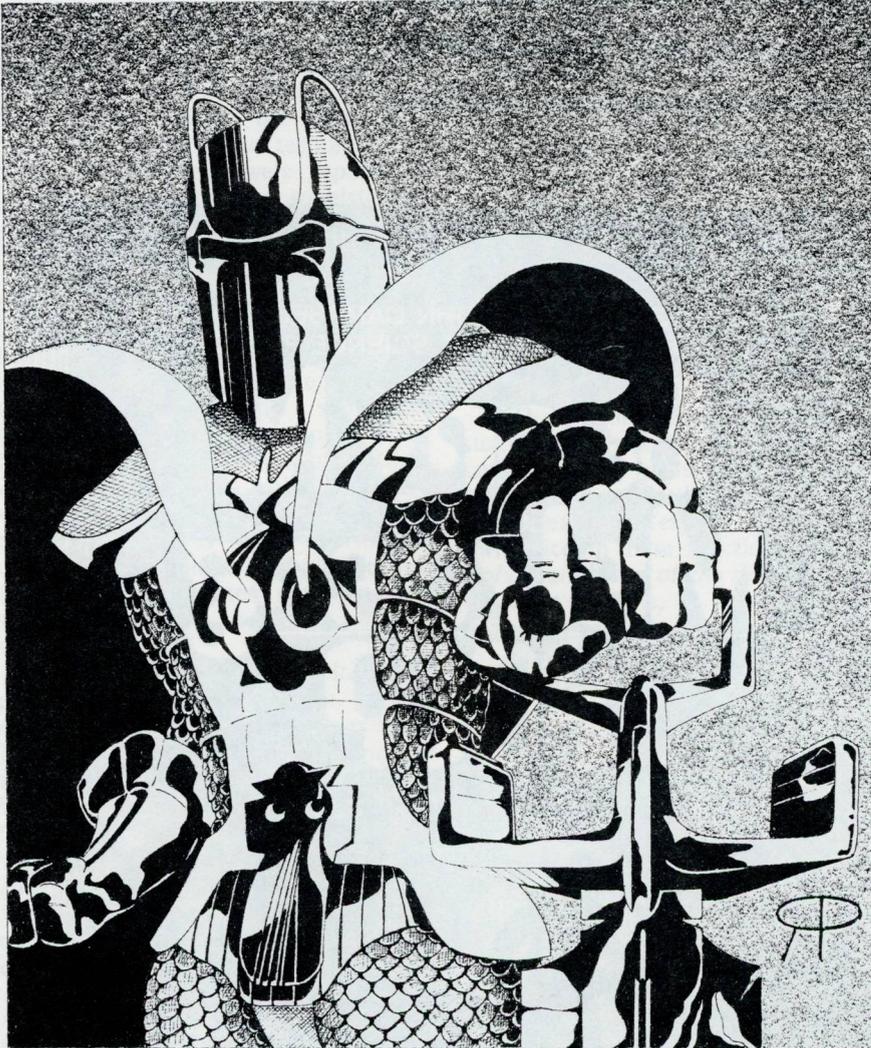
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RANDOM FACTORS: LETTERS



EDITORIAL NOTE: I was amazed at the response to last issue, especially the Robert Silverberg piece. Close to a hundred pieces of mail came in, and after eliminating the casual notes, looking for good, quotable and publishable letters, I found myself with fifty letters still on hand. Obviously that's way too many to publish (the letter column has been averaging about 16 letters published per issue), so with a bit more judicious editing, hacking, and general mayhem, I present the following letters to you.

I've cut out all comments on the religious controversy except Jim Allan's. Jim comments about the religious aspect of *The Lord Of The Rings* and, because this is what the controversy was about in the first place, I think it's a good place to ring the curtain down on what was threatening to take over ALGOL. Religion is fun in its place, but I wouldn't want my sister to convert to Druidism. . . . Fred Fowler wishes to make it known that he was overwrought when he wrote last issue's letter: two *Valium* and he felt much better, thank you. And whoever

burned that cross in front of my house after last issue, will you please identify yourself? The New York City Fire Marshall wants a word with you.

And now, without further preparation, we plunge boldly in the letter column. Got your battle armor on? faceplates down? Remembered to take your lasers off "safety"? Okay, Sergeant Saturn, a swig of xeno and then At 'Em!!!

Sharon Jarvis
Science Fiction Editor
Doubleday & Co. Inc.
245 Park Avenue
New York NY 10017

I see where Ted White says *Deus Irae* remains unfinished. Phil Dick and Roger Zelazny did finish their collaboration, and Doubleday will be bringing the book out in August. We'll also be publishing Phil's *A Scanner Darkly*, which everyone has been waiting for. It's now planned for January 1977.

In the future, Doubleday will be adding original art to a number of the books, done especially by known artists. The first drawing, done by Rick Sternbach, will appear in *The Greyspace Beast*. We hope to expand it so that each book has at least one drawing. Some anthologies will contain up to half a dozen pieces of art. However, for the time being they will be all black and white; there's no money available for color.

Robert Bloch
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Los Angeles CA 90046

I found Silverberg's excellent autobiographical essay extremely interesting, but somehow it conveyed a wistful quality which defied analysis until I realized that Bob sounds so *old*. And he's really in the prime of life. I hope I don't sound that way when I get to be his age.

Ed Wood
873 Tower Avenue
Hartford CT 06221

Since Silverberg quotes scripture at the beginning of his article, I'll quote some too: *Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted?* Matthew 5:13

I was probably reading science fiction before Silverberg was born and I still read it today. I do not say that I appreciate everything I read nor do I enjoy a great deal of today's product. Yet I realize there are fads in reading and if one is patient, one's favorites return.

Is Silverberg serious when he says, "Evidently modern American commercial science fiction is no place for a serious writer." What are people like Le Guin, Bester, Heinlein, Clarke, Asimov? Unserious writers!! I suggest to Bob, whom many years ago I once called "printed television" and who has certainly put me to shame with his recent accomplishments, that if the audience is not listening, maybe he should inspect what he is saying rather than putting all the blame on the audience. No publisher should be expected to publish books for which there is little or no demand.

I am and have always been very pragmatic about what I read. If an author has entertained me and by whatever magic of the writer's craft made me want to read more of him, he has succeeded as a writer. I don't care if he is the current favorite of the critics or is some older writer forgotten by the multitudes. May I suggest again that Silverberg could use some knowledge in the hard sciences. That advice could do for the bulk of our current crop of writers. If you don't know your science, how in the hell do you write good science fiction?

Bob Silverberg has gained rewards and awards that many another writer might well envy. Yet even as a comparatively young man, he is calling his science fiction career to a close. Just how much more of the good life does he want?

M.A. Bartter
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Rochester NY 14623

Apparently I am a minority of one. I started reading science fiction in high school: no one scolded me, no librarians sneered at my choices, I was never compelled by parents or peers to hide noxious covers. I simply enjoyed glimpses of the future.

When Sputnik burst upon the American scene, my first thought was a simple "of course." My second: "what's all the fuss? Didn't you KNOW this was coming? Haven't you been watching, haven't you been reading, where have you BEEN?" (Atom bombs, moon shots, ecology, overpopulation: *ad infinitum*.)

Science fiction to me has never been a ghetto. I've never felt a compulsion to band fennishly against the outer dark, though it's fun to talk with people whose language I share: linguistics, history, science fiction, poetry. I've always felt free to pick and choose what I like—Kipling, for example—to enjoy literature of vision and insight wherever I find it, without apology.

Now, Robert Silverberg, whose exciting biographical article you published in the Winter '76 ALGOL, has left SF, with encomiums from Harper's *Bookletter* (12/8/75) tolling a dismal knell:

"*The Stochastic Man* is set in the future and is unfortunately burdened down with all the nonsense—futuristic dress, futuristic transportation—of more routine science fiction. Silverberg excels at character detail and is too good a writer (forgive me everyone) to be stuck in science fiction."

What the reviewer—a Mr. Stephen W. Soule—is really saying is that science fiction employs a linguistic style with which he is unfamiliar and uncomfortable, and he is not only unwilling to accept or transcend this in the interests of the book itself, which he admits has merit, but must categorically damn all who can. (I had a difficult time learning to read John Hawkes, but was rewarded by the literature open to me when I did so. Why should Silverberg not receive the same courtesy?)

