

THIS ISSUE Alfred Bester Robert Silverberg Ted¹⁸
White T.B. Swann Richard Wilson Dick Lupoff

ALGOL 18



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HELP BRING SCIENCE FICTION TO THE ANTIPODES:

AUSTRALIA IN 75!

BEATLE~JUICE~EDITORIAL

I wrote an editorial back in 1964 wherein I talked about changes made to improve the way ALGOL looked. And so, again, let me tell you about some of the new things in this issue. First, with the exception of this editorial, all the type has been reduced in size. I've not worked it out, except to estimate that there's something like a 25% reduction in the type size. The result is more articles and columns in this and future issues.

This typeface is one of the new items this issue. In many ways it's a more readable face than what I've used the last two issues. It reduces in size especially well, and is as close to a regular book face as it's possible to get using an office model Selectric. Future issues will see new faces, in all the senses of the word, but I expect to continue to use this typeface for most articles.

And the use of halftones. Halftoning has been within reach of even mimeographed fanzines for years (have a picture screened; then an electrostencil made from the screened print) but few fanzines have ever gone into the process. Photo-offset simply eliminates the last step. Rather than have an artist do torrid jungle scenes or quaint Dutch villages to illustrate Bob Silverberg's article I've inserted photos of the country. It's effective; if the opportunity presents itself in the future I'll use more photos.

Photos provide an opportunity for something else, something of an experiment. Taking an idea from "Playboy," you'll find a new feature on page 19: photos of contributors, past and present. The feature is entitled, perhaps appropriately in Mike Glicksohn's case, "Algolagnia." Of course, continuation depends on contributors sending their photos in with their articles/art/etc. in the future. The photos in this issue were culled from my personal collection, and show a wide range of conventions (and years); facial hair patterns and styles have shifted through the years, but the contours and topology hopefully remain the same.

* * *

Last issue I wrote that the cost of publishing that issue was over \$300. The response to that note has been great indeed. Many felt that it was too great a cost; that the final product, while a fine fannish thing in its own right, was just too great a burden for one fan to bear. My counter to that, of course, was that if something is worth doing it is worth doing well. Since I published that issue, half a year ago, I've made a decision, one which was dependent on the initial decision to go offset. That decision was to go the S.F.R. route.

Science Fiction Review was a fanzine that went in for advertising in the prozines and elsewhere to a degree heretofore unheard of in fandom. In the end SFR's circulation was in excess of 1500; its cost to Dick Geis in time, money and energy was just too much. And so he ceased publication.

My first ads appeared in LUNA in February. Since then ads have appeared in the May F&SF; in MONSTER TIMES; in the British SF Convention Program Book; and again in LUNA. Ads will appear in the future in NOSTALGIA NEWS; AMAZING; and elsewhere. The result: subscriptions, never very many to begin with, have doubled; ALGOL was written up in Publishers Weekly with the resultant exposure to book publishers (and a wider range of books for Dick Lupoff's column); and the cost of ALGOL has come down. Not by much, but some. Of course the cost of advertising is initially high, but I've been spending money in other ways. I've rediscovered the joys of Letraset, especially their Letragraphica series; nearly all the headlines in this issue, and the type on the cover, reflect that.

And I suspect I have better business sense than Geis had. I'm helped, of course, by a less hurried schedule; two issues a year versus four or more. But I suspect that if the business end ever gets to much for me to handle, as it did for Geis, I'll simply get help, fannish or mundane. And on a note of optimism, on to other matters.

* * *

[Continued On Page 15]



Writing and 'The Demolished Man'

BY ALFRED BESTER

Many years ago, when my wife and I returned from a trip to Europe, a friend of ours was quite indignant with our account of our travels and said with great anger that he felt that I felt that the entire world was created for my amusement and my entertainment. And he was pretty sore about it. He was only half right. Later on, a lady, a very perceptive lady, said to me after we had been discussing things, "I understand you. You are in love with the world." And I said, "Yes, that is perfectly true!"

And it is also true that when I write science fiction, I write out of love. I must fall in love with a story or a novel and once having fallen in love with it consummate the affair right through to the end. My wife is rather amused by this. I've heard her say more than once, "He doesn't love me anymore, he has fallen in love with a book..." And this does happen. But, of course, the interesting problem is: how does one fall in love with a story, or with a book?

It is easy to fall in love with a short story because this is a quick thing. It is more or less like the situation when you are driving your car and stop for a traffic light; you glance to the right or the left and you see a lady in the car next to you. You fall instantly in love with her and, in your mind of course, you leave your car and leap into her car and for a half-hour you have this wild thing going for you. This is, in a sense, what one does with a short story. An idea comes along, some sort of a bit of dialogue which you've heard at a bar, or some sort of research that you have done -- because, indeed, the writer does not sit at home in an ivory tower waiting for inspiration to come. He gets out and digs, he shuffles around, he listens to people, he talks to people, he is like a giant dragnet; he is dragging up for future use anything that he can hear, that he can see, that he can possibly use.

Some of the stuff is stored away in one's notebook, but occasionally there is one of these lucky moments when something comes out of the blue and hits you between the eyes and you say: Ah, I'm in love, here is the idea, here is the story. And off you go to work up the steam for your half hour affair with this short story.

But with a novel it is a different proposition. The novel is not jumping from one car to another. The novel is a long-term love affair. Now, don't hold me too closely to this analogy because it does not work all the way down the line. But it is in a sense a kind of affair, a long-enjoying affair with the novel, or the lady, however you will. And it usually starts of course with that first meeting with an idea, which very often you think is a short story idea; and then you start it and suddenly discover there is this long perspective reaching into space, and you realize that you will not have enough room within 3,000 or 6,000 words to handle this and you suddenly realize that you are stuck with a novel. As in an affair with a lady, you are afraid in the beginning. And steps which lead into the genuine love affair are, at least for me, rather interesting.

Let us take, for example, a book written many years ago by me, "The Demolished Man". It is old now but since so many people seem to be still interested in it, I will explain what the emotions were in putting this book together. In the first place, you should all understand (not my colleagues, because they all know about this) that I am a working writer, I am a working stiff, I am not an entirely science fiction writer -- I am an *everything* writer as indeed we all are.

So, when I was first approached by Horace Gold who was then editor of Galaxy Magazine, and

CODE TO REICH: wwqh.

wwqh: ACCEPT OFFER.

When he asked me if I would write something for him, I was a little surprised. I was rather busy writing radio scripts at the moment. We discussed various ideas and I submitted several proposals to him. I can recall that two of the proposals were:

1. Would it be possible to do an interesting story about a time and a future in which the police will have time-scanners which can scan back into the past so that it will be impossible for a criminal to commit a crime and get off, because with the time-scanners they could go back to the origin of the crime to find out who the guilty parties are, and of course arrest them? I thought this would make an interesting conflict.

2. Another suggestion I had, in a half dozen of them, was that I thought: could there be a time in the future when people who are trading agents should be perhaps more versed in psychiatry, in the understanding of other areas, or perhaps even capable of extra-sensory perception, so that they can help train them in the races with whom the people of the world really have no sympathetic understanding?

There were five other ideas, one of which Horace kicked out; and then he said, "Why not do a story about a crime committed in the future in which there is extra sensory perception? Let us combine two of these ideas. What will extra sensory perception do? These are the law enforcements against crime: what will telepathy do? And we discussed it on the phone (Horace at the time was in bed in his apartment; he was suffering from frightful agoraphobias as a result of his war experiences -- so we were on the telephone very often). I was quasi-interested in it, because quite frankly the idea of writing a science fiction novel terrified me. But, as we discussed the idea of a telepathic society, or a semi-telepathic society and what influences it might have on life as we knew it, I became more and more interested; and then I did something which writers often do: I wrote a "bubble" number 1. [I'd better explain that: in the old days when an act came on it was introduced with what was called a D-Board No. 1, which was a high upbeat exciting introduction to the act to follow.] I did that with what subsequently became "The Demolished Man". I also did it with another novel which followed it, and submitted it to Horace Gold who was enthusiastic enough about it to get me started on the writing.

Now, I had not yet fallen in love with the book. I remember the moment when I fell in love with the book quite well. It was the moment when I was attempting to describe the sort of evening party, the evening events which we had all week long, but exclusively in terms of telepaths. And I tried very hard to think of what special quality this party might have, and I thought of the many parties which I had given or attended (since I come essentially from the entertainment business). I thought of parties given for entertainment people, all of whom speak the same slang, who all know the same jokes, and who are very quick and very hip and up-to-the-moment on everything -- and I thought: how could I translate that into telepathy? At the same time I suddenly recalled embarrassing experiences when a square, a civilian from the middle west, would by accident come to one of these parties and be completely out of place. Every line of dialogue would be a source of embarrassment; we would all blush, and try to cover up. And it was from all that, that I more or less extrapolated into the telepathic party which I tried to describe; and then, of course, came this great notion of doing it in a typographical pattern, in geometrical forms. I spent about two days in my workshop working it out and I was so pleased with it, so delighted with the entire dimensions that all the various visual effects that one could achieve in writing could do to this story, that at this moment I fell in love with it.

Sorry, Lincoln	We weren't party-minded	Enough
Tate	thought	Esper
but	Alan	Men
I'm	Seaver	remaining
Not that a Pres	was ever elected still	unmarried
at	coming	can
liberty	but	ruin
To be generous,	I feel Al's a man to lo	the
reveal	don't	Guild's
anything	TP	entire
about	him	eugenic
D'Courtney is	arriving according to	plan
	yet	

Now, at the moment I fell in love with it I began to drive down very, very hard; as hard as I could. I was in constant discussion with Horace Gold; we discussed many ideas; we dismissed many ideas, we adopted many, but always the central theme was: the open-mystery story. I must explain that I had been until then, in radio, a mystery writer. And there were in those days two forms of writing: there was that of the English mystery in which Body A is found and Body X is found, and Body Y, and so forth and so on, when no one knows what the hell is going on until the last scene, the explaining scene to which the whole thing is tied up. These long and interminable expositions of where, when, you know: Joe got into Max's taxicab and he didn't know that Max was keeping Bubbles le Grand who was really financing the entire Mafiosa organization, but he did know that the Mafia was double-crossing him. You go mad with this thing and then where are you? It is endless. Many of you, I am sure, have been forced to go through that.

The other form of mystery which we wrote was the open-mystery, in which you play the events, the conflicts and the acts of violence, as they occur. You keep no secrets from your audience except one secret. The secret either of motivation -- why the killer has killed -- or, secondly, the gimmick: how he or she killed. These little things you hold back for that additional suspense. It occurred to me that this "Demolished Man" was a marvelous opportunity to do a new form of open-murder mystery. That is, to do a chase in which we lay out the events, event by event; in which we give the motivation, but actually we are cheating on that because the protagonist -- who is the killer -- does not really know his own motivation. It is concealed within himself and we are now deeply involved in psychiatry. And if any follower of Freud's objects to what I say, I apologize, but this is the thing that really grabbed me.

Now, the three critical points in writing a novel for me -- and I am speaking for all of us -- are these: First, the attack. There must be a tremendous attack on a story. In fact, I have always believed that the first-rate writer starts a story at the point where a fifth-rate writer stops it. You start at the peak of the action and then you move on. This is, for me, the first big problem.

The second problem is, of course, the mid-point, because at this point you suffer from fatigue. You have been re-reading your manuscript over and over again to get the flow and the tempo, to see if you are headed in the right direction. After you have read it for about 479 times, it begins to occur to you that it is a little bit boring. You get a little tired of it and you say to yourself, "The hell with it! This thing is no good; let's forget it!" It is at this point that you must have the courage to say, "Look, if I liked it enough to start it, it must still be good. I will finish it." But if you are lucky -- and indeed I was lucky -- you can find a new gimmick at the mid-point which will recharge you with enthusiasm. I found mine in a very curious way. I was writing the book at a cottage we have at a far island beach; I was fishing one afternoon, without luck, and once I was minding my own business casting for fish, suddenly the idea of typography jumped into my mind and suddenly I thought: Good God, it could be possible in the future that people's names could be spelled instead of with letters -- they could be spelled typographically. I grabbed my fishing rod, I rushed back to the cottage, spent an entire afternoon next day working out all sorts of typographical gimmicks; this was enough to charge me through the midpoint to get on towards the finishing.