Furthermore, Mr. Soule has taken a cheap shot at *The Stochastic Man*. No one faults Tolstoy for explaining Russian transportation, or Fitzgerald for describing his characters' dress. To assume that nothing will change in the future is to deny the present; Mr. Silverberg has used these details simply to underscore, not to bludgeon, the story. The excitement, the futuricity, is engendered by the utterly believable chaos of New York City, and the opposed religions vying for Lew Nichols' allegiance: irresolute Transit vs. absolute determinism. For this is a religious novel, make no bones about it: a religious novel without a God, without an afterlife (Carvajal sees nothing after death) and without an ethic beyond karmic acceptance.

Joseph Campbell (*The Masks of God*) has suggested that we need myths that speak to our age as ancient religions no longer do. Silverberg has presented us with an ambitious and not unsuccessful attempt to weld old patterns to an uncompromising vision of lonely, immutable law, though his decision to prevent Lew Nichols from ever testing determinism doth protest just a bit too much, making post-Stochasticism merely an uneasy blend of Eastern fatalism and Western activism. "Tell us what is coming so we can accept it" is only a minor alternative to the Transit posture of continual unquestioning acceptance. If Carvajal is, as proposed, in the line of Tammuz, Osiris, Dionysus, and Christ, the dying, everliving gods, one pattern has been shattered. There is no resurrection, and no life.

How else can this story be told but in the future? Why circumscribe it, or refuse for stylistic reasons to consider it on its merits? Why raise walls about our visions, as Mr. Soule has?

"Pure" SF has lost the talents of Mr. Silverberg.

And yet, isn't the point of fiction to look beyond, to perceive what is not yet seen? And have you noticed how much closet SF is on "mainstream" shelves?

Wherever Mr. Silverberg turns up next—and I sincerely hope it's right up on the bestseller lists—the books will be for us all.

Richard Evers
4308 9th NE - B2
Seattle WA 98105

My admiration for Silverberg's fiction

has steadily grown over the past five years or so, ever since I read *The Masks of Time*. Now I consider him to be one of the giants of the field, indeed one of the giants of contemporary fiction—and this is not meant as hyperbole. It saddens me beyond words to know that, at the peak of his powers, he is leaving SF. Or rather, that he has already left. But the departure is only in the flesh. Because behind remain his marvelous, rich, vivid, passionate stories, to fill us with wonder. In the slow, struggling evolution of SF over the past decade, much credit should go to Silverberg for the ambition and talent and hard work he brought to his fiction, and thus to the progress of the field. I hope he returns some day. Perhaps it is only hope that makes me think he will, that a man of his qualities will gravitate back to a field that is, despite its current unnecessary limitations, so rich in possibility. But if Silverberg has gone away for good, still his works will be here, to point in directions others among us might take. He has shown more than most of us have seen.

All my thanks and gratitude for publishing his memoir.

Cy Chauvin
17829 Peters
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The autobiographical piece by Robert Silverberg was very moving, particularly toward the end. I really felt empathy for his struggle to improve his writing and SF, and for the way it became so much more difficult for him to go. "It has been slower and slower ever since, and I have only rarely, and not for a long time now, felt that dynamic sense of clear vision. . . ." That sentence in particular, and so much of the rest, reminded me of David Selig in *Dying Inside*, who gradually lost his telepathic powers. Such a potent analogy! I have to admit I've felt dissatisfied with Silverberg's recent novels as any—but feel sad that readers could so affect him.

The comparison between ALGOL and SFR is unnecessary: you are clearly superior in all ways except frequency of publication.

Stephen A. Antell
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Brooklyn NY 11201

The Silverberg article and the Dozois interview were both good reading. One other thing they have in common is the stereotype of the writer as misfit, once an overbright, inept, friendless child, since grown into a man who turns to writing because he feels more comfortable in the world of his own imaginings than in the real world. But there's another side to this coin. In the review column in the April 1976 *Analogue*, Lester del Rey discusses the importance of experience of life in society in the development of a writer. What I know about the cutthroat nature of the publishing industry tells me a man must be hard and tough to succeed in it. And I've observed on the few occasions when I've seen established authors in the flesh that most of them—Harlan Ellison and Isaac Asimov are obvious examples—are far from being fumbling introverts. Which view is the right one? Will the real SF writer please stand up.

While I may disagree with Gregory Benford about the amount of science one may learn in passing while reading SF, I consider his analysis of the role of science in SF perceptive and acute. However, I can't help but feel that he didn't go quite far enough in his discussion of science as a symbol, in that he failed to distinguish between the two aspects of science. Benford was addressing himself to the layman, who sees science as a body of dogma. He neglected the aspect which is experienced by active practitioners in the field, to whom science is a body of methods of formulating questions about our universe. It is only with an eye

upon the latter that we can see the true value of SF. SF at its best is the literature of intellectual sophistication, appealing to intellectually sophisticated people who believe that although there may be somewhere such a thing as ultimate Truth, no one as yet knows more than little pieces of it, and all articles of faith are subject to questioning and testing. Ideally, this attitude of inquiry should extend itself to social issues as well. True, Benford hinted rather broadly at this in his discussion of "The Cold Equations," but he didn't make it quite explicit enough and might have left some readers with the wrong impression. I daresay there are many SF fans, even having read Benford's article, who still interpret Godwin's story as a triumph of scientific dogmatism over humanitarian enlightenment, when it is in fact the exact opposite.

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One can see why Robert Silverberg is bitter, but I don't think his implied blame of the "science-fiction community" or "general science fiction audience" is justified at all. First of all, he makes it quite clear earlier that the reception given his non-fiction work also did not fit, in many instances, his own opinion on it. *Lost Cities and Vanished Civilizations* which he considered only a competent rehash was a great success, at least with an influential awards committee, while *The Golden Dream* and *The Realm of Prester John* were commercial disasters. Also he claims to have felt "flickers of new guilt" for the lessening of the SF element in his latest fiction works, and so should not really have been too surprised that SF readership did not support them as fully as they had some of his earlier work. To expect that good writing will mean commercial success is to be ridiculously naive, and as for fan awards, there has always been, and I hope always will be, a tendency to place the highest value on those stories that are of a high quality or original in a science-fictional way, rather than in other ways. They are, after all, awards given for science fiction.

Silverberg writes, "Editors who I believed were friends told me, quite sincerely, that there was no room in commercial publishing for such books as *Dying Inside* or *Son of Man*." Why the past tense in "believed"? Are we to conclude that these persons are no longer entitled to the title *friend*, and if so, why? Because they did not pretend that the kind of books they truly believed, from evidence of past sales, would not sell very well were in fact to be desired from a commercial standpoint, or because they did not take on Silverberg's books anyway despite the possible loss? Note also the sentence: "To produce, at a rate of a page or two a day, books that angered the science-fiction community (because they were too much like literature) and were ignored by the readers of mainstream literature (because they were science fiction), was too frustrating, too depressing." Did these books really *anger* the SF community, and when and where was there a general complaint that "they were too much like literature"? The complaints are more generally summed up by Harold Goldfus's letter in this same issue of ALGOL in which an increasing introspection, depressing manner, and contrived structure are referred to. Incredibly good writing appears in these books, but also an annoying pretentiousness that, I expect, puts off the average reader who is not particularly into writing for its own sake. Also, I have found for myself, and others whose opinions I have sought out mostly agree, Silverberg's treatment of sex is disturbing in its unpleasantness, though exactly why it comes across in this

way I don't know, nor have I encountered any coherent attempt to explain it.

I wonder also, how much the simultaneous unavailability of a great deal of recent Silverberg may not be just a counter-reaction to the availability of such a great amount of both his recent and his early work a very short time ago.

As to religion in *The Lord of the Rings*, a close look shows it to be there in almost all aspects, but, perhaps purposely, played down so that the average reader simply doesn't see it. If it is gods you want, there are three of them who play a major part: first there is Sauron, second Olórin who becomes incarnate as Gandalf, and third is another who becomes incarnate as Saruman. All three are in origin Valar from the utter West. Sauron was originally the servant of Morgoth, the great rebel, corresponding to the traditional Satan, and attempted to take his place in Middle-earth when Morgoth was finally defeated and cast out in the Battle of the Valar at the end of the First Age. The five Istari were yet other Valar sent from the west, in human form "to contest the power of Sauron, and to unite all those who had the will to resist him; but they were forbidden to match his power with power, or to seek to dominate Elves or Men by force and fear." (Bal.III.455).