Thirdly, now. The 3/4-mark in a novel is also very dangerous because you start with an earthquake and build to a climax. Well, this is the problem in novel-writing: you start with an earthquake and you try to build to a climax, and at the 3/4-mark you say, "My God, where is my climax?"

THE DOLPHIN DAYS



Thomas Burnett Swann

Science fiction writers have invented a host of creatures, vicious and benign, murderous and beguiling -- Hobbits, yellow-eyed Martians, blind angels, and, if we include Homer, that science fiction writer par excellence who was also an epic poet, then we may add Cyclopes, Sirens, Scyllas, Charybdises, and Circes. The Creature -- the Beast -- the Alien -- is inseparable from, and integral to, the genre. But so far no mere writer has surpassed that flippered miracle, the dolphin. He has come into literary prominence thanks in part to the studies of John Lilly, who ranks him with the sperm whale as having an intelligence perhaps equal to that of man and as perhaps possessing an oral literature passed on from beak to beak, from generation to generation. Arthur C. Clarke has announced that it is one of his great ambitions to make friends with a dolphin, and other science fiction writers have written a spate of books such as "Dolphin Boy" and "The Dolphins Of Altair," which show man's increasing fascination for the being.

Sailors have always traditionally loved dolphins and believed the tales of drowning men being prodded to safety by obliging snouts. But only after two thousand years have dolphins been rediscovered in something of their full grandeur. The ancient Greeks, intelligent, intuitive, sea-far-

ing or seashore living, understood the dolphin and his capabilities and envisioned various sea deities like Palaemon and Taras as riding on their backs to explore seacaves or surmount storms. To the Greeks, the dolphin was much more than a fish and possibly more than a man; he was a companion to the gods if not himself a demi-god.

And thus he seems to us of the Twentieth Century who see him through fresh eyes. Walter Pater and other Aesthetes of the last century argued that the greatest beauty contains an element of strangeness which fascinates us and yet at the same time disturbs us. Pater, not John Lilly, should have rediscovered the dolphin, who has grace, who has symmetry, who is beautiful by any standard, and yet who is...strange. He defies all attempts to make him merely cute by teaching him tricks in marinelands and casting him in TV programs for children. We encourage him to fetch balls, to make amusing squeaks, to swim races, but he always remains somehow mysterious and ultimately unknowable, infinitely more than a trained chimp or an obliging dog. One feels that he is not man's servant but his friend and yes, in some ways, his equal, perhaps his superior. He is not so much performing tricks as sharing in a game with the human beings he unaccountably but unfaithfully loves. Certainly his patience with our patronizing attempts to train him argue a complexity of character which we have hardly glimpsed. Perhaps -- who can say -- he is training us? In short, if we think that we have domesticated him, we have misunderstood him. We have mistaken an alien for a household pet.

In spite of his arresting beauty -- and he manages to resemble both a clipper ship and an atomic submarine -- he is alone in appearance as well as performance. He is a creature who emigrated from the land to the sea several million years ago, and he reveals characteristics of both worlds. A body streamlined for the depths -- and yet a pair of flippers which, however usefully he had adapted them to the water, once served him as legs. A mouth which seems perpetually set in the sweet, sad smile of an archaic Etruscan statue, and yet which, to the discerning eye, masks a variety of moods at least as various as those of men.

Strangeness and beauty compel us but do not necessarily win our love; the dolphin, however, is more than loveable, he is irresistible. We love him because he is one of these rare creatures who give without taking, who offer friendship and demand no return. He submits to laboratory tests, electrical and otherwise, which often maim or kill him. In some oceans he is even caught for food. Yet with all of our cruelties, he never attacks us; he tolerates us, indeed, he solicits our company.

How foolish we must look to him! Gangling, four-limbed creatures which flounder in the water with the uncouthness of an octopus but without his speed. Quite likely we are much uglier to a dolphin than an octopus is to a man. We are not one of those creatures -- horse, tiger, leopard -- which delight with speed, color, and configuration.

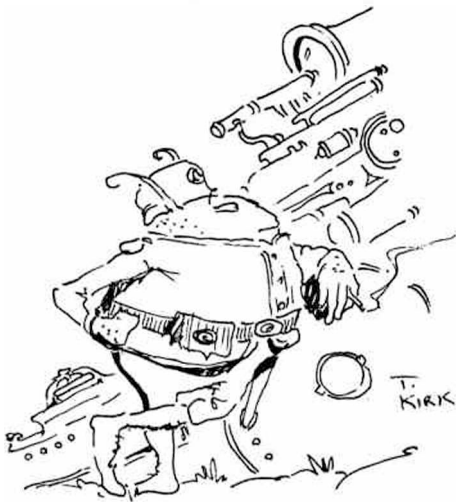
And yet he likes us and we like to be liked. Therefore, in our own superior, condescending fashion, we return his affection.

Man is lonely on his dwindling planet. Valiantly he hurtles space ships into the firmament with the hope of finding intelligent life -- aliens: like him and yet unlike him, to whom he may speak but who intrigue him with their novelty -- on other planets. Dead moon. Dead Venus. Perhaps dead Mars. How wonderful to find himself companioned on his own world! To find a brother, intriguingly different yet nonetheless brotherly!

When man learns delphinese -- and learning a language means learning to understand a heart as well as a vocabulary and a grammar -- no Atlantises will remain hidden from him. More important, no seas will be lonely.

-- Thomas Burnett Swann





LUPOFF'S BOOK WEEK Dick Lupoff

ULTIMATE WORLD by Hugo Gernsback, Walker, 1972, 192pp., \$5.95, ISBN 0-8027-5542-9

When I first got involved with fandom, 20 or 25 years ago, I remember coming across frequent references to a legendary volume called "Ralph 124C41+" by Hugo (himself!) Gernsback. It took me a little while to get hold of a copy, but I did, and sat down to try and read the thing.

It's famous for its incredible predictions, in 1911, of all sorts of modern inventions: radar, ball-point pens, stuff like that. What nobody bothered to tell me back in 1950 or so -- and what hardly anybody has ever said that I can recall -- is that the thing is *unreadable*.

Well, here we have "Ultimate World," a novel that Gernsback wrote in 1958-59, but that went unpublished until this year. In an introduction, Sam Moskowitz tells us why the book remained unpublished for so long: non-fiction material interpolated doubled its length and put it into a category where it wasn't quite fiction any more, nor nonfiction, but a weave of the two.

What I find more puzzling than why it was not published sooner, is why it has been published at all. The book is utterly inept in regard to style and characterization: Gernsback never got over the habit of addressing his readers as if they were a gaggle of slightly slow-witted six-year-olds. The novel (Moskowitz has kindly removed the non-fiction sections) opens with a piece of typical Gernsbackian superscience: "They were sitting on their sumptuous *tempreg* (temperature regulated) foam-plastic couch..."

Gernsback apparently never got over the notion, either, that SF is designed to educate readers in science, and so the book is full of little speeches, quoted scientific notes and the like, which are alternately boring and maddening but seldom interesting and certainly not educational.

The book deals with a peculiar "invasion" of earth by aliens who specialize in putting human couples through sexual gymnastics in null-gravity conditions; they don't ask first and the people don't have any choice about it: the aliens seal off houses, pump them full of irresistible aphrodisiac gases, and away we go. The notion of Hugo Gernsback describing sexual activities is more than a little staggering, and Uncle Hugo brings it off with all of the sophisticated grace one expects; in the first such scene, we observe Duke and Donnie DuBois. They have just noticed a strange odor in their room: "Duke immediately divined its purpose: it had an extremely powerful effect on his spinal nerves and erotogenic centers. The tumescent effect was overpowering and within seconds, he as well as Donnie dismissed their recent extraordinary experiences and everything else from their minds except animal passion. Duke ripped off his abrijamas and flung himself passionately at the nude form of his wife in a marital union such as humanity had never experienced before."

Phew! Fant! Mmman-O-man!

The book does have a reasonably interesting plot, of the puzzle variety: who are the aliens, why are they here, and what's going to become of them and of earth? But the devices are so clumsy, the writing so abysmally bad, that one can only assume that Walker took the book on the supposed strength of Gernsback's name rather than on the basis of any supposed merit in the book itself.

"Ultimate World" surely fails the John Smith test: that is, if the manuscript had come in with an unfamiliar byline, it would never have seen print. As it is, we would all be better off had exactly that happened: "Ultimate World" is not worth money to buy or time to read, and as a work which may represent SF to the world of librarians and academics, it's going to make us all look very, very bad.

Better it had remained in the trunk where it lay between 1959 and 1972.

THE LATHE OF HEAVEN by Ursula K. LeGuin, Scribners, 1971, 184pp., \$4.95, ISBN 684-12529-3

I won't say that Ursula K. LeGuin has never written anything badly, but I will say that if she has, I have yet to come across it. Her books that I have read range from very good to utterly superb, and "The Lathe Of Heaven" falls into the latter classification.

It is a character portrait, it is an almost Phil Dickian examination of the nature of reality, it is a chillingly convincing portrait of a variety of possible future worlds, it is a Faustian study in the problem of personal power, it is a fine example of the interpolation of "hard science" into fiction, it is a poignant love story, and it's probably a few other things that I've overlooked, all of them good.

The gimmick is that the central character of the novel has "effective dreams," that is, if he dreams of the world we know, as (for instance) everyone having two thumbs on each hand -- when he awakes, everyone in fact has two thumbs on each hand. And always has! Only the dreamer, Orr, possesses a double memory of the way things were before the dream. Orr seeks the aid of a psychiatrist, who begins by trying to convince him that the effective dreams are a delusion, but in time the psychiatrist himself becomes convinced that the opposite is the case, that the effective dreams really do change reality -- whereupon he begins trying to manipulate Orr to dream what the psychiatrist wants him to dream.

At this point the pulp hack would have the psychiatrist command Orr to dream of a world in which the shrink was universal dictator, lavished by women and wealth, etc. Ursula LeGuin is an artist; she is capable of insight into humanity and exercises this insight in her books. So the psychiatrist does what a real person would do: command Orr to solve the world's problems. After all, we're all benevolent at heart, are we not?

Orr finds a good woman and falls in love but loses her in the shifting realities of his own making and has to pursue her from world to parallel world -- and she is herself different in the different realities!

I don't want to give away more of this; I don't think I've given away too much but I'm going to stop here.

The book is spare, suspenseful, thought-provoking, touching and exciting in turn. If it isn't the best SF novel of the past year, at least it's the best one I've read in that time. Pick it up in whatever edition you can find it (it was serialized in *Amazing*, brought out by Scribners, done by the SF Book Club, and should have a paperback edition shortly if it has not already), and get ready for an evening of gorgeous reading.

CHRISTIAN SCIENCE by Mark Twain, Harpers, 1907

I do try and mix up the old ones and the new ones in here... As Ted Sturgeon said some years ago, "Any book is a new book if you haven't read it before." Jack Biblo of the fine Biblo and Tannen used bookstore in New York recommended this book to me back around 1965 and I've been looking for a copy ever since. The story is that a member of the author's family (his widow?) was a Christian Scientist, and ordered the book suppressed following Twain's death. Hence, only as many copies as happened to be in print, have ever been available; it's a situation a little like that of certain volumes by Edgar Rice Burroughs, when that author's estate declined to permit new editions to appear for many years after the books had gone out of print.

"Christian Science" is an amazing piece of vituperation in the fine style of Twain. From its opening words, he never relents in his attacks on that religion. Not that the book is hard reading; on the contrary, it's funny, lively, and hugely graceful. Read its opening:

"This last summer, when I was on my way back to Vienna from the Appetite Cure in the mountains, I fell over a cliff in the twilight and broke some arms and legs and one thing or another, and by good luck was found by some peasants who had lost an ass..." There being no physician available, Twain is given his choice of summoning a veterinarian or a Christian Science "healer;" he records his conversation with the latter, and then moves into a more serious attack on Christian Science and its founder (and then leader) Mary Baker Eddy.

Apparently Twain was seriously concerned that Christian Science was going to establish itself as some sort of international theocracy, supplanting civil governments in time. He attacks the works of Mrs. Eddy (and the citations are indeed ludicrous examples of confused, florid language that are

hard to believe were ever advanced seriously), and makes a not-wholly-incredible case for the theory that "Science And Health," the chief work of Christian Science, was not written by Mrs. Eddy.

He goes into the bylaws of the Christian Science movement, its history to a certain degree, talks about the efficacy of faith healing and repeatedly points out that Christian Scientists insist that they use some mysterious force other than faith-healing...

The only major flaw in the book is that Twain engages in a terrible amount of overkill, ripping Mrs. Eddy up and down for what are, basically, only literary weaknesses. (What have these to do with the truth or falsity of her statements?) But then we all love to see religion ripped up, do we not? This book provides a few hours of amazing reading, and certainly reveals a Mark Twain very different from the gentle country story-teller we all read when we were children. Very, very different.

LAST AND FIRST MEN by Olaf Stapledon, Dover, 1968, 438pp., \$2.50, ISBN 486-21962-3

This classic dates from 1931; the Dover resissue is bound with Stapledon's "Star Maker" to give us a very heavy volume.

"Last And First Men" is barely a novel at all: it's a sort of future history that puts Heinlein's, Asimov's, and Doc Smith's completely in the shade as far as scale and scope are concerned. Stapledon traces the whole history of human intelligence, over a period of billions of years, on three planets through 18 distinct forms of humanity.

There are hardly any characters as we usually encounter them in stories, and none of the personal detail that makes fiction live. "Last And First Men" is instead a sort of "imaginary nonfiction," dealing with historical trends and philosophical attitudes. Stapledon portrays huge sweeps of history, peoples and species of Man devoted wholly to music for their lives, or to flight. (I wonder how he would have reacted to the contemporary rock-and-roll freaks I have encountered in and around San Francisco, people who go to concerts almost every night, who devote themselves entirely to the experience of music. What Stapledon predicted for some weird future race of Man exists here and now.)

The book is full of fascinating notions. Stapledon puts on one page thoughts and inventions enough to sustain an ordinary novel, then drops the notion behind that particular exposition and moves on to another.

It's a difficult book to read. Stapledon's style is heavy at best; the book, as I have suggested, is devoid of characters, dialogue, action on the individual level. Stapledon pursues philosophical notions at great length and with a kind of doggedness that carries each through its full logical permutations without relenting.

I think the way to read this one is a few pages at a time, alternating Stapledon with easier writers; fortunately Stapledon organizes his material into relatively short and fairly discrete units, facilitating that method of reading. "Last And First Men" is difficult but rewarding reading.

GROUND ZERO MAN by Bob Shaw, Avon V2414, 1971, 160pp., 75¢

The last time I reviewed a book by Bob Shaw I mentioned that he treated repeatedly the theme of disintegrating marriages, and mentioned consequently that one might speculate on the reason for his doing so. Those words of mine provoked a strong response from Shaw which, aside from its purely personal aspects, was mainly a statement that he did not write about disintegrating marriages.

Okay.

I opened "Ground Zero Man" and found -- on its very first page, mind you! -- the following:

"The only parallel to this mood in my experience is that of a man whose marriage is failing (of such things I speak with some authority) but who lacks the nerve or energy for adultery. He eyes another woman squarely, with all the boldness he can muster, and inwardly he begs her to take the first step -- for, in spite of his yearnings, he cannot."

Yes, "Ground Zero Man" is another novel about a disintegrating marriage, and for all that anyone may say the contrary (including its author), no matter how you slice it...

Shaw expresses concern that I imply that his marriage is in other than robust condition; I wish to state here publicly that I have never met either him or Mrs. Shaw and know nothing whatever of the condition of their marriage, nor if I did would that be necessarily vital to any point I make.

The point I am concerned with is this: when a theme recurs in an author's work, that is of interest to a reader or critic. And Shaw has written of disintegrating marriages in book after book after book, including most recently "Ground Zero Man" and "Other Days, Other Eyes." Why Bob Shaw keeps writing of disintegrating marriages, I do not know. Why he denies that he writes of disintegrating marriages I do not know either.

The one portrayed in "Ground Zero Man" is typical of the sort: husband is a hard-working business-man-engineer, in love with his wife after several years of marriage but also a little tired of her. The wife is essentially useless although ornamental, keenly aware that her father's money got her husband off to a good start, aware of her own uselessness, as a result insecure, and insanely jealous of her husband, whose fidelity she suspects or denies outright.

The wife's bitchiness makes the husband's life worse and worse; as his marital difficulties build to a crisis, so does some aspect of his work...and so on to a suitable denouement.

In "Ground Zero Man" the hero believes that he has thought of a machine that can force universal nuclear disarmament by forcing all near-critical masses of fissionable materials to blow up. When Shaw introduced this idea, my immediate response was a kind of giggling doubt. "Nuclear weapons don't have one sub-critical mass in them, to which a second is added; they have several, each well below critical, that are combined to exceed critical. Therefore this imaginary invention..."

Oh Jesus, I wish I could just praise this book; it *does* have its strengths. I mean, why do I keep reading Shaw's books? I do it because: [a] His characters live and breath. [b] His style is pleasant. [c] There are touches of vivid reality in them that jump right up and make moments come right to life. [d] His pacing is amazing; I think it's the best of any writer active in this field.

But the *logic*...most of his books have logical holes in them of absolutely staggering dimensions. In a really bad writer it would hardly matter, but in as good a writer as Bob Shaw, it's really upsetting. Yet he's so good, in those areas where he is good, that every one of his books is worth reading. And I expect that one of these days he'll think one through properly before he writes it, and then we'll really be in for a treat. In fact, maybe he already has. Maybe it's "Other Days, Other Eyes" I'll find out next month.

PEREGRINE: PRIMUS by Avram Davidson, Walker, 1971, 174pp., \$5.95, ISBN 0-8027-5546-1

After reading "Peregrine: Primus" I can almost forgive Walker for publishing "Ultimate World." This is the talented Avram Davidson at his humorous best, a marvelous "historical fantasy" (and I hope we will not get hung up on that term again), a romp through the petty kingdoms of Europe in the days after the fall of Rome, when every local bully was calling himself Caesar and when disputes over early Christian dogma were provoking one little war after another, every time one local theologist called another a heretic, which was apparently an everyday event.

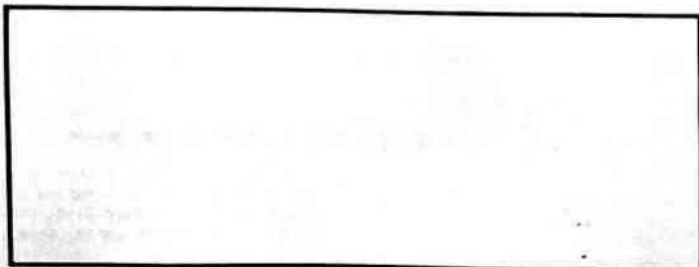
Peregrine is himself a bastard son of Paledrine, Sovereign of Sapodilla, "the last pagan king (dom) in lower Europe." Having come of age he is exiled from his daddy's realm, as was the custom, lest he enter a claim on the throne and make problems for the king's legitimate heir.

So off sets Peregrine with the usual variegated bunch of traveling companions: a potty old sorcerer who, it turns out, can sometimes actually work real magic; a slack-jawed and feeble-minded lackey who turns out later to be anything but feeble-minded; and so on. The book is quite on the picaresque side, but Avram, being the craftsman he is, ties his loose ends together before the story closes. Along the way Peregrine and his pals undergo hilarious encounters with assorted cheapskate petty Caesars, whores, the last three Vestal Virgins in the world, a ragtag excuse for a Mongol horde, and assorted churchmen. Nobody escapes without a crack on the noggin, be they bureaucrat, military man, godmonger or lady, and Avram makes good use of the satiric device of putting modern phrases in the mouths of our ancestors to show just how little things have changed.

The humor may be just a little too broad for me in places. I usually prefer the foil to the broadsword, but that's pretty much a matter of personal preference. The book is very funny, fastmoving and enjoyable.

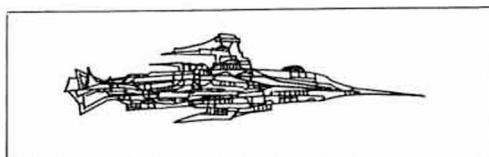
I do *not* understand why Avram closed the utter romp of "Peregrine: Primus" on the serious note that he did. It is not ineffective; it does seem incongruous. Perhaps on the letter page of the next issue of this magazine he will illumine us.

-- Dick Lupoff



A NOTE FOR TOLKIEN ADDICTS: "A Guide To Middle Earth," compiled by Robert Foster, and published by Jack Chalker's continually improving Mirage Press (\$3.75 paper, \$6.00 hard-cover) is an excellent buy. Although I'd read the LoTR books in 1966, it was only on re-reading last year that the fever got me. This excellent compilation provides background for every historical remark, place, name and event listed in the Middle Earth books. The only thing lacking from the massive outpouring of literature about the Tolkein universe is a set of maps of past kingdoms, drowned lands, and earlier Ages; if someone would do them, I would be happy to publish them, as a worthwhile addition to the illumination of Tolkein's works.

-- Andrew Porter



BJ

[Continued from Page 3]

Once upon a time, a Great Call went out on the airwaves and through the postal systems of the world. Congress was called among the science fiction writers of this planet. That congress was convened in Rio de Janiero, a great city-state in the empire of Brazil. It was held under the auspices of the Instituto Nacional do Cinema, and presided over by the all-wise and all-knowing Jose Sanz, in reality a dying immortal in a clever plastic disguise.

The speeches from this wonderful Symposium were gathered together and published on sheets of specially treated vegetable matter (in a book). Alas, as there was little commerce between the Brazilian Empire and the other enlightened nations of the world, especially those under the direction of the Queen in Londinium, this book, although written in both Brazilian and English, saw little circulation in the wider circles of science fiction.

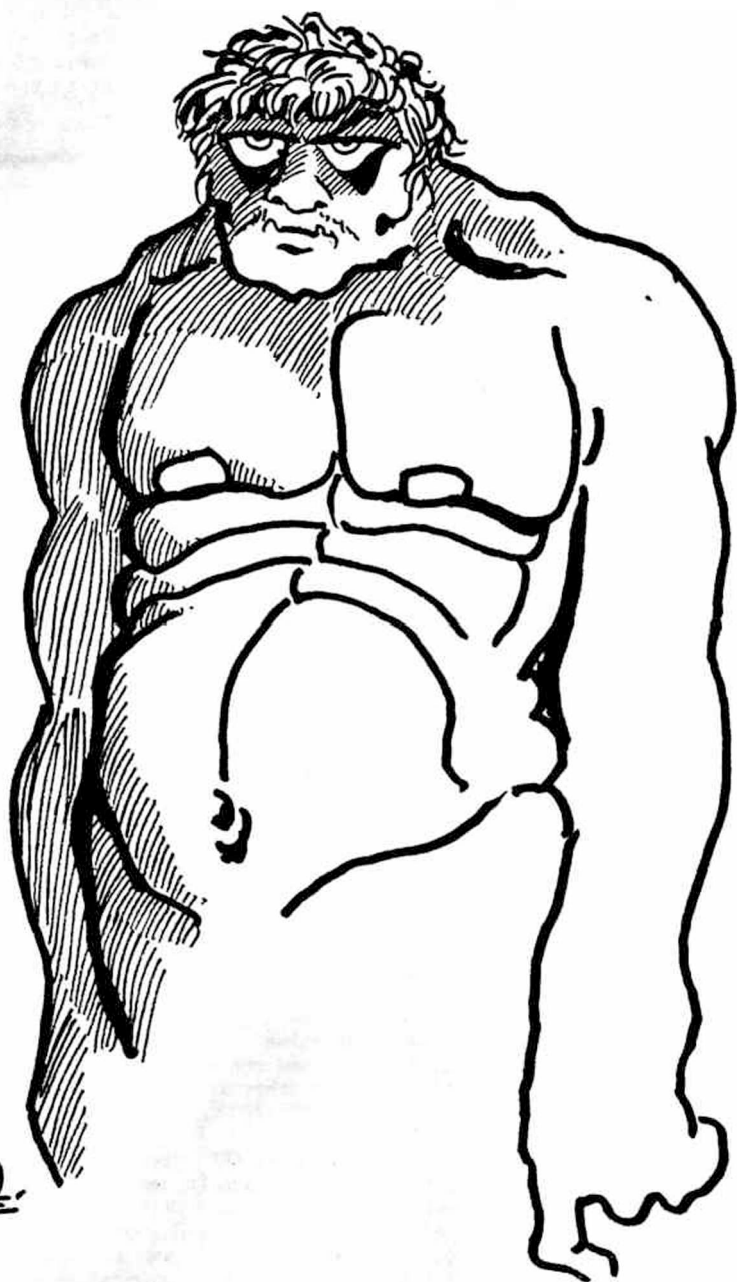
This situation has now been remedied. Through the kind services of the Great and Benevolent Jose Sanz, these speeches will come to be published in ALGOL for all the world to read. Indeed, two of the articles in this very issue -- those of Alfred Bester, the Star-Destined and reigning Lord of Rolly, and Jacques Sadoul, Duke designate of the City of Parys -- are reproduced, by a clever and complicated retranslation method, from this hitherto overlooked volume. And there are lots more excellent articles where these two came from: you'll be seeing them in future issues.