Other Valar are mentioned, in particular Elbereth, who is credited with the creation of the stars, and to whom the Elves sing hymns. "She was often thought of, or depicted, as standing on a great height looking towards Middle-earth, with eyes that penetrated the shadows, and listening to the cries for aid of Elves (and Men) in peril or grief. Frodo (Bal.I.263) and Sam (Bal.II.430) both invoke her in moments of extreme peril." (*The Road Goes Ever On*, p.65). When Faramir's men encounter the oliphaunt one of them, Damrod, shouts, "May the Valar turn him aside!" (Bal.II.341).

There is also the force or forces behind the dreams which led Boromir to the Council of Elrond, that earlier yet meant that Bilbo find the ring, who sent back, for a time, Gandalf, after his death.

Organized religion appears also, though not among the Hobbits. But the Elves, as already indicated above, worshipped, or at least venerated, Elbereth. As for the men of Gondor, before beginning to eat they turn and face west for a moment of silence looking "towards Númenor that was, and beyond to Elvenhome that is, and to that which is beyond Elvenhome and will ever be." (Bal.II.361). In Minas Tirith stands the Court of the Fountain where the White Tree grows, a descendant of Galathilion, the Tree of the High Elves in Elvenhome, itself a sapling of Telperion, the eldest of trees, which with Laurelin the Golden once gave light to all the land of the Valar. This was the symbol of the religion of Gondor, that of the original Elf-friends, the Edain, who in Númenor maintained still the old teachings of the Elves and the Valar when others had been overcome by the pride that led them, in the end, to attempt a landing on the Undying Lands, at which point the One, upon the request of the Valar, removed the Undying Lands forever from our physical earth, and all Númenor was sunk beneath the waves. Only nine ships escaped, bearing on board those who had been faithful, and the tree.

This was to the men of later times the single great incident, comparable in their tradition to the crossing of the Red Sea in Jewish tradition. When Aragorn is crowned he repeats the words which Elendil had first spoken on his landing, and which one assumes were spoken in turn by each successive king, Elvish words that translate as "Out of the Great Sea to Middle-earth I am come. In this place will I abide, and my heirs, unto the ending of the world." (Bal.III.303). The very realm of Gondor took its old district and city

names from this incident. In the west was Minas Anor, in the district of Anóriën, named for Anáriön the younger son of Elendil. In the east was Minas Ithil in the district of Ithilien, named for Elendil's elder son Isildur. Between the two fortresses, with the river Anduin flowing through its midst, was the great city of Osgiliath "Fortress of the Stars" referring to the Seven Stars that marked those ships which bore, each, one of the *palantiri*.

To conclude, religion is not stressed in *The Lord of the Rings*, is even somewhat obscured, but it is certainly not ignored by Tolkien, and he seems to have had a clear enough idea of it. For further details we must await *The Silmarillion*.

[This comment, by someone I consider a leading Tolkien scholar, very definitely ends the discussion/controversy about religion in LOTR, which started to degenerate into a much lower and more personal debate. If you want nasty comments, go read *The Congressional Record* or *Hansard*, or the letter column of the *London Times*. . . . AIP]

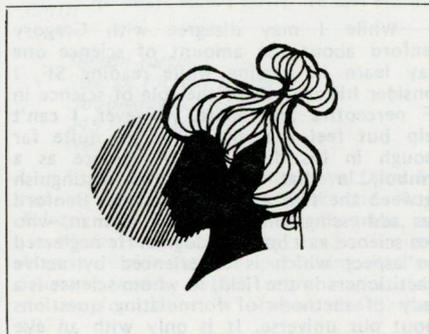
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The postscript of the Silverberg thing was amusing—I don't know why Silverberg thinks *Son of Man* is one of his best books: a 200 page tour de force description of an intense LSD experience is an interesting literary experiment perhaps, but it's not a novel (and it may not even be prose). Dedicated to "fellow voyagers" Bill Rotsler and Paul Turner, one wonders why Silverberg hasn't addressed himself to the "drug experience" in his autobiographical writings/interviews. Is this taboo? Philip Dick doesn't keep secret his experiments with psych chemicals, so what is Silverberg hiding? Lots of his books are about drugs, and often they serve as catalysts of enlightenment, viz. *Downward to Earth* and *Time of Changes*.

To put my opinion on the line, I think his best achievements in SF are the short pieces like "Going" and "Born with the Dead" and the novels *Downward to Earth*, *Time of Changes*, *Up the Line*, and *Nightwings*.

I enjoyed *Stochastic Man* even though it seemed derivative of Dick's *World That Jones Made*. Another parallel: *Thorns* seems derivative of Saberhagen's *Exile from Xanadu*. But in both cases, Silverberg does much the superior job. These books are like episodes in "Schwartz between the Galaxies"—traditional SF clichés worked up into their best dress. Silverberg certainly exploits the potentialities of the genre. Check out *Invaders from Earth* for an early anti-imperialist (pre-Viet Nam War) statement; or *Lest We Forget Thee, Earth* for pure space opera (written under the pseud. Calvin Knox). Silverberg—my favorite author!

I also liked the long review of ERB books by Richard Lupoff. I was always a sucker for the New-York-Review-of-Books kind of essay, and here it is in top form. Very very informative.



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The highlight in this most recent issue for me was the long Bob Silverberg article. I'd known sketchily some of the matters that he discusses in much greater detail (and conversely, I know much more about such matters as his fanzine-publishing adventures which he skims over hastily). But this is the first real overview I've seen on his life and creations. I'm quite concerned over the postscript. Maybe Bob's depressed outlook just now is nothing but a transient stage, the sort of mood most of us get into when we find ourselves growing old and we realize that, whatever we've done and haven't done up to now, the range of future possibilities is alarmingly reduced because of such factors as probable lifespan and impending physical slowdown. But I keep worrying that it might be a symptom of an imbalance of glandular power or some such bodily condition which is affecting Bob's spirits. It seems improbable that he should start to worry, after all these years, about the out-of-print situation which affects almost all science fiction, good or bad, after a few years. And unless he's very lucky or very skillful, I'm afraid that Hollywood scripting is the wrong means for curing the blues.

Curiously, it wasn't long ago that I finally picked up a copy of *Revolt on Alpha C*. I'd like to take it along to a worldcon and collect autographs from all the fans whose names are used as characters, then deposit it in a bank vault or some other place where it might survive the breakup of civilization. When the nation struggled back to civilization, someone would happen across it and would assume that it was a popular history of previously unknown space achievements of this previous civilization, and it would become for those signatures something comparable to the original manuscript of the Declaration of Independence.

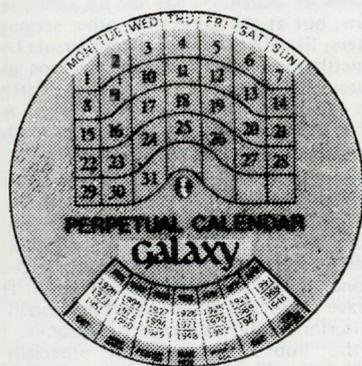
Dick Lupoff's reviews are at least as high as their normal stratospheric standards this time. I suppose it would be possible to argue that he overlooked the real usefulness of the Porges biography of Burroughs, that of putting into one volume so much information that has been scattered among a bunch of previous books. But if I'd written the first big book about Burroughs, as Lupoff did, I doubt if I could have given even this semi-approving review of the Porges book. I had one magical conversation with Doc Smith just like the one which is mentioned in the review of the Conover book. It was just unbelievable: there the two of us were, sitting in the lobby of a worldcon hotel, millions of fans and pros were swarming all around us, and by some preposterous coincidence not one of them interrupted us or barged into the conversation. Never before or since have I had a talk with anyone at any worldcon that endured one-tenth as long without some such intervention. I hope the time soon comes when an E.E. Smith fandom arises, so someone can write a book about him that pays the sort of tribute to his goodness that Willis paid to the memory of HPL.

[Knowing you as I do, Harry, I know the importance you place on personal health. I also know, as do most fans, that you're going to outlive all of us, despite your frequent hints otherwise. And the thought that Bob Silverberg's separation from the SF field might be "...an imbalance of glandular power or some such bodily condition..." has been raised by others I've talked to. And a common suggestion, though I'm damned sure Bob isn't going to like this, has been "change of life." Let's face it—I've just faced turning 30, another traumatic step in a long road—Bob isn't the young kid who had to grow a beard so he'd get served in bars

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anymore. Middle age is sneaking up, the body is changing and slowing down, he has a lot more grey hair than he used to, and all sorts of psychological adjustments are going to have to take place.