* * *

By the time this issue sees the light at the other end of the mailbox, the DUFF race will have been decided. DUFF, or Down Under Fan Fund, is, in the great tradition of TAFF, a fine and noble fan project designed to send an American fan to attend the SynCon, to be held this August in Sydney, Australia. In the fine tradition of fandom, it also kindly provides for return airfare to send the American visitor back to America, to write up their adventures and provide another link in the worldwide science fiction conspiracy.

But although the DUFF race itself will be over, DUFF needs your continued support. This year's winner will still need funds to enable them to see as wide a range of Australian fans and territory as possible; future DUFF races will bring Australian fans to North American conventions. As some of you may know, I am one of the two DUFF nominees this year; the other is the delightful (and much prettier than I) Lesleigh Luttrell, co-editor of the Very Good STARLING. If I have won, I'll of course be doing some sort of report; either in ALGOL or separately. But whoever has won, continue to support DUFF; I hope it's around for a long time to come.

[Continued On Page 43]





SCIENCE FICTION IN FRANCE

Jacques Sadoul

Before the beginning of the 1950's there were some SF books published in France which are now out of print. Some Robert Heinlein books for young people were published, and also "City" by Clifford Simak. All are out of print now. Also, Jack Williamson's "The Humanoids" had the same fate as "City".

At the beginning of 1950, the first collection started: *Le Rayon Fantastique* (The Fantastic Ray). It started with two or three books which did not have great success. The "The Star Kings" by Edmond Hamilton appeared; it was the beginning of the new science fiction interest in France. Of course, the old interest was the one of Jules Verne -- the last century that has been so completely forgotten. And H.G.Wells, in France, never had the audience he had in Anglo-Saxon countries. In this *Rayon Fantastique* collection, some distinguished stories appeared. For example: "Childhood's End," by Clarke; "Slan," by Van Vogt; and other books. But none of them attracted sufficiently the public to create a science fiction movement.

Other collections began: Ray Bradbury, and some Lovecraft books. These books only raised the interest of the public. As the French critics of literature said, "These are very good books because they are not science fiction." And so, Bradbury and Lovecraft were taken apart from the SF field, and the SF didn't start. It started only when "The World of Null-A" by A.E. Van Vogt appeared in France. This book was translated by a very brilliant French writer, Boris Vian. He read the novel of Van Vogt in America and he was so enthusiastic, he asked to translate it himself in France. His translation was extremely good. It has a very brilliant style and it was a really marvelous piece of literature. The translation was perfectly accurate and this book had a tremendous effect on the French public. Some months after the appearance of "Null-A" everybody in France spoke of Korzybsky and nobody had read it.

After that, two magazines tried to start: a French edition of "Galaxy" and one of "The Magazine Of Fantasy & Science Fiction." The third edition of "Galaxy" failed after a few years because it had no editor. It was then made by a secretary who would take the American edition and translate it; she mixed the translations and when they were too long for the page of the magazine, they were cut -- even if it was the end of the story which disappeared. So, this magazine failed and disappeared for a few years but was started again by the editors of "Fiction." "Fiction" was a French version of "The Magazine of Fantasy & Science Fiction." This magazine tried to offer a chance to young French writers, and it developed some really interesting talents. In fact, they were distinguished stories which had no great interest in the ideas, but mainly in the style. Those stories were written by fans because in France if you professionalize SF you starve to death.

I will give you some prices: a page in France is paid for about \$US 5.00; a cover painting is paid for about \$US 50.00. As there are two magazines in France -- one published practically only American stories -- you see that it is absolutely impossible to live from writing SF.

In 1950 the interest in SF increased. It did not have a big public, of course; only about 30,000 people were interested. Then, all this also failed. Why? The two collections -- *Le Rayon Fantastique* and *Présence du Futur* -- were edited by men who hated SF. The one *Présence du Futur* was only fantasy-ford. That is why it published Bradbury and Lovecraft, and also the Belgian Jean Ray. But, after having published those works he had to publish real SF and he didn't want to do it. So, he published Polish, Italian and Russian books which were not science fiction. They were a kind of literature a little strange, of course, which deceived the public.

The other publisher, the one of Le Royon Fantastique, I don't know why he ceased to publish real SF after 50 books. He published "Foundation" by Asimov, but never accepted the sequels to publish. It is absolutely foolish. I asked him why, and he said, "Well, the first sale went on pretty well. It is a change, so I prefer not to do the sequels." Therefore, the fans were absolutely deceived also, and ceased to read that collection. After 60 more books he tried to return to the origins and published two more books by Van Vogt but it was too late. He also tried to publish the sequels to "The Star Kings" but it didn't work. So, by the end of the 1950's SF in book form practically ceased to appear.

I will give you some sales figures: "The World of Null-A" sold 25,000 copies. "Childhood's End" sold 18,000 copies. As for the magazines, they sold at the beginning 18,000 copies and now they are selling less than 12,000 copies.

This very year, a picture of Clarke and Kubrick, "2001: A Space Odyssey" was projected in France. Every French fan said it would be a failure, but it was a great success. And the book which was published out of collection was also a success. So, the publisher of "2001" decided to start a new collection which will begin next October. The man who will direct this collection is a friend of mine and he bought some books by authors like Fritz Lieber, Robert Heinlein, and Frank Herbert which he intends to publish. So, there is hope on this side!

I myself created an SF book club and published a hard-cover edition of the main works in the field such as "Star Kings," "Foundation," "City," and many others. And now I am publishing some new authors books (new authors for France, that is). We plan to publish books by Delany and Disch and even Mr. Harlan Ellison.

So, I hope that in a few years science fiction will rise again in France and find a great audience.

-- Jacques Sadoul

[Editor's Note: I have taken the liberty of retranslating this article into slightly better and clearer English than that in which it originally appeared. In most cases, the word "collection" apparently means "series". Translational inaccuracies must be laid to the door of a double translation of the original speech (by Portuguese-speaking transcriptionists, and again by the editor). Permission to reprint this speech granted by the Instituto Nacional do Cinema, Rio de Janeiro.]



COMING IN ALGOL'S NEXT ISSUE:

ALGOL's next issue, out in November, will feature two long articles: "Experiment Perilous: The Art And Science Of Anguish In Science Fiction," by Marion Zimmer Bradley; and "The Overseas Scene: An Australian Looks At Science Fiction," by George Turner. Plus, of course, regular columns by Ted White, Greg Benford, and Dick Lupoff. There's also a good chance of articles by J. G. Ballard and Frederik Pohl, space permitting. Deadline for letters and contributions: October 1st.



ALGOLAGNIA

It's fairly easy to create an image of someone in your mind. All too often the image is nothing like the reality. To dispel the mist of fancy and let in the clear light of reality ALGOL presents photos of past and present contributors. Counter-clockwise from the left are: Bill Rotsler; Susan & Mike Glicksohn (caught in an untypical pose); Terry & Carol Carr and Ted White; Ross Chamberlain; Derek & Anna Carter, busy contemplating your editor's navel; Alex Panshin; Dick Lupoff at NYCon 3; Mike & Shiela Gilbert (Eddie Jones' hand behind Mike); and Robert Silverberg in MC garb (with Robin White behind).





The other day a well-known SF writer -- one whom Theodore Sturgeon recently lauded in one of his review columns -- called me up to ask if I could take a look at one of his upcoming novels, with an eye to its serialization in *AMAZING* or *FANTASTIC*. There is nothing very unusual about this. It happens periodically. But in the course of our conversation, the author, whom I shall not name because he might (but might not) regard this as a bit personal, said to me, "You know, my car just quit, I've got this heavy mortgage on the house we got last year, and I'm living in poverty. I really need this sale."

Now this author is not one of my immediate circle of friends, but we know each other moderately well, and I felt myself placed in an uncomfortable, if not embarrassing position, because I didn't want to know that he needed the few hundred dollars this sale would produce so badly. I wanted to be able to read the novel and make up my own mind, unclouded by thoughts of what a bastard I'd be if I didn't like it.

As it turned out, I didn't like the novel anyway -- and I felt like a total shit when I called up the author to tell him I wouldn't be buying it.

I tell you this not as an example of the enormous and unfair pressures which are occasionally exerted upon me in my capacity as editor of one third of the magazines in the SF field (two magazines sounds less impressive, doesn't it?) -- which it isn't, really -- but because I think it is symptomatic of the economic situation for SF writers. Because it is pretty sad when a man with at least half a dozen published books, good reviews, and an enviable reputation has to go out on a limb for a few hundred dollars like that. I'm sure the author in question was even more embarrassed than I was.

A year or so ago, Greg Benford wrote a piece (which he published in these pages) about how if he wanted to make money from SF, he certainly wouldn't write SF. He had a point.

The majority of my friends who are also SF writers live on marginal incomes which in some states would qualify them for welfare and in most states for food stamps. I'm not going to name any names, but you can guess them if you try -- and the odds are you'd be right on two out of every three. I've

been thinking a lot about this lately, because I'm in the same boat. For three months in the winter of 1970-71, I was getting food stamps, and I still qualify for them, but simply refuse to go through the humiliating routines which are required every three months ("Why don't you give up this silly space-writing stuff, Mr. White, and get a real job?" "Have you considered employment in the construction trades, Mr. White? There's quite a demand for unskilled labor." Etc.).

I'm going to lay my cards on the table, as the saying goes. I'm going to tell you what the editor of one third of all the SF magazines in the field is paid for his task.

I get \$150.00 a month.

In addition, I get about \$12.00 a month (average) for expenses and \$26.00 a month for doing the cover designs and type and mechanicals. That's less than two thousand dollars a year.

I shouldn't complain, though. An editor of an SF pulp in the forties is reputed to have gotten \$15.00 a week. When he discovered his secretary was also getting \$15.00 a week, he fired her and did her work himself, effectively doubling his salary.

I wish I had a secretary.

In the last ten years, the cover price of most SF magazines has risen about 100% -- from 35¢ a copy to either 60¢ (my magazines and ANALOG) or 75¢ (the rest). Also during that time the number of pages has either decreased or remained the same -- and not one SF magazine today offers the total wordage in fiction of a 25¢ pulp of 1950. But with rare exceptions the magazines are paying no more for stories now than they were ten -- or even twenty -- years ago. The average (excluding ANALOG) is 2¢ a word. In that same period, sales of all SF magazines except ANALOG have been cut in half -- from an average of 60,000 copies to 30,000. This has been due to pressure from both national and local distributors, most of whom regard SF magazines as a waste of time.

It would be easy to conclude that the SF author should take his business elsewhere, but although the market for original anthologies is opening up, they pay only an average of 3¢ a word, and books (novels) pay no better. (The average paperback original novel goes for \$1500.00. At 60,000 words, that's 2 1/2¢ a word.) Besides which, the original anthology market is deceptive. The number of editors presently involved in producing such anthologies are, if anything, more capricious and more biased than the remaining magazine editors. For the average SF writer, the anthologies are an elusive market.

So let's look at the writer's potential earning capacities: Let's say our writer writes an average of 3,000 words a day -- *when he is writing*. This is not typical of every writer, but most writers I've talked to regard 3,000 words a good daily average, and most of them, for one reason or another, don't have the opportunity to write every day. So 3,000 words a day, on a 5-day basis, represents an ideal situation which only a few legendary writers (like the Silverberg of old) exceed. 3,000 words at 2¢ a word is \$60.00. And that seems like a pretty good daily income. Multiply by 5, and you have \$300.00 a week or \$15,600 a year. Not bad, you say.

A lot of writers have sat down and worked out these figures and agreed with you. Not bad -- not bad at all. Nothing like Real Riches, but a comfortable annual income even today.

Don't you believe it.

To begin with, unless you are one of the few to-be-envied souls, you can't sell that much. In terms of short stories, that productivity is the equivalent of a 15,000 word novelette each week. Or 52 novelettes a year. I doubt very much that all six SF magazines put together publish 52 novelettes a year. In terms of short stories, your annual production would be 156 5,000-word stories. Have you ever heard of an SF writer that prolific? Where could he possibly publish so many stories? But you don't intend to write just short stories or novelettes, you say. You have in mind several books a year.

At 3,000 words a day, you can write a book in one month. That's 12 books a year. Well, you might be able to sell them -- for a while -- but pretty soon your books will be a glut on the market. Sort of like finding a new Dean Koontz book on the racks every time you turn around...

So okay, 3,000 words a day is unrealistic. You might be able to do it, but your quality would suffer and your market would be unlikely to absorb it. Set yourself a more realistic goal. Say, three books a year and as many shorter stories as possible.

Three books a year, at least until you've proven yourself to your publisher(s) and can command \$2,000 a book or more, means \$4,500. Throw in another 10 shorts and 5 novelettes -- a lot of stories, if you stop and look at what most SF writers actually produce annually -- and you've picked

up \$2,500 more. Congratulations: you're now earning all of \$7,000 a year. And your name is on the cover of every magazine in the field almost every issue.

Discouraged? Don't be. In fact, if you write three books, ten short stories (averaging 5,000 words each) and five novelettes (at something like 15,000 words each) a year, you will be one of the most prolific writers in the field, at 355,000 words annually -- over a third of a million words a year.

For around seven thousand dollars.

Assuming, of course, that everything sells. Don't make this assumption. *That's* the one that does you in each and every time. Oh, everything may sell, *eventually*. But not right away. Not tomorrow. Not to the first editor to whom you send it.

Okay, now suppose you're married and have two kids. Lots of people are married and have two kids. A good many have even more kids. Do you know how far seven thousand dollars a year will go in supporting such a family? Right: you have just officially qualified as a poverty-income family. In some states this opens the door to you for Medicare, food stamps and even limited welfare. (But only in some states. In others your wife will have to desert you first.) Well, I hope your wife has an income, and you don't have to spend too much of your working day looking after the kids...

Have I made my point? There is money in SF. Robert Heinlein lives more than comfortably on his royalties from over 20 books. But it took him 30 years to get there. Other SF writers -- Clarke, Asimov -- have established reputations for themselves which command much fatter fees and royalties. And a good many, like Silverberg, have put in their writing time (more than 3,000 words a day -- much more) in other areas, publishing, say, over 40 books on archeology, etc., in order to earn a handsome income. But you can't assume you'll have the same good fortune -- nor the same talent. And you can't find it in SF unless you're a major talent and quickly become a major-name writer. And, funny thing about those major-name writers: most of them average a much smaller annual output than I've outlined above.

Periodically I brood about this. Once in a while I attend a function of some sort and meet the latest of Doubleday's Assistant Editors, who are invariably young, ignorant of SF (SF is the bottom rung of the editorial ladder at Doubleday), conceited, and making three times as much money as I do from my writing and editing combined -- and I begin to brood again. Why do these parasites, I ask myself, these uncreative and essentially useless people make so much more money from SF than I do? What is their qualification? Have they read and thought and eaten and breathed and slept with SF as I have, for twenty-five years? Do they even care that much about SF? The answer is always No. And yet my labors (or the labors of those like me -- the people who write books for companies like Doubleday) support these parasites in a manner to which I only wish I was accustomed. And how is that, you ask?

The writer of a book is paid a royalty on the sales of his book. In most cases (but not always!) a portion of these royalties is advanced to him. The portion runs, as I said, in the \$1500 range. It is assumed that sales will "earn out" at least this much. It is surprising how often sales never exceed the point at which the advance is "earned out". Sometimes the book is withdrawn from sale by the publisher and pulped at this point. (Doubleday SF books rarely go past their first printings, and that first printing can be as low as 3,000 copies. This is because Doubleday is not interested in selling more than one printing; even DANGEROUS VISIONS was dropped from print within a year of the time it was published.)

And the author's royalty is usually a very low percentage of the book's cover price. In the paperback field, the average is 4% -- of a price like 75¢. In hardcovers it may be as much as 10%, depending on who you're dealing with and how good an agent you have. (Most agents aren't very good.) (But they do manage to skim 10% of your earnings right off the top. That means if you have an agent you won't make \$7000 a year -- you'll make \$6300, from the same amount of work.) It is on the other 90% to 96% of the book's earnings that a vast network of people will sponge. They include your publisher and his many employees (all of whom are better paid for doing less work than you), his printer (printers make even more than editors -- and many can neither read nor write English), the distributor and the wholesaler and the retailer (for paperbacks) or the jobber (for hardcovers).

Publishers get rich. You won't. Yet, without you and many like you, the publisher is in the position of a shoemaker without any leather. The publisher exists solely to put your work into print and realize more money from it (in terms of salaries, in terms of profits) than you will.

Ask me sometime why this situation must continue to exist, and what the SFWA could do about it, if anyone in that organization had any imagination at all. Ask. I'll tell you.

-- Ted White



1. Plinckough 69

CHARLES BROCKDEN BROWN:

The broken-hearted look

RICHARD WILSON

If on an American literature examination you were asked to name America's first science-fantasy writer and you replied Edgar Allan Poe you'd probably be scored wrong. The correct answer is Charles Brockden Brown, who published his first pseudo-scientific novel in 1798, eleven years before Poe was born. The book, "Wieland: or The Transformation," had the distinction of being virtually the first native novel published in the United States. Its author, a former law student, was the first in the new world with the courage and perseverance to choose writing as a full-time profession. Not many years ago a responsible critic described him as the father of American literature.

Other critics, looking at him more realistically as the hack writer he had to be to earn a living, recognize his limitations but credit him with having created, in a stumbling way, the first American psychological novel. Power and effectiveness can still be found in Brown's pioneer style, but today's reader has to sort it out from the confusion and claptrap.

Brown studied for the bar for years, but then turned his back on a law career and never returned to it. He wrote poetry first with some success. In his student days he kept journals describing systems of Utopias; these apparently were the basis for his first complete manuscript, "Sky-Walk." However, no one knows that for certain: the manuscript was destroyed with the other effects of a publisher who died of yellow fever. It was the only copy.

But this failed to discourage the beginning writer, still in his mid-twenties. It became a pattern with Brown that when he had finished one novel he hurried on to another, seldom rereading what he had written. "Wieland" was completed six months after the loss of "Sky-Walk."

An early influence on Brown was William Godwin, the English master of the Gothic novel whose daughter, Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley, later wrote "Frankenstein." Brown denied the influence, claiming that his horror stories aimed at "the illustration of some more important branches of the moral constitution of Man." But authors of Gothic novels are forever claiming morals for their works that have to be dragged in bodily. "Wieland," it is true, does not depend for its existence on the usual European props of haunted castles, dungeons, trapdoors and sliding panels. Brown's scene was Pennsylvania, where he was born in 1771. He made use of three horror-inspiring elements: spontaneous combustion of the human body, possession and "biloquium."

He threaded somnambulism and other pseudo-scientific themes through his later novels, which included "Arthur Mervyn," "Edgar Huntley," and "Ormond." Brown became highly regarded in Europe, and enjoyed the reputation of being America's most distinguished novelist until James Fenimore Cooper eclipsed him.

But today few people read Brown other than students of American literature, who seek out his few volumes high in the stacks or buy them in the specialized quality paperbacks found mainly on the shelves of college bookstores. Brown himself once said frankly that his novels were not worth reading and when his sales fell off toward the end he turned from fiction writing to editing and pamphleteering.

"Wieland" starts with a bang. An old mystic disobeys a heavenly command and, in punishment, feels his brain being scorched to cinders. There is an explosion. He drags himself to a temple he has built on his farm on the bank of the Schuylkill River. His family finds him and brings him home, his clothing in ashes and his body horribly burned. In Brown's purple prose, he dies after "insupportable exhalations and crawling putrefaction had driven from his chamber and the house everyone whom their duty did not detain." The author thus describes self-combustion, a phenomenon considered mysterious but by no means uncommon toward the end of the 18th century.

The narrative now shifts to the mystic's grown children, Theodore and Clara Wieland, and the brooding stranger Carwin, whose spectre from then on dominates the action. Theodore is the Wieland of the title, a grave man with "a sort of thrilling melancholy." He believes his father's mysterious death was the result of a "supernatural decree" and he too becomes a religious fanatic with the temple as his headquarters.

There is major and minor skullduggery and the finger of suspicion points always at the stranger, Carwin. Frances Carwin, lank and pallid, is the picture of villainy. He has sunken eyes, coarse straggling hair that falls over his forehead, big irregular teeth and a chin "discoloured by a tetter." His skin is coarse and sallow. "Every feature was wide of beauty," Clara says in one of her classic understatement, "and the outline of his face reminded you of an inverted cone."

But Carwin has a remarkable voice which imparts to her "an emotion altogether involuntary and incontrollable." Both attracted and repelled, the good Clara feels "the first inroads of passion incident to every female heart," even though she is engaged to Pleyal, a friend of the family.

Carwin's voice is his only asset. He is a bilquist, it is explained. Today we know this gift as simple ventriloquism, but in those days it was a wondrous thing -- definitely science fictional and much more mysterious than self-combustion. As late as 1815 Brown's chief biographer, William Dunlap, called bilquist a "mysterious and wonderful phenomenon, the existence of which is not so well attested to" as self-combustion.

Unfortunately, Carwin is never satisfactorily explained in "Wieland." Elsewhere, however, Brown tells how Carwin discovered his powers of bilquist, early in life. As a youth, Carwin met Ludloe, a member of an international conspiracy that planned a Utopian state. Carwin went to Europe as an apprentice and was admitted to the secret group after having confessed to Ludloe "as to the past, the present, and the future, without exception or condition." (Brown does not explain how one could confess to the future.) But Carwin withheld mention of his bilquist; Ludloe discovered the omission and, in accordance with the rules of the secret order, decreed that Carwin must die. Carwin fled back to America, a hunted man. Thus Carwin's gloomy, mysterious skulking around the Wieland home.

Wieland now hears the mysterious voices that led to the lamentable combustion of his father. Carwin professes interest, disagreeing with Wieland's claim that the voices are supernatural in origin. Here the author plants the suspicion that it is Carwin who has been throwing his voice.

Carwin since his arrival has been plotting against the honor of the "young, beautiful and independent" Clara. He hides in her closet and confronts her one night when she is alone in her bedroom "with her habit suiting the hour, and the place, and the warmth of the season." She stands "upon the brink of ruin" but some power protects her from Carwin's intentions. Foiled, he leaves her with her honor intact and tries another scheme. Hiding himself near Clara's fiance, Pleyal, the ventriloquist fakes a conversation which convinces Pleyal that Clara is "the most profligate of women."

Gradually the novel builds to a climax. Wieland's wife is killed. So are his five children. Clara is sure Carwin is the killer. But no; it is Wieland. Carwin's only crime has been to lust after Clara, and in frustration seduce her maid. He has used his ventriloquism for these pastimes but not to order the murders; the voices Wieland heard were the result of a religious "phrenzy" he inherited from his mad father, a heavenly command to kill his family as proof of his faith. He would have killed Clara too, except for Carwin's intervention. The reasons slowly emerge from the welter of Brown's prose. After the climax the explanations, some pertinent, some moralistic, are drawn out to the point of exasperation. But in the end Clara marries Pleyal and Carwin skulks off to write his "Memoirs of Carwin, the Bilquist," a volume Brown never finished.

Accounts of the life of Charles Brockden Brown are more interesting today than the books he was forced to write at a headlong pace to earn enough money to support himself. Many of his novels appeared first as serials in magazines which evidently were not scrupulous about payment, and Brown needed a weapon against the system. So he sold his stories a piece at a time. No one could tell how his magazine serials were going to turn out because he didn't know himself. He relied on inspiration to provide turning points and climaxes in his plots and often stalled for pages, when the action was crying

to be carried on, by inquiring tediously into the minds of his characters.