And of course, in these liberated decades nobody has to remain at the jobs they've been doing all their lives. Businessmen are becoming woodworkers, wives are dropping out and turning on, and even writers are permitted to go do something else. Twenty years is a long time to be writing SF. And, as I've said in earlier issues of ALGOL, perhaps only change is a constant. . . . AIP]



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I definitely cannot agree with Lupoff about *Forgotten Beasts of Eld*. It gripped me, and held me. It is hard to compare to *A Wizard of Earthsea* because they have no similarities, neither in content nor style. *Earthsea* is more prosaic, the trilogy as a whole moves slowly—though that does not mean badly, just that it was slow paced, and everything was described in nice detail. *Eld* on the other hand was told with an extreme frugality of wordage, it moved quickly. I would not call *Earthsea* overdeveloped, or *Eld* underdeveloped, or one better than the other. I would call them different, and *Eld* as good in its approach. Interestingly, though, Richard quotes the one paragraph I found a bit confusing on the first reading, so he's quite good at finding the weakest spots to use against a book. I'm not sure I like any reviewer saying adamantly a thing like "I cannot recommend this book," when another reviewer is determined to say, "I cannot recommend this book too highly." Such flat statements of non-worth or ultimate-worth are not critical in scope, not informative, not really either subjective or objective. Such statements mean nothing—the opinions expressed by the reviewer should express enough without the standard ending cliché of recommendation or non-recommendation. Point out objective strengths and weaknesses, and subjective likes and dislikes, but leave the final verdict to the reader! I love *Beasts of Eld* and I have been recommending it to everybody, and no one has yet told me I steered them wrong.

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Silverberg's article exhibits a certain preoccupation with self which makes the essay much less immediate than, say, Jack Williamson's piece. I suspect that a similar self-preoccupation has damaged the work of

the Late New Silverberg, and that a rest from SF may be the best course at present. I think we all hope it won't be a permanent rest, of course.

What I am about to say is hardly an original point, but it's something that Gregory Benford passes over while talking about the relation of science and SF. This is the fact that, even when science fiction is written by capable scientists, even scientists who profess the most rigorous of hard-SF ideals, the standard always seems to be not what the writer knows to be scientifically accurate, but what the writer thinks he can get away with on the reader. Thus Anderson has confessed that he fudged a factor of (I think) ten or so in *Tau Zero*, Niven has refused to let mathematics cheat him out of a good black hole time paradox, and so on back to Verne, who almost certainly knew his Columbiad wouldn't work as described. Standards of verisimilitude vary from audience to audience, depending on their scientific sophistication. Thus movie SF has almost always disgusted SF fans with its scientific crudity, while this has almost never bothered movie audiences in the least.

I would urge you to continue reviews of Canadian SF as long as you can find the stuff. I find the competent SF of other countries fascinating. Unfortunately, the lesser breeds without the law are all too ready to drift out of SF into fantasy or grotesquerie or satire or surrealism, and these latter products are often unsatisfactory even by their own standards. (Before I give someone the chance to play Liberal, I should explain that I think it was Kipling's meaning, and certainly is mine, that the aforesaid breeds are lesser in the specified sense—here, ability to write competent SF—exactly because they do not follow The Law—here, verisimilitude through rational elaboration of basic assumptions.) But Canada's close association with the US obviously presents special problems, at least for Anglophone SF. Is van Vogt's SF Canadian while he was selling to *Astounding* but living north of the border? Did it become American when he moved south? If Judith Merrill resumes writing, will her output be Canadian? Or do we require Canadian publication or Canadian themes—survival, The Land, non-hostility toward governmental involvement in society, and that sort of thing? This is the sort of pigeonholing game which goes on all over the place, thanks to the fact that several nations speak English (and French), but SF is so international that I think the problem comes up with particular acuteness.

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I would like to challenge Gardner Dozois' statement that "given sufficient technology there's no reason for cities to exist any more." I suspect that this attitude reflects unhappy experiences with certain U.S. cities that are not applicable to healthy, functional cities in other parts of the world. A city of the latter kind offers something that no amount of three-dimensional communications or computer print-outs can supply, namely informal, unorganized interaction with other people, activities or products.

This may not appear to be an important consideration for a person who has lived only in cities explosively divided by racial hatred, or where the core is dead and only the sprawling suburbs show any life. As a resident of a city where such vicious polarization has not taken place and substantial numbers of people continue to live, work, and seek diversion downtown, however, I would not choose to live anywhere else. I like being able to go browsing among stores, either alone or

with my friends, or going to theatrical reviews downtown, or having a wide range of meetings of various kinds that I can go to in person, or simply walking and watching people on the streets or in the parks. I have lived in the suburbs where the excessive amount of "elbow-room" made such interaction, and, indeed, even the simple act of walking from place to place, impossible, and nothing could persuade me to live in such a setting ever again, at least as long as I can afford to live in the centre of Toronto. I like to go out to the wilder parts of Canada for a vacation, but if everyone went out there to live (e.g. under the influence of teleportation) then there wouldn't be any wilderness any more.

I am very surprised by Doug Barbour's statement that Andre Norton's works are sexist. I have always considered her one of the least sexist authors of her generation, in the sense that she was writing books with strong, competent, heroic women in them long before other authors even began to consider the possibility of this. For this reason she continues to be one of my favourite writers, and I am tired of seeing other people inflating their egos at her expense.

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ALGOL 25 is beautiful and the Silverberg article is easily the best thing in the issue. I think Silverberg is making a mistake in his retirement from SF. Unless he makes it to mainstream best sellerdom, and then the more specialized area of *highbrow* mainstream best sellerdom (i.e. Pynchon and Singer, not Robbins and Susann) he'll probably find all the same problems elsewhere, often more severe. I hope he doesn't want to do any serious work in Hollywood. Bloch says that 60% of his Halloween *Star Trek* script actually got onto the screen, and that's very good. It sounds like Silverberg is going back to hack-writing only he wants to do it in Hollywood where the pay is better.

It's shocking to find all those Silverberg books are out of print. That means Hugo and Nebula winners and nominees of recent years are out of print, which goes to show you what the awards are worth. He has lost his audience somehow, but at the same time other serious SF writers, like Samuel Delany and Ursula Le Guin, neither of whom show any signs of compromising themselves to attract the Perry Rhodan crowd, are selling quite well. A readership for that sort of thing *does* exist, but somehow Silverberg has missed it.

Some people insist that Silverberg is being too self-consciously artistic. Somebody else complained that *Dying Inside* is only marginally SF and offers nothing special to the science fiction reader. (It really might have done better as a mainstream novel. It might have reached a wider, if not necessarily more discriminating, audience.) I disagree. I think the books in question, especially *Nightwings*, represent the finest American science fiction of the past decade.

The only thing we can hope for is that there will be a revival. Many famous works of SF don't sell well, and are sometimes out of print, but keep coming back every few years. Blish's *A Case of Conscience* is an excellent example of this. It has survived since the time it was written, and has been reissued again by Ballantine: it had been out of print since the Walker hardcover of 1969.

I completely agree with Douglas Barbour about the importance of style. Even such things as characterization are a function of style, the author's skill with words. If he is crude and clumsy, he can't delineate the subtleties which make one person different from another. He can't describe scenes to make his story vivid without a mastery of the

language. Very simply, since words are the writer's sole medium, his increased sophistication in their use can only be for the better. The real difference can be seen if you compare Shakespeare to his almost forgotten contemporary, Thomas Kyd. Kyd wrote something called *The Spanish Tragedy* which is generally considered (and I concur) to be an awful conglomeration of turgid verse, unbelievable characters, and excessive violence in contrived circumstances. Shakespeare used pretty much the same plot and format and got *Hamlet*. (Kyd actually did have a good sense of dramatic structure. He just couldn't write the language well.) The difference between the great work and the cheap melodrama of Kyd is solely in the style. Shakespeare was more articulate than Kyd, and could probe more deeply. (Of course he may have also had a greater understanding of human character. Not to be overlooked, but still Kyd was too clumsy to do anything with whatever understanding he may have had.) The same is true with Samuel R. Delany. In the hands of, say, Robert Moore Williams, *The Jewels of Apor* would have been pulp sword and sorcery, sort of *Jongor Seeks the Magic Rocks*, and wouldn't be in the slightest bit distinguished. If Gardner F. Fox had written *The Einstein Intersection*, you can imagine what the result would have been. Fox and Williams are just vastly less sophisticated stylistically. They understand none of the subtleties of language the way Delany does.