John Neal, a critic who wrote in Blackwood's Magazine in 1824, defended Brown's literary procrastination in a colorful description of editorial practices of the day: "There was no stealing his bait. If you nibbled, you were in, for the whole, like a woman in love -- hook, trap and all. Money-lenders; gamblers; and subscribers to a story -- which is 'to be continued,' nobody knows how long, are all in the same pickle. They must lend more; play higher; and shell out again -- or all that has been done, goes for nothing. You must have the last part of a story -- or the first, is of no use to you...our author knew this. He never let go of more than one end of a story, at a time..."

"So with 'Wieland:' in every case, you leave off, in a tease -- a sort of uncomfortable, fidgeting, angry perplexity -- ashamed of the concern, that you have shown -- and quite in a huff with him -- very much as if you had been running yourself to death -- in a hot wind -- after a catastrophe -- with the tail soaped."

The few contemporary accounts of Brown which survive today suggest that he might have looked into mirrors to find descriptions of his villains. "Brown's personal appearance was remarkable," John Neal wrote. "He was a tall man -- with a powerful frame -- and little or no flesh...His pale, sallow, strange complexion; straight black hair...the melancholy, broken-hearted look of his eyes; his altogether extraordinary face..." Mystic, Utopian, bookish, introspective and solitary, negligent of his appearance to the point of slovenliness, he might almost have been Carwin. "His principal character is always the same," said Neal, "always Carwin."

Thus this word portrait by Neal -- quoting Thomas Sully, an artist of the period -- might be one of Carwin the bilquist, at work on his unfinished memoirs: "I saw him...a little time before his death. He was in a deep decline. It was the month of November -- our Indian summer -- when the air is full of smoke. Passing a window, one day, I was caught by the sight of a man -- with a remarkable physiognomy -- writing, at a table, in a dark room. The sun shone directly upon his head. I shall never forget it. The dead leaves were falling, then -- it was Charles Brockden Brown."

Brown died in 1810 at the age of thirty-nine. Edgar Allan Poe, destined for heights that Brown never achieved, was then one year old.

-- Richard Wilson



TRAVELING GIANT



Robert Silverberg

We took our winter vacation this year in Surinam and Guyana. Most people who heard us say that immediately asked us Why Go There? and I suppose most of you will do the same. All right, why?

Surinam is the country once known as Dutch Guiana. It's still Dutch, but now prefers its native name. Guyana was British Guiana before independence, and watch the spelling: calling Guyana "Guiana" to a Guyanese is apparently something close to calling a Black or an Afro-American a nigger. Anyway, these two countries are on the upper right shoulder of South America, between Venezuela and Brazil. The air fare from New York is only a few dollars more than to such Caribbean islands as Jamaica and Trinidad. We have already been to most of the West Indian isles; we were curious about the mainland. Surinam and Guyana are both tropical; they have huge unexplored jungles full of sloths and anteaters and like that; they have dark and beckoning rivers. Few tourists go there, so we would be spared the vulgarities of a tourist-oriented place like Puerto Rico or St. Thomas. The cultural angles seemed agreeably complex: Guyana's population is 55% East Indian, and Surinam has a hefty Indonesian minority, so we could contemplate the pleasant culinary possibilities of curries and rijsttaffels at the local eateries. (We are both spice-freaks.) Both countries have native American Indian villages & other anthropological goodies. So, after discussing the project for five or six years, we decided abruptly last fall that the time had come.

We left New York on Saturday, Feb 27, early AM. The flight was an endless thing, delayed by fog at the outset, then a multitude of stops. We landed first at Trinidad. (Got out, bought a bottle of rum for \$1.25 at the airport free shop, returned to plane. Drank rum happily the next five days.) Next stop was Georgetown Airport, Guyana. It was late afternoon our time, but the eastern coast of South America is in a different time zone (several of them, in fact, 15 minutes to half an hour apart) and night was falling. Our first glimpse of South America: absolute blackness below. No towns, no villages. A spooky unpopulated wilderness. We killed a lot of time at Georgetown before the plane took off again and deposited us, 45 minutes later realtime, in Surinam. An endless taxi ride took us from the airport to the capital, Paramaribo. It seemed as if a narrow strip of civilization lining the highway was all that separated us from that black, mysterious jungle beyond. (When we saw the highway again by daylight, we found that nothing more mysterious than cultivated fields lay beyond the houses.)

We liked Paramaribo instantly. Marvelous Chinese-lantern houses, gay and brilliantly lit and fashioned from exotic timber. Alien cultures all over the place -- Javanese, Hindus, Moslem Indians, Chinese, whatnot, each with its own set of restaurants, temples, customs, etc. Driving into town we spied a restaurant labeled VIETNAM CAFE, and, since our one experience with Vietnamese food was favorable, long ago, we resolved to hunt for it after we were settled. Reached the hotel, way at one end of town on the waterfront: plush, attractive, almost empty. Surinam is off the usual tourist beat, especially during recessions. It was now 9:30 local time and God knows what New York time, but

we were so turned on by all that we had seen so far that we decided to go exploring. It was a mild 80°-ish night, very tempting to some winter-weary northerners. We took a long walk along the waterfront street, figuring we couldn't possibly get lost so long as we stuck to it. (All kinds of tempting inland streets diverged, but we didn't have a map.) Peered in windows of closed shops. Looked at restaurants. Nobody on the streets; we wandered alone through this unknown land and, oddly, felt unendangered. About 11PM we came upon an Indonesian restaurant recommended by one of the travel writers. Still open; we went in. Clean, air-conditioned. We had had dinner, more or less, on the plane, but we couldn't resist. Ate again. Nasi goreng, bami goreng, other spicy goodies, local beer. Five bucks. Back to hotel by midnight. Shower, bed. Tired. Pleased.

We had made one lucky strike on our way in. The moment we got off the plane, a plump, well-dressed brown-skinned man approached us, handed us a card identifying him as Eugene Balgin, Licensed Tourist Guide ("Call me Boggel"), and asked if we were interested in taking any tours of Surinam. Well, we were, but we'd been exposed to this airport-hustler routine in fifty lands, and so we were cautious and noncommittal with Boggel. "I'll take your card," I said, "and we'll see about tours later." He replied in a pleasant low-pressure way; meanwhile he murmured a word to a minion and we found ourselves being whisked through customs & immigration in about six seconds. He put us on a cab, told us not to bother paying the driver ("We'll settle up later") and said he'd see us in the morning.

Morning came -- Sunday -- and we were, of course, up at dawn, our time-sense all scrambled. Wandered the hotel grounds, visited the caged sloths and monkeys near the swimming pool, had breakfast, and checked at the desk about tours. The hotel had its own tour guide. We asked about Boggel and got only a cryptic grin. Well, maybe our first instinct was right: let's not get mixed up with an airport hustler. We decided to take a walking tour of the town by ourselves, to see the things we had peered at in the dark the night before. But before we could leave, Boggel arrived, looking very hung over. Let's discuss your jungle tour, he said. We sat down in a corner of the lobby and he started listing things. Turned out Boggel was a former guide for one of the big local agencies, now free-lancing; he offered us the standard tour minus the agency overhead. We also quickly found that he was articulate, intelligent, amusing, and honest. A friend, no less. Our apprehensions vanished and we hired him to take us on a four-day river tour of the jungle, starting Tuesday. He went off to buy groceries and hire a boat. We didn't know it then, but we had dealt ourselves an ace.

We spent Sunday exploring Paramaribo, which was shut down tight. A taxidriver friend of Boggel's drove us, free, to the Botanic Gardens, very lush, very exotic. Then it rained. We walked back downtown in the rain and bought ourselves lunch at a stand run by two ancient Indonesian vendors, mama and papa -- string beans in hot peanut sauce and fried noodles. Delicious. We stood there eating with our hands. Natives are awed. Crazy white people gobbling native foods, full of microorganisms. We had a second helping, walked away happy. More rain. We inspected the cathedral (closed), the marketplace (closed), the shops (closed), and walked way out on the waterfront street, looking for the Vietnam Cafe, as a dinner possibility. Didn't find it. (Actually we walked right past it, kept going another mile, and didn't realize we had missed it. On two subsequent endless walks we did the same thing, before suddenly spying it. Wasn't Vietnamese, either -- just a local hash joint.) We had dinner that night at the Midnight Hotel in downtown, and it was a strange event. No menu; we told them we wanted Indian food, went to our hotel to wash up, came back two hours later, and were conducted to a private dining room, where a waiter brought us a succession of curries and stuff, with much bowing and smiling. Turned out the hotel was new and the restaurant wasn't due to open for another two weeks; they had simply improvised a dinner for us, rather than turn us away. It cost us, though: \$23 for two, local money, \$12 US, pretty high for Surinam.

Monday the town at last opened and we did it in utmost detail -- the market, the bank, the supermarket, the Indonesian restaurants. We ate, shopped, got sunburned, found a Dutch edition of a Larry Niven book in a bookstore, generally had a ball. Paramaribo has about 150,000 people and you can find all of them in any one street at any one time. Friendly, smiling. Dutch is the official language; there's a native patois called takki-takki ("talkie-talkie"), a kind of pidgin Indo-European mixture; but most everyone speaks some English, too. A happy day, although we were quite glad to get out of town the following morning. Boggel picked us up at daybreak, and soon we were on board a ferry, the first of many, heading for the interior. By noon we were at the town of Moengo, an Alcoa project, via taxicab, and an hour later we were at the town of Albina on the mighty Marowijne River to begin our river tour. (Head Note #1: Marowijne is pronounced: "Marihuana." Head Note #2: In the local Dutch-language newspaper I found an ad for "Potplanten," but some study revealed that they were simply selling potted plants. Head Note #3: Nobody offered to turn us on down there, not even Boggel.) Boggel did, though, turn us on to all sorts of native foods. He had spent years catering to middle-aged Americans with food crochets, and we let him know at once that he was on to some live ones now, who wanted to try everything, the spicier the better. So he plied us with alu paratha for breakfast and blood sausage for lunch and chili peppers pulled right off the plant, and within three hours we knew we had found a gem.

We set out a cross the Marowijne, which is a lot wider than the Hudson, for a brief visit to French Guiana. The boat was about 30 feet long, a dugout canoe with an outboard motor. Most of it was filled with supplies and luggage, but there was a cupola in the middle, two benches and a covering, where we could hide from the tropical sun. Boggel had hired two boat boys, natives of the river villages, to do the actual riverwork; he would just serve as guide and interpreter. On the French

side we visited a dismal, dilapidated ex-penal colony, one of the ones where Papillon stayed (St. Laurent), and hastily left. Up the river, now. A mile wide, solid wall of jungle greenery on both sides. Strong current, shallow bottom, frequent rapids calling for plenty of skill from the boatboys. We were heading south, into the interior.

Surinam's big attraction is its bushnegro population. The bushnegros are the descendants of slaves who escaped in the 18th Century, fled into the jungle, and reverted to an African tribal existence. They're extremely black, wear very few clothes, live in wooden huts, speak an Africanesque language, shun all the fripperies of civilization, worship mysterious animistic gods. They're also extremely friendly and accessible. Bushnegro villages of 50 to 500 people are scattered all along the Marowijne, and we stopped at dozens of them. The same routine everywhere: land, scramble ashore, smile a lot, wander in awe through the village examining the wooden carvings, the artifacts, and such, give candy to the children, pay respects to the chief. Boggel interpreted. He was a city Negro, one fourth Chinese, and regards the bushnegros as quaint savages, while they regard him as a decadent townsman. He knows a little of their language but won't speak it, and they speak takki-takki to him. With his help we bought an elaborate carved paddle from a girl for a couple of bucks, and got some photographs.

Bushnegros go completely naked until the age of 8 or 9, and the women remain bare-breasted thereafter. I think a tour like ours would turn Rotsler into a leg man in 3 hours. Bushnegro girls, ages 13-15 or so, have spectacular breasts, big and high and firm, sticking out straight the way they do in paperback jacket paintings but not often in real life: two cones of chocolate-colored rubber. But about age 15 the girls start having babies, and something weird happens to their breasts. They elongate. They turn into pendulous drooperies a foot long or more. (I do not exaggerate.) They become udders. One of the more sinister little apas had a discussion recently as to whether wearing bras-sieres prevented the deshaping of the breasts. Maybe so. Certainly the bushnegro adult women were badly in need of support. But the girls were remarkably constructed.

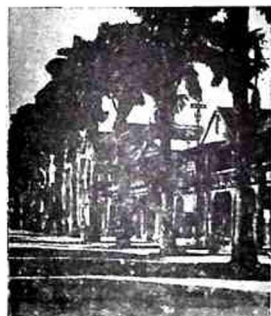
We went upriver all day Tuesday and Wednesday, and starting coming back Thursday morning, having stopped at government-owned rest camps in the jungle each night. Crude but tolerable lodgings. Boggel did the cooking for us. We now discovered that he had spent 4 1/2 years as a cook in the merchant marine in WW II and was a superb chef; he whipped up elegant dinners out of the most unpromising materials and we congratulated ourselves once again on our cleverness in having discovered him.

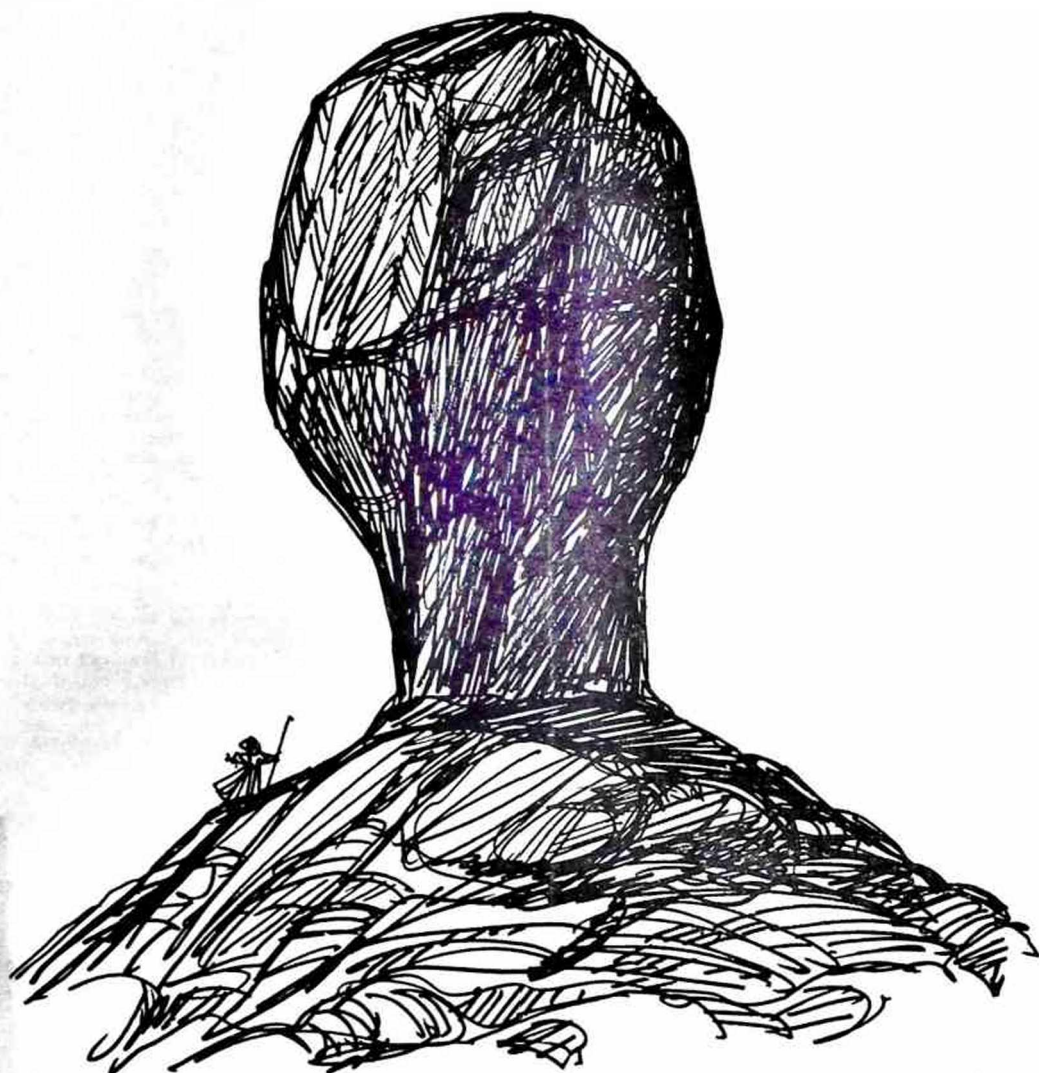
Each night after making camp we'd go for a river swim while Boggel and the boat boys got dinner ready. The river was cool and clean, but we stayed near shore because of the powerful current. On the third night, the boatboys were fishing for dinner about 50 feet from where we'd been swimming, and when we came out we went over to inspect their catch. They'd hauled up 5 mean-looking toothy fish about a foot long, which were lying on the dock, still alive, gnashing their teeth. What are they, I asked. Oh, piranha, the boatboys said. They weren't putting us on. The river we'd been swimming in for 3 days was full of piranha, thick with them, and nobody had bothered to tell us. Apparently they were pretty sure we wouldn't be molested. (They must have been confident; we hadn't paid them yet.) That night we tasted piranha. Delicious. ("You have eaten piranha, the Lord said, and now you shall be eaten by piranha.") Boggel wouldn't have any, saying it was a man-eating fish and he didn't care to be a cannibal at one remove. Or words to that effect.

Eventually we got back to town, after 4 memorable jungle days. Time now to pay Boggel. Wonder of wonders: the amount he asked was exactly what he quoted us at the beginning, no hidden extras, no specials. A gem, a paragon. At the hotel Barbara showed him a copy of "Hawksbill Station" in the newsstand. He had been starting to wonder how this peculiarly informal American earned his living; now he bought the book. I'm going to send him "Up The Line," too. As a professional tourist guide, he may be amused.

-- Robert Silverberg

NEXT ISSUE:
On to Guyana

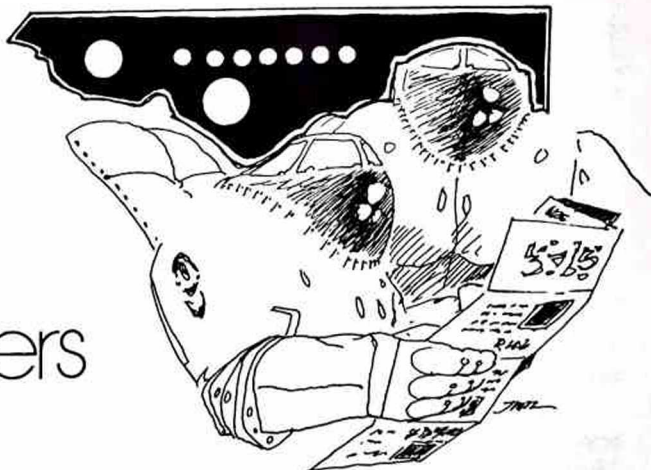




HAMMER OF THE GODS

FOSAR

RANDOM FACTORS~ The Readers



Bob Shaw
6 Cheltenham Park
Belfast BT6 0HR
Northern Ireland

As a general rule, I don't write letters in defence of my stories, partly because I realize that all defence of any given piece of literature ought to be built into it from the start, partly because I long ago realized that nobody will ever write a book that everybody in the world likes. If that happened to me, I would have an all-time best-seller and become a millionaire -- but a deep sure instinct tells me I'll never be rich, so as far as I am concerned Dick Lupoff or anybody else has a natural right to dislike something I have written.

My basic motive for writing on this occasion has nothing to do with the literature-oriented content of Lupoff's review of *ONE MILLION TOMORROWS*, but while I'm at the typewriter I might as well make one or two comments. The mind of a critic, even a *soi-disant* critic, fascinates me. Take a look at the following review of the same book, which appeared in one of the world's major newspapers, *The Sunday Times*, and which was written by a professional SF author and critic.

"The immortality motif is an old favourite; but Bob Shaw has given it a new look in *ONE MILLION TOMORROWS*. Two hundred years from now it is possible to tie off at a chosen age and maintain that apparent age indefinitely. The trouble is that it works splendidly for women, but men become sterile and impotent.

Willy Carewe, married to sexy Athene, is cost accountant for a pharmaceutical corporation. His boss tells him that he can be guinea pig for a new immortality shot that won't cool his love life. The test will be carried out in secret. Fine. Except that persons unknown then attempt to demonstrate Willy's mortality with some violence, which arouses resentment and curiosity. This ingenious, sophisticated SF thriller is well written and thoroughly entertaining. It is easily Bob Shaw's best novel so far."

Now, that review fails to elate me any more than Lupoff's effort fails to depress me, but it pinpoints a question I would love to have answered about the critical mind. When a critic has denounced a book and then reads another review which says the exact opposite to what he said -- does a flicker of doubt ever cross his mind? Does he ever get a momentary suspicion that the failure was his and not the author's? Or does he simply add to the list of the world's injustices a note that a fool who knows absolutely nothing about literature is stealing good money by posing as a critic?

Like many other authors, my knowledge of the craft of writing is limited to what I have gained through sitting down and slogging through the task of producing novels and short stories, so I have a great envy for those people who -- without having to sweat to get into print themselves -- were granted an *a priori* insight into every aspect of writing. Lupoff has long been on my list of individuals who regard themselves as having this gift, and who I keep expecting to write the perfect novel so that the rest of us can learn from example how it is done. Unfortunately, I never get to checking any names off the list, therefore I have to content myself in this instance with the collection of misunderstandings and unwarranted personal insults which Lupoff offers as a review.

It would take up too much of my time and your space to go through his piece point by point, but let's consider the first couple just for the hell of it. He begins by complaining that I do not clearly explain how to make an immortality drug. The reason I don't do so is, I hope, obvious to all normally intelligent people fans -- I don't know how to make such a drug, and neither does anybody else, therefore -- with the best will in the world -- I just can't clearly explain the trick. If I could, I would go ahead and produce the stuff and make humanity (with certain exceptions) immortal. The best I could do was to state that my postulated drug wrought changes in the male system and made it absolutely intolerant of male hormones. In spite of having, I presume, read this Lupoff sneeringly comments that even today sexuality could be restored to men in these circumstances by injecting them with male hormones. When I state that a system is completely inimical to male hormones and destroys them, and he says everything will be all right if you inject some male hormones into this system which is inimical to male hormones and destroys them, I get a panicky sense of being cut off by a great chasm from some sections of humanity. Or is Lupoff proposing some unscientific scheme in which the man could simulate a usable erection by means of splints or plastic inserts, and then be injected with special hotrod hormones under tremendous pressure which would cause them to circulate through his body so quickly that it couldn't destroy them and come shooting out of his penis a split-second later? (Even then they would still be hormones and not spermatozoa, and in any case the whole procedure would be pretty unsatisfactory for both parties concerned.)

Seriously though, as Alan Hunter used to say so unnecessarily after one of his jokes, let's move on past the sentence in which Lupoff says I "completely overlooked" the above consideration to his next triumphantly discovered flaw in the story. He sneers, again, over the fact that I make no mention of Barenboim and Pleeth testing the new type of immortality drug on animals and then human volunteers, implying that I am out of touch with the way scientists would actually work. Now, I am perfectly aware that drugs are often tried out on animals and then on human volunteers, and I know that all my readers are aware of this elementary fact -- so when I say that a large drug company has developed a new product and has reached the stage of wanting to test it on a human being, I take it as read that the company has already gone through the normal preliminaries. This is dealing with the so-called flaw on the superficial Lupoff level, but let's go a little further into it because I had a built-in reason for not explicitly mentioning tests on animals, and settled for implying them. Later in the review Lupoff sneeringly reveals that the drug never existed and it is all part of a complex swindle. I'm glad he absorbed that much of the plot -- but does it not occur to him that, if the swindlers knew from the start that their miracle drug was only plain water, that messing around injecting it into animals and talkative human volunteers would be, to say the least of it, just a little fucking stupid?

Every point he raises in his review can be disposed of on the Lupoff hovercraft level of thought and on my own much deeper level of thought. You may guess from the tone of these remarks that, in spite of Lupoff's insulting assertion to the contrary, I believe I can think.

But having shown just how valueless his criticisms are (as I have heard many others do) I move on the main reason I have troubled to answer him, and it has nothing to do with literary criticism. I refer to the following sentence in which I have underlined one clause: "Most often, for reasons upon which one may speculate, he deals with disintegrating marriages."