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Mixed reactions to Samuel R. Delany's *Dhalgren* are a topic well worth discussing, to my mind; I see *Dhalgren* (and *Triton*, which should be a fit topic for general discussion by the time your next issue sees print) as pointing the way towards what so many have been discussing for so long, the merging of science fiction with the mainstream. Allow me to elaborate.

Dhalgren was not hailed as an instant masterpiece by all upon its release. After an unbroken stream of successes, Delany came up with a clunk (or at least a relative clunk, compared to his Nebula-studded career to date); obviously, he changed something in his success formula. One partial reason for the mixed reception might be that those who enjoyed his previous books for reasons of their own, were alienated by his new direction. (And in this context, there are still those who talk about the great science fiction Robert Silverberg turned out in the Fifties. Chacun à son goût.)

How did Delany change his approach? Looking over Delany's work from the beginning of his career, the characterizations become more and more subtle, more and more realistic. In the period when he won four Nebulas, the characterizations were all of a specific type. For example, Prince Red in *Nova*. Delany took the psychological ramifications of a personality with only one arm—and used those motivations to explain the character's unrelieved "badness." All the character traits have been extrapolated from one source. Most of Delany's characterizations from that time are like that—we are given the character's actions as they are necessary towards full characterization, but the character is only presented as a shear-plane rather than a three-dimensional image.

In *Dhalgren* and *Triton*, this has changed, and for the better. Bron Helstrom and the Kid are the two most delineated characters in Delany's work to date, because they react to situations with human variability. Rydra Wong does tend to remind one of a cross between Wonder Woman and Delany's wife; but Bron Helstrom and the Kid

are difficult to compare to anyone else in that fashion, simply because they are so well individualized. They are unique human beings, and not merely a pastiche.

Many of Delany's previous works revolve around a sociological centre. For instance, *Nova* is concerned with the sociology of power (both in the concrete and the abstract sense); *Babel-17* with the sociology of language and sociolinguistics; *The Einstein Intersection*, the sociology of mythology.

But *Dhalgren* and *Triton* leave the field of sociology and enter the field of psychology. *Dhalgren* seems to delineate the psychology of a schizoid personality, the Kid; "Bellona" is perhaps (and I feel I'm entering dangerous ground here) a physical metaphor for the "state of mind" involved. *Triton* deals with a type of psychosexual aberration relevant to a kind of male/female principle. The emphasis is on the psychological aspects of the story, rather than the sociological. (For instance, compare the war theme with that of *The Fall of the Towers*—Bron doesn't even pretend to be interested in the war most of the time, just his/her personal problems.)

There have been complaints that Delany's work is becoming more and more autobiographical, as if this were a bad thing and somehow defiant to the traditions of science fiction. Personally, I think it's marvelous. The interested reader is referred to a simultaneous reading of *The Diaries of Anaïs Nin* and Miss Nin's *Cities of the Interior* for a masterful example of how the two can be mingled. Many mainstream writers have techniques which are perfectly applicable to science fiction, and no one's complained in the past. "The Saliva Tree" is supposedly a tour de force. Why then complain when Delany strikes out in yet another direction? As a matter of fact, Delany's type of autobiographical writing requires far more from the author than the mindless emulation of someone else's style.

SF finally seems to be reaching its adulthood. There have been a number of very exciting novels in the last few years, each of them pointing the way to an extremely interesting future for SF. Judging by the increased interest in the teaching of SF at all levels, there's going to be more and more interest in the literary parts of SF.

And Delany's work seems to be growing in the same directions as the field on the whole. Let's face it, Samuel R. Delany has for the last ten years been a very important name in science fiction. To dismiss *Dhalgren* as unimportant merely because it's not easy-to-wade-through, boy-babe-bem stuff, is both to do the novel an injustice and to point out the field's own incapacities.



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Much as I'm in sympathy with it, Doug Barbour's response fails, intentionally or not, to recognize the validity that Stableford's argument in "The Social Role of SF" does indeed possess. Admirable as he is on Delany's work, Doug, I fear, plays right into the hands of our genial devil's advocate by appearing the perfect academic specimen. Yes, Delany may well do what Stableford suggests SF does—and do it more richly, more profoundly, for being literature. Nevertheless the "perspective" function Stableford posits for SF, if it truly exists, can be operable for the greater readership—albeit on a cruder level—in the presence of literary ineptitude. In such instances the fiction is just the conventional, comfortable medium in which the perspective is presented: a kind of springboard for a fanciful frame of mind, like other popular fictions that promote daydreaming and wish-fulfillment. C.S. Lewis has quite adequately fingered the driving force behind Stableford's contention when he refers to the reading of the "unliterary" in *An Experiment in Criticism*. Such readers, generally speaking, pay attention to words only closely enough to extract the event—or, that might be amended, what they want out of the fiction. They don't need the revelation of Delany's "sufficiently multiplex and grand" style, or even the comparative modesty of the art that conceals art, but, basically, nothing much in the way of art at all. Just language that is more or less "functional." Good writing like Delany's is for satisfying the aesthetic and "perspective" needs of Doug Barbour, Jeff Clarke, and a less numerous readership. And that is one valid sense in which art can be considered "useful."

This may seem blunt, even offensive in some quarters. Let me sound a disputatious closing note anyhow: Apart from questions of good and bad literature *per se*, perhaps we ought to wonder (at least sometimes) whether this adaptability SF is supposed to promote is an altogether Good Thing. After all, what we mean by such "adaptation" is just "coping" with rapid change; it doesn't involve any wisdom, a wisdom analogous to that Ritchie Calder (invoked by Stableford) says science needs. There is no essential difference between the common man of today and the medieval peasant other than one of material life-style. The former is hardly closer to glimpsing beyond his immediate environment than the latter, let alone to being able to correct what he apprehends as negative. Maybe it is better—as the thrust of Barry Malzberg's work really suggests—that we don't adapt so indiscriminately to every kind of change we instigate but go a little insane once in a while. Perhaps if we feel ourselves bleeding to death we won't quite bleed that far.

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Robert Silverberg's long article was the *creme de la creme* of the issue. The late addition, as to why he's quitting SF writing, brings the original article right up to date. There's an honesty about it all that's moving as well as fantastically interesting (as all gossip about those you are interested in is interesting). The clear articulation of work-habits, and how they changed as Silverberg came to truly care about the artistic value of his SF, is also of great interest. The whole thing's a brilliant piece of autobiography, though it never gets too personal, beyond the actualities of writing.

Meanwhile, the postscript is saddening because it is a giving up by a man and artist I, at least, would like to see continuing to create

the kinds of marvelously multifarious and even mysterious fictions he has given us in recent years. One suspects a lot of unspoken reasons behind the decision, beyond the shallow SF readers' refusal to recognize the man's great contribution to the field. Ah well.

Ted White's column was *good*, and far more "useful" than some of his recent writing has been. He's telling us some inside stories which truly help us to understand how the SF publishing *business* works, and the information is definitely worth having.

I liked Greg Benford's piece, and tend to agree with him but with a few small caveats concerning the kinds of science necessary. I think Samuel R. Delany in *Foundation*, was correct to point to the "soft" sciences as becoming more important and often leading to much more complex fictions than the "hard" sciences. On the other hand, Benford is right to say that the good writer will have his "facts" right, or will do a damned good job of making them *appear* right. But we can look to Le Guin's *The Dispossessed* as a fine book which makes much more use of "soft" sciences than "hard" ones yet convincingly presents an interstellar and interplanetary culture. AND gets that all-important "awe" onto the page.

I fully agree with Mike Glicksohn about how last year's fan Hugos were Too Bad. There are better and much more fannish zines than *SFR*. Why, even *ALGOL* feels more fannish, even with all that expensive beauty. And, funny thing, I enjoy reading it more than *SFR*, even though I can't quite keep from reading *SFR* when it comes. It's because I agree more with Dick Lupoff than Dick Geis, I guess, and enjoy the former Dick's writing more, too.

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The cover is splendid and splendidly printed. It's been so long since I've seen Jack's work that my initial thought was "Boy, that's one of the best imitations Gaughan's Mike Gilbert has ever done!" It shouldn't surprise me that *ALGOL* would be the magazine to induce Jack from out of his lengthy period of fannish inactivity and I'm extremely pleased that you did so.

The Silverberg autobiography is a superb piece of writing! It's an honest and very revealing examination, at times it might even sound a trifle arrogant to those who are unacquainted with Bob, and written with tremendous skill. Familiar as I was with a fair amount of the factual material it contains I still found this one of the very best pieces of writing and one of the top articles to appear in any magazine in some time.

The postscript is, unfortunately, all too familiar to regular fanzine readers. Bob's farewell speech has received considerable exposure and generated a lot of quite heated exchange in the fan press in the last few months. It's a great loss to the field though and one can easily understand how an artist like Silverberg could become discouraged at the lack of acceptance and recognition of his most ambitious works. I understand Bob is currently doing screenplays in Hollywood, for a Star Trek film (!) and one or more, possibly, of his books. It's difficult to imagine how much artistic satisfaction he'll derive from this aspect of his career but I guess if you're going to be forced to work in an artistically deprived area you might as well get well paid for it. (This is not to imply that Bob will do anything less than his very best even with something as essentially trivial as a Star Trek movie, he's too honest a craftsman for that, but to me it doesn't seem as if he's moving up the slopes of Parnassus at all.)

I sometimes find it hard to remember

how serious Gardner Dozois can be when I mostly see him with his hair down (to his knees) in his manic relaxing mode. (He recently related being in a car with some friends when they passed a synagogue showing a huge banner reading "Free Soviet Jews"; he somewhat astonished the whole car by saying "Why, let's go in and get a six pack!" Gardner's like that...) While the interview doesn't really reveal any especially new insights, it's well handled and shows a side of Gardner that is less seen than it should be.

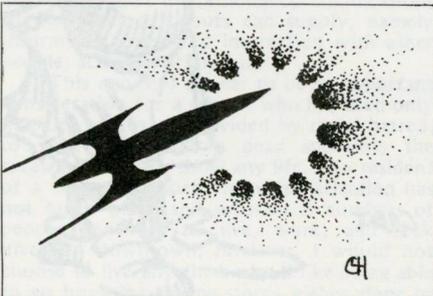
As usual Ted reveals numerous fascinating inside stories of the publishing world. Personally I found it surprising that there's a tradition of accepting a collaborative work after a contract has been signed with an individual author, but Ted provides enough evidence to suggest that this is so. I'd have thought publishers would have been more hard-nosed and businesslike about such things. Once again it would appear from the stories Ted tells, that there are more things in heaven and publishing... One wonders, though, what abuses writers may have been guilty of in similar circumstances as the editors have committed so many unethical acts?

A point of information, please. Copyright protects a publication from being reproduced even in part but is there any restriction on *quoting* from a published work in public? I imagine it would be practically impossible but that doesn't necessarily mean there aren't rules.

Steve Simmons' comment on the desirability of hard work in reading is a potentially explosive remark if ever I read one. I wonder how many people would take this as proof of Jeff Clark's claim (in a recent *Khatru*) that the current generation, SF readers included, is essentially a mediocre, non-thinking one? What he implies, though, is that a good writer will make intellectual stimulation a pleasure, not a chore: one wonders what SF writers would fit that definition for him?

Damn good graphics throughout the issue and some really fine pieces of artwork. Rotsler is brilliant (and so, I guess, are his friends), Bode will be sorely missed, Butts and Hunter are distinctive and refreshingly new while Mohr is still too Kirkish but obviously skilled, and Odbert and Shull are typically enjoyable.

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England

My principal complaint about Douglas Barbour's reply to my article is that it misses the point completely. What Barbour argues is that good SF is better than bad SF from the aesthetic viewpoint. I don't dispute that. What I do dispute is that the assumptions which go with the aesthetic viewpoint can be taken for granted. If we are content to observe rather than to make value judgments we find, in fact, that they cannot be taken for granted at all. Barbour says that "If SF does what he says it does, it can only do so when it is well-written, when it is literature. The better written it is, the more entertaining it will be..."

Observation suggests that this is simply *not true*. The great majority of the works which are produced and read under the label of SF are not well-written, but are nevertheless successful—indeed, may well be more successful than SF which *is* well-written. (See Robert Silverberg's comments in the postscript to his autobiographical article.) I am not applauding this fact, but I *am* trying to explain it. From the point of view of the aesthetic critic, of course, it is not a fact which needs explaining—the aesthetic critic accepts that 90% of everything is worthless and henceforward is content to ignore that 90%. If the fact that large numbers of people enjoy and prefer this 90% occurs to him at all it is simply seen as a confirmation of his own aesthetic superiority. Literary criticism, being an entirely artificial discipline, thrives on its self-justificatory elitism. As a sociologist of literature, however, I cannot accept such narrow perspectives. I want to know why people read what they do, and why they enjoy it. The considerations of the literary critic are, by and large, irrelevant to this enquiry simply by virtue of the fact that the literary critic dismisses 90% of readers and 90% of writers as external to his own interests. Because literary critics denounce all literature save the favoured 10% in a derisive (and often ill-mannered) fashion, some literary critics have assumed that because I am interested in the remaining 90% I must be aggressively attacking the favoured ten. Let me assure them that this is not so. I have a considerable admiration for the writers Douglas Barbour quotes.

The fact remains, though, that if we want to study the whole pattern of literary production and consumption the expectations of the literary critic—his aesthetic values—are not going to be much help, because a great deal of what is written and consumed is written and consumed *in spite of* its literary failings. There is, of course, no reason at all why literary critics should be interested in finding out why people like to read the things they like to read. It might, however, be worth noting that there might well be reasons why *writers* should be interested in the question. And maybe readers would be interested, too.

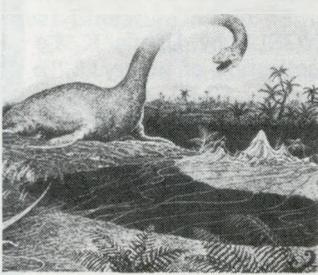
BRIEF COMMENTS: *Denise Stokes*: I liked the last issue, but so did someone else. They ripped off my copy on the "Empire Builder." Amtrak's run between Chicago and Seattle, while I was asleep. *Dick Lupoff*: The cover is incredible—Gaughan's cover is an overwhelming form-and-color trip, highly effective. I liked the photos of Silverberg, and of the art, my favorite was the Shull multipede, with high marks also for Healy, Butts, Bode. *Gene Wolfe*: This issue constitutes one of the most beautiful magazines I have ever seen. *SFR* is a superb fanzine, perhaps the best published today; *ALGOL* is a real magazine, and comparing it to *SFR* makes as much sense in comparing a child's erector set under a Christmas tree to the construction of a small but real building. If

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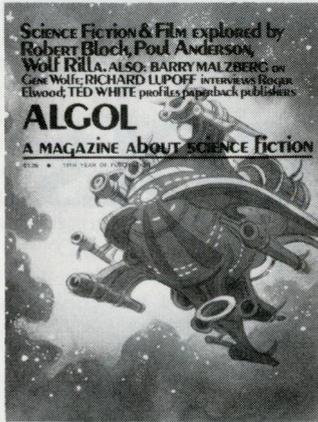
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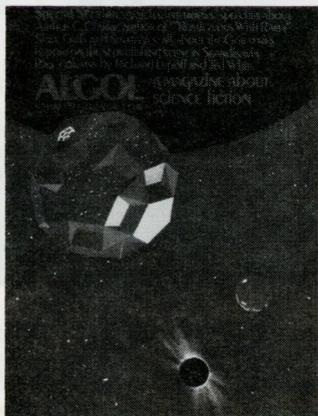
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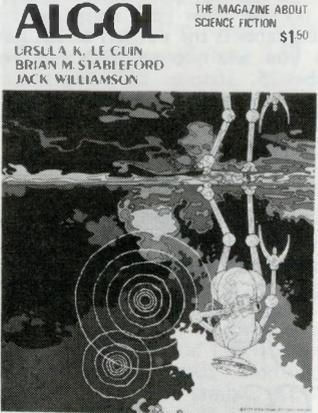


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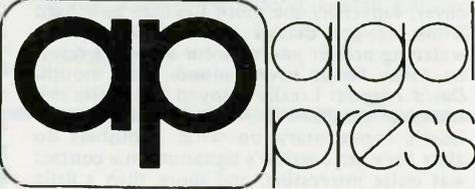


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Time were an Arabian stallion, ALGOL would be a Shetland pony and SFR a cold in the throat. ((*Blush*). Thanks, Gene -AP)) *Dr. A.D. Wallace*: The segregation of Canadian [SF] gives rise to the thought that perhaps British fiction, or even California fiction, must also be put in its separate place. (He drew a circle and left me out. I drew a circle and took him in.) *Jeff Hecht*: I liked the cover, especially the more I realize how hard it is to get decent color printing after watching printer and/or color separator screw up *Laser Focus* covers month after month. *David Taggart*: I really enjoyed Ted White this issue. I always enjoy Ted's writing. This issue's commentary on what publishers do after they get a writer's signature on a contact was quite interesting, and more than a little sad. *William Trojan*: The cover of your winter issue is magnificent. It's the best cover I've seen on an SF magazine bar none. "Lupoff's Book Week" as usual was my favorite part of the issue. I have only one criticism: his column was too damn short. For my money, Lupoff writes the best reviews in the business. I've been reading book reviews in *all* the prozines and a few fanzines for the last 15 years, and I've never read anyone even close to being as good as Lupoff. *Terence M. Green*: Your last two covers have been absolutely staggering; really beautiful. Makes me wonder where you're actually headed with ALGOL. And due to Lupoff's review of Porges' "Burroughs" book, I think I'll pass this one up. *Jodie Offutt*: For your information, ALGOL is the only fanzine I *never* read in the bathtub. I sometimes even takes *Outworlds* with me when I soak. But don't tell Bill—he's liable to throw me off his masthead. ((He wouldn't dare! -AP)) *Alan Hunter*: The cover of this issue was most striking. I frequently dislike Jack Gaughan as a draughtsman and a stylist, but I have always respected him as a colorist. This is one of his best compositions. *Prof. Harvey Abramson*: The Silverberg piece was very interesting, particularly when one correlates it with *Dying Inside*, one of the best of his novels. It is of course dangerous to confuse fiction and an author's reality, but in this case there *seems* to be a perfect fit.

WE ALSO HEARD FROM: Michael Carlson, Robert Sinclair, Rick, Craig Hill, Sandra Miesel, Ronald Salomon, John Arsenau, Susan

Wheeler, Donald Robertson, Fernando Quadros Gouvea, Brian Topp, Fred Fowler, Harry Bose, Trina, Stuart Schiff, James Thompson, James Goddard, Lauraine Tutihasi, David Garnett, Stig Brelum, Dainis Bisenieks, John Alderson, Michael Bennett, Robert Briggs, John Gustafson, Mike Bracken, William Findlay, Denise Stokes, Ben Ostrander, Everett Larsen, David Dyer-Bennet, Kim Gibbs, Taral/Wayne MacDonald, Kevin Cross, and Alexander Yudenitsch.

CORRECTION: The Alan Hunter illustration in ALGOL #24, page 38, originally appeared in *Armageddon* #4, published and copyrighted 1971 by Ian Penman. My apologies to all involved for lack of credit of original publication.

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FREDERIK POHL is joining ALGOL as a contributing editor. Full details next issue.

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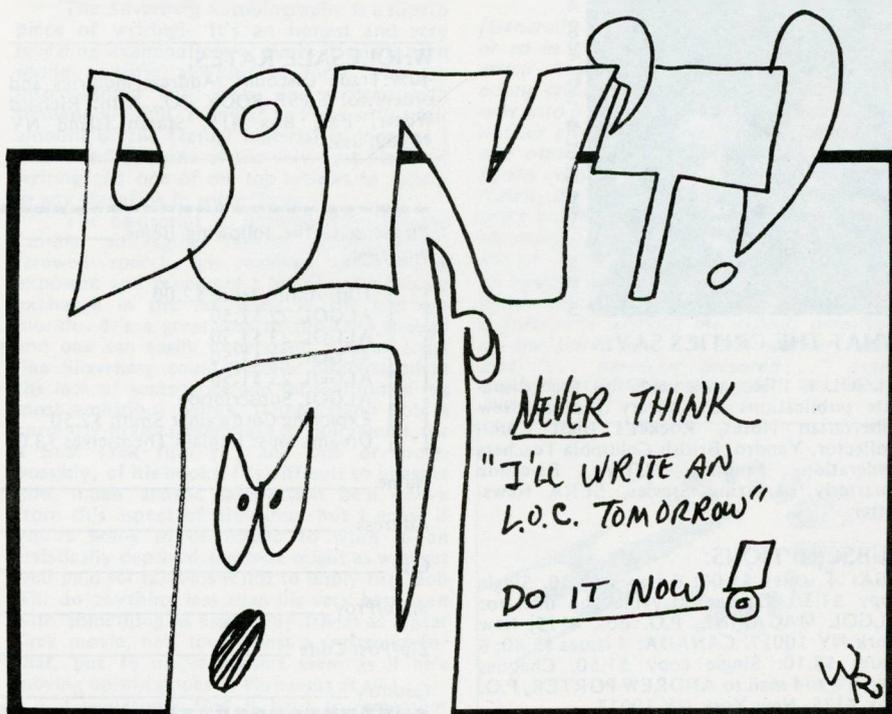
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ALGOL'S PEOPLE



DICK LUPOFF

"Russ Winterbotham wrote *Maximo the Amazing Superman and the Supermachine* and the Whitman Publishing Company issued it as Big Little



Book #1440 and changed my life. I was five when I read it in 1940, and while I didn't know what that book had, I knew that it had *something* I'd never encountered before, and I knew that something was for me. It was science fiction.

"Throughout the 1940s I subsisted mainly on comics, stumbling now and then on some of the early anthologies of Wollheim, Conklin and Merrill, encountering Ray Bradbury, Stephen Vincent Benet, A. Rowley Hilliard, H.P. Lovecraft. From 1950 onward I was really hooked. It was the first issue of *Galaxy* that pulled me in, and I read *Galaxy*, *F&SF*, *Other Worlds* and most of the other boom-magazines with fanatical loyalty. Schoolwork meant nothing. Great Literature meant nothing. I lived for SF, and when I discovered fandom (a school chum named Gerald Bregman showed me a copy of *Amazing*; the stories and art repelled me but the fanzine review column was a revelation), my doom was doubly sealed.

"I got my first rejection slip in 1951 (it was from Tony Boucher, and it was more encouraging than some acceptances I've got since!) and made my first fiction sale sixteen years later. It wasn't continuous effort, of course, but it was still a long haul. In 1970 I cut loose from my mundane job (making industrial films for IBM) and went full-time freelance. *That* was a tough proposition too, for a few years, but things look a good deal brighter now than they did. I'm writing for houses like Bobbs-Merrill, G.P. Putnam's Sons, Harper & Row—instead of Ace, Lancer and Beagle. The critics are starting to take a little notice now, and my prices are getting a little better.

"One of these times I'll write a really good book. At least that's my ambition, and I think I might make it yet!"—Dick Lupoff

BOOKS BY RICHARD A. LUPOFF

NON-FICTION:

Edgar Rice Burroughs: Master of Adventure. Canaval Press, 1965; Ace.

All in Color for a Dime. Co-edited with Don Thompson. Arlington House, 1970; Ace.

The Comic-Book Book. Co-edited with Don Thompson. Arlington House, 1973.

Barsoom: Edgar Rice Burroughs and the Martian Vision. Mirage, 1976.

NOVELS:

One Million Centuries. Lancer, 1967.

Sacred Locomotive Flies. Ballantine-Beagle, 1971.

Into the Aether. Dell, 1974.

The Crack in the Sky. Dell, 1976.

The Triune Man. Berkley/Putnam, 1976.

Sandworld. Berkley, 1976.

Lisa Kane. Bobbs-Merrill, 1976. (Juvenile)

New Alabama Blues. Dell, 1977 (tentative).

Sword of the Demon. Harper & Row, 1977 (tentative).

Also, approximately 40 shorter works of fiction in such magazines as

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HANCOCK & WESTON "Lost Treasure of Cocos Island," Nelson, 1960, 325p \$4; Honor Frost "Under the Mediterranean" (Underwater archeology) 1963. Illust., 278p \$4; Walker Chapman "The Golden Dream: Seekers of El Dorado" Bobbs-Merrill, 1967. 437p \$4. From: J.G. Amedeo, Box 522 Wyckoff Hgts Sta., Brooklyn NY 11237.

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Jun. 25-29 SF EXPO '76. New York Hilton, New York City. Toastmaster Isaac Asimov. Registration \$18.50 attending, \$10 supporting. Write: Science Fiction Services, 2 Church Street, Montclair NJ 07042.

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Jul. 30-Aug. 2 RIVERCON 2. Louisville KY. Write: FOSFA, P.O. Box 8521, Louisville KY 40208.

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Versins, CH-1463 Rovray, Rovray, Switzerland.

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Sep. 24-26 PghLANGE VIII. Viking Motel, Pittsburgh PA. GoH Joe Halde-man. Registration \$4, \$5 at door. Write: Barbara Geraud, 1202 Benedum Trees Bldg., Pittsburgh PA 15222.

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Jul. 1-4 1977 WESTERCON 30. GoH Damon Knight, Fan GoH Frank Denton. Totem Park Residences, Univ. of British Columbia, Vancouver BC. Membership \$6 to 7/76. Write: Westercon 30, Box 48701 Stn Bentall, Vancouver BC Canada V7X 1A6.

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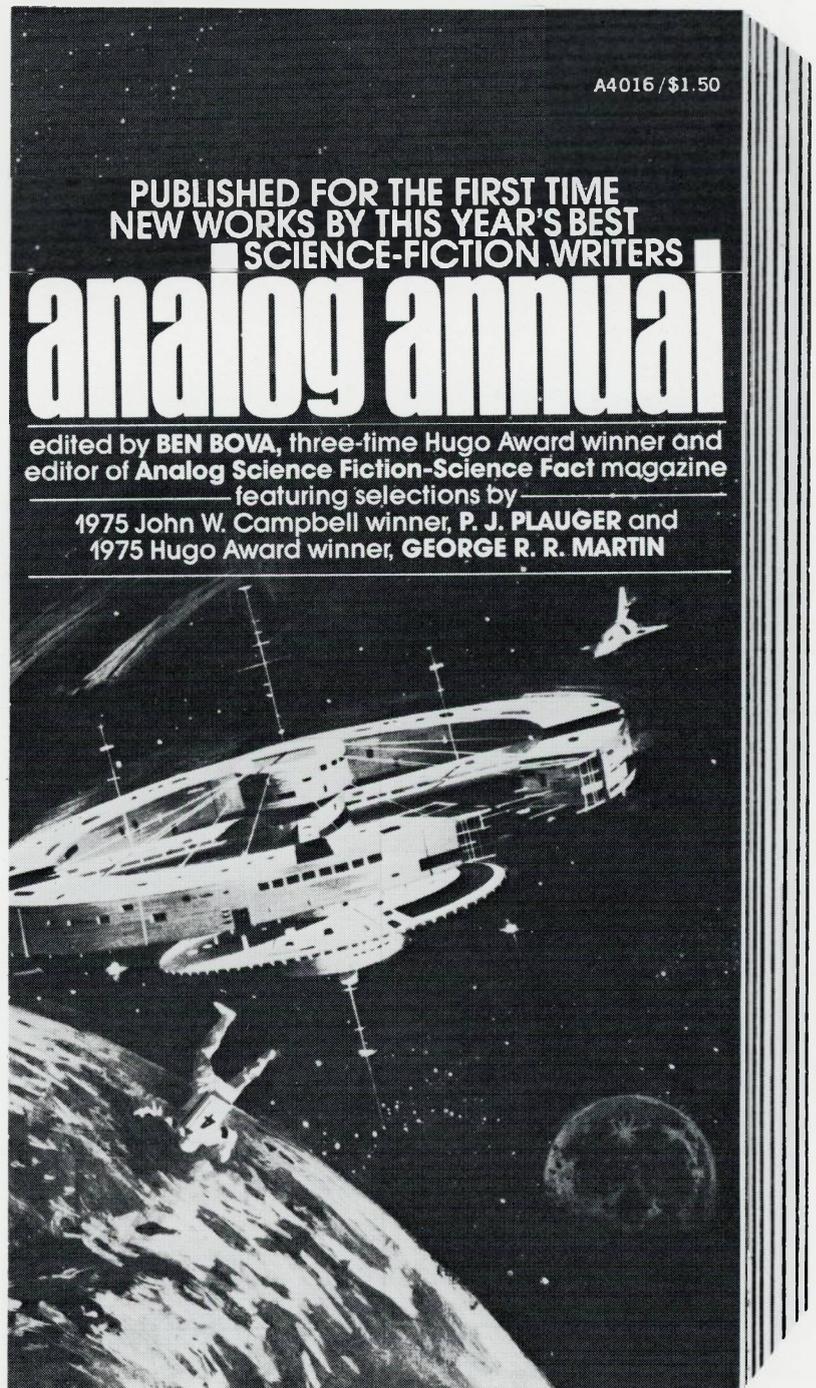
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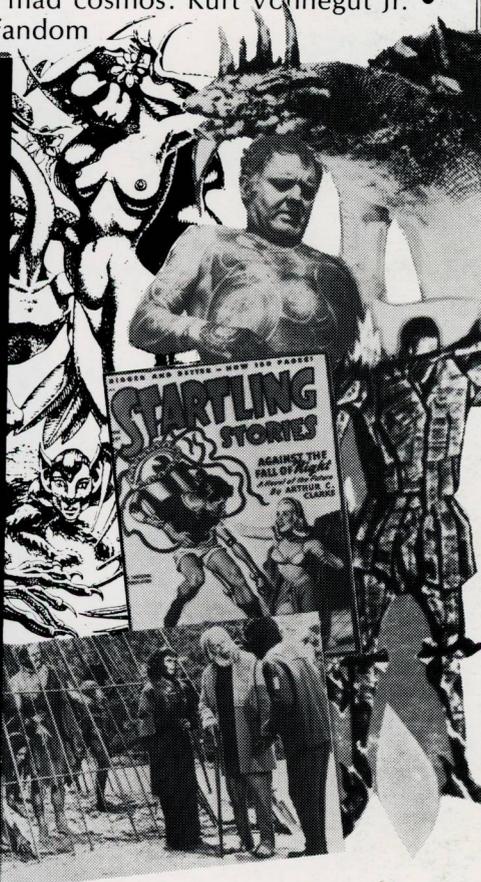
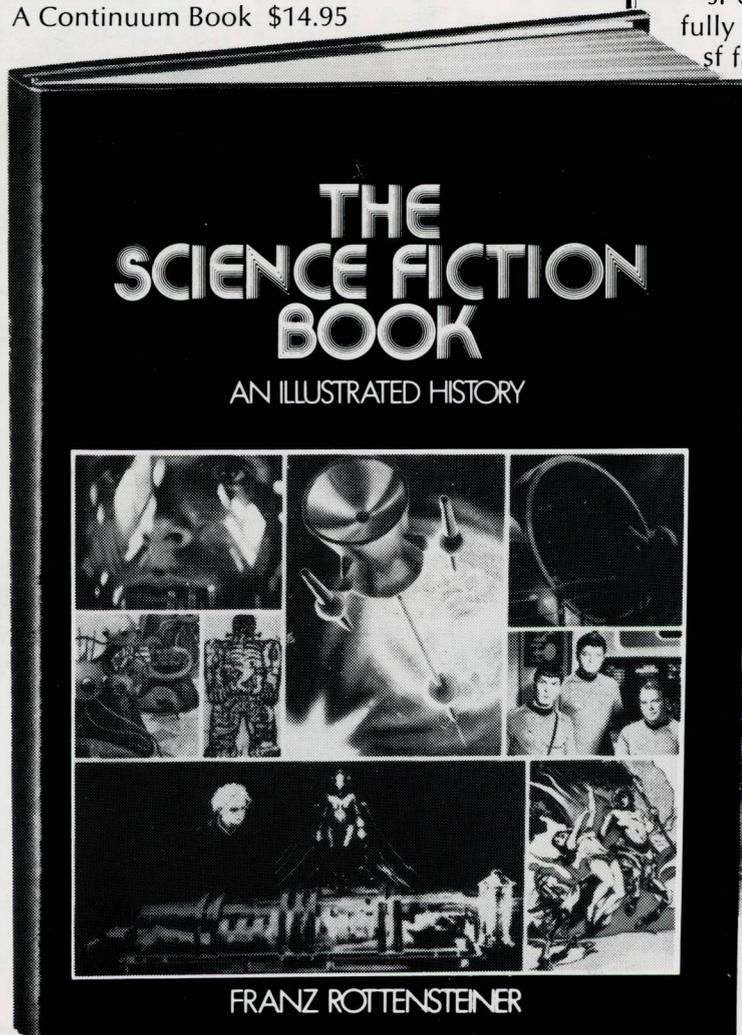
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