Now, of the five of my books which Lupoff could have read when he penned the above sentence, two -- which is not a majority -- deal with protagonists who are married and are having some difficulty in the relationships with their wives. So he is wrong when he says "Most often", and he is even more wrong when he refers to "disintegrating marriages" because -- as is apparent to anybody with any degree of insight -- the trouble with the marriages described was not that they were disintegrating but that the partners were almost *too much in love*, locked together in emotional bonds which could never be broken. (For the record, I have written a cycle of four books in which I deliberately gave the heroes different kinds of marriages and different sets of marital problems because I thought it would be a salutary change from the all-too-common SF hero who has no human ties whatsoever and thus can be flicked off to the other side of the galaxy with a minimum of disturbance for both himself and the author.)

The point, however, is that to Lupoff these books appeared to be about disintegrating marriages and he invites all his readers to speculate on the reasons for this! He thinks I am obsessed with failing marriages and, if Ted White had not had the good sense to reject this review for AMAZING, Lupoff would have invited thousands of people outside fandom to snicker over the possible reasons for this.

I believe he has demonstrated that he knows very little about literary criticism, but -- Christ Jesus! -- is he so far removed from an understanding of everyday propriety, decency and courtesies that he cannot see the enormity of setting out to review a book and throwing in snide insinuations about its author's private life? Somebody who is close to Lupoff in fandom should explain to him that this is the sort of thing that you just don't do!

I am not going to ask him for an apology -- mainly because all my friends in the fan world know that I'm happily married -- but partly because I have no wish to engage in even the briefest dialogue with a person who is so out of touch with normal standards of behaviour and with the entire fanish ethic.

DICK LUPOFF REPLIES: I have never met Bob Shaw but everyone I know who has, says that he is a lovely, charming person and I am quite prepared to believe that (his letter notwithstanding). Nor have I any information that his marriage is other than he describes it to be, and I congratulate him and Mrs. Shaw and wish them all continuing happiness.

So much for personalities.

The book was still very dumb.

George Turner
87 Westbury Street
East St. Kilda, Vict. 3182
Australia

ALGOL 17 to hand, and I like it very well. And, like everyone else, I like the bits where I can add a little to what the writer has offered -- as with Lowndes' "Influence Of Fandom."

One page 10 he discusses J.M. Walsh's "Vandals Of The Void" as anti-racist. Walsh, if he is still alive, would be puzzled and amused. For a start, I think heroine Jansca of that novel was not black but red -- the blackness was probably the artist's desperate attempt to register a degree of pigment. And in the thriller literature of the day inter-racial sex was one of the methods of imparting a little frisson to a subject whose discussion in detail was not permissible to that field. Bedding down a voluptuous negree or a gorgenus Chinese was considered an exotic touch, and the racial aspect occurred to the reader only as a mild itch in the crotch.

Now J.M. Walsh was an Australian, and in 1931 the Aboriginal problem had not hit our national consciousness; the outback people were uneasily aware of it, but it was not a big issue. Nobody reading VOTV would have conceived the racial connection, and I'll bet my typewriter that Walsh never thought of it -- particularly as he was living in England at the time, far removed from such intellectual issues as it was geographically possible to be.

The position in America, with its huge number of black-skinned people, was probably different, but the great empty-headed world was not really aware and Walsh, I imagine, would have been taken more than a little off balance by Lowndes' point of view.

Incidentally, despite his statement that "I wouldn't especially recommend it to you", it was pretty superior work of its period. And -- a warning note to aspiring critics -- all work of the past has to be read within the context of its period. Fail to do that and you haven't much hope of enjoying it and, since this is not the easiest thing to do, that is why most of the pre-war thrillers seem stuffy and slow. Recognizing their merits isn't easy, but they had them. The modern version offers little radical improvement save in a racier style and the use of that evasively named 'permissiveness' (explicit sex ad nauseum) which is too often poked in like the currants on a bun, regardless of whether it matters to the story or not.

The return to the point, we weren't pro- or anti-racist in those days. Merely apathetic. Or worse, unaware.

Greg Benford, in an article full of commonsense observation, makes a blunder of the kind which reveals him as a bloke who, like so many of the younger fans writing of the past, knows not whereof he writes. He says (page 24): "Fifty years ago a work of that length (60,000 words) would have been quite routinely labeled a novella. Novels were long: 150,000 words or so. The 60,000 word book is a product of a hurried age and commercial packaging conventions."

In a word Greg -- balls!

As one who started reading novels about that long ago (precocious brat) and who today reads the past as avidly as the present, I assure him that general commercial lengths have changed little if at all since 1880. And a 60,000 worder was never in history labeled a novella. In fact today's tendency is towards the long novel -- and, as a rule of thumb, the longer the drearier and less literate. Brevity has its virtues.

The letter section is quite something. Such a galaxy of star-quality names as Australian fan-editors dream on but rarely achieve! But Rottensteiner (a sturdy old faithful for our better fanzines)

puts in a word for us as having the highest standard of fan reviewing. Maybe, maybe not, but the standard of fan reviewing seems to me everywhere precious, snooty and designed to do anything but advance the appreciation of SF, either as a genre or as a part of world literature. (Blish and Knight excepted; but they are professionals. The impenetrable Rottensteiner and Stanislaw Lem not excepted.)

Your own reviewer, Dick Lupoff, writes an f.a.q. fan review (one doesn't have to agree with him, but that isn't relevant) but attempts to dissect books without first making two necessary decisions: [a] what has the author attempted? and [b] how does this book relate to his other work?

A simple consideration of "The Two Timers" and Bob Shaw's short stories would have shown him (in the case of "One Million Tomorrows") that he is not dealing with a typical Shaw novel, carefully thought out and competently handled, but with a stopgap action yarn knocked off for a voracious and unquestioning market. The thing was simply not worth a lengthy review and Lupoff achieved no more than the crushing of a gnat with a power press. The real question, if any, was how the hell it got into the "Ace Special" series. The point of any review of this novel could have been no more than that Shaw had written a potboiler and Shaw-lovers could ignore it.

He goes on to damn two other works, making up a column of despair. And, stuck in the middle is "Science Fiction Hall Of Fame" which he dismisses, though with approval, in about forty lines which are completely uninformative to anyone wishing to have some notice of the volume. The fact that SFHOF marks the highest point of anthology publishing since "Adventures In Time & Space" seems to have passed him by. This book is of considerable importance in SF publishing, and should have been given more consideration than the other three put together. Any competent critic could mine it for a ten thousand word article. To pass it off briefly in a sandwich of trash was inexcusable.

And why give so much space to second-rate books? As SF reviewer for our most literate Melbourne daily, I make a point of not wasting my time or the readers' on rubbish. Such stuff needs mention only when [a] the author is too prominent to pass over and the reader should in fairness be warned, [b] when the book has achieved a faked-up reputation which needs closer examination, e. g. such twaddle as "Nova" and "Macroscope", or [c] when the book, however bad, has the seeds of premise in it.

Denigrating SF is all too easy (so is denigrating the mainstream novel, though this is generally a more professional product) but locating the good and *recognizing* it among the jetsam is an essential part of criticism. Propagate the best and some improvement in general reaction is possible. Destruction is sometimes necessary, and construction is not a reviewer's true business (it is a *critic's* business, but that is a nag of another shade) but perceptiveness is certainly his business.

And Dick Lupoff was certainly unperceptive in his column for ALGOL 17.

Nonetheless he's a sight better than a few others round the landscape. Nearly all fan reviewers have one bitter lesson to learn -- that their personal reaction to a book is not a fair basis for praising or damning. When you have decided whether you like it or loathe it, the time has come to look hard at it and decide whether the fault is in the book or in yourself. The answer can be a cruel surprise. And the review will be all the fairer for it.

But it isn't easy to recognize value in a work which just doesn't happen to be the type of thing which excites you. I have had more than once the uphill task of writing up the positive values of a work which, on a purely personal level, was not to my taste. That's one reason why good reviewers are rare and the *balanced* review is hard to come by.

Praise and damnation are so much more spectacular, and so much easier to write.

Franz Rottensteiner
A-2762 Ortmann
Felsenstr. 20
Austria

Avram Davidson's letter and Greg Benford's essay point a pretty dark picture of the American SF scene. In Austria, \$6,000 a year would be a pretty good income, but in view of the cost of living in the USA this is pretty low. Frankly, I believe in the future US authors will attribute (or should attribute) much more importance to foreign markets. Compared to the \$1500 for an average SF novel Benford mentions, our own advances which we pay in Germany don't look so bad; and in addition, costs of translation (at least for Lem and Russian writers) approach this figure. Adding the cost of translation plus the advance, we easily arrive at figures over \$1500, and we certainly sell more copies of our hardbacks (up to 6000 books per title) than Davidson gives for his Doubleday book. The situation in France may even be better. I don't know whether the figure is correct, but I have heard that Leiber's "The Wanderer" sold 14,000 copies in France, in a quite expensive edition.

Of course, both the best markets in France and we in our Insel Verlag SF do only a very few titles a year, a very few American authors, and certainly (on principle) on Nebula winners, since I don't wish to encourage an award-happiness. But there are over 12 SF paperbacks a month now in Germany, and this means a lot of money. (With these markets mediocrity helps a lot, of course, for quality is suspect.) Fiction factories like Robert Silverberg, John Brunner and Poul Anderson must earn some thousands of dollars a year just from their German translations. Most of those paperbacks are badly cut, and very poorly translated; but either the authors don't know this, or they just don't give a damn. Now and then somebody protests, as did John Brunner about the German treatment of his "The Jagged Orbit", but these are rare cases. A recent example of such foul handling is Alexei Panshin's "Rite Of Passage." Just the other day I read in a German fanzine that the Goldmann edition somehow lost 60 pages in translation; and if adequately translated, a German translation is about 20% longer than an English original.

The fault for this lies primarily with the agencies, I believe. SF simply isn't a very important part of their business, and agents (perhaps authors, too) are just interested in quick sales without the patience to wait for better publishers, although they could get quite more money if they did wait a couple of years. There are many SF novels that I should have liked to do in my own SF series, but can't do now, because they already have appeared as paperbacks, even if badly mangled (e.g., Vonnegut's "Player Piano"). I had planned, for instance, to issue a complete edition of the works of Cordwainer Smith, 4 or 5 books; but we didn't get the rights, although I am sure that our editions (a hardcover and later 25,000 copies in paperback) would have netted the author's widow at least \$1500 per book over several years, quite aside from the higher prestige and better translations. We are filling this hole now with non English language SF, with the result that these writers not only get the better money, but also the good translators, the promotion, and the reviews in the big German newspapers (which almost never review SF paperbacks). Of course I wouldn't pay 95¢ for most of the novels that get \$1500 or \$2000 in the USA: standards in German hardcover publishing being somewhat higher than in the US SF field.

I can well understand that writers like Anderson want the fans or the reviewers to write only about the things they have liked. That writers want only admiration and not criticism, is very well known; but such opinions are only to be registered and then ignored.

Alexei Panshin
Open Gate Farm, Star Route
Perkasie, Pa. 18944

"Rite Of Passage" was sold to Goldmanns, the German publisher, by Ace, which controls foreign rights. I was shocked when I received a copy of the book. Though it was advertised as a Nebula Award winner, the title was altered and the book was radically abridged. The epilogue, which sums the import of the story, was cut completely. I wrote to the publishers complaining about what had been done and received no answer from them. I was mad and am mad, and all the madder because I have no power to alter what has been done and may be done again. I don't like seeing the work of six years reduced to kindergarten German. And there is nothing I know that can be done about it.

John F. Kusske
3527 Pillsbury Avenue South
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55408

I don't think Greg [Benford] understands the psychology of today's would-be writer. Sure, many fans believe that becoming a pro would be relatively rewarding financially, but that's just a by-product of the other rewards he expects to garner. Most...fans...think of the income from professional writing as a supplement to their regular income or as an emergency fund, in case of lean times. (How many of us, I wonder, believe that we could be successful pros if we only tried hard enough and that, if we were starving to death, the stimulus would be great enough to produce our best efforts?) The desire for glory, I think, is much more important as a motivating factor than the desire for money. Editors, publishers and anthologists don't receive nearly as much fame as the writers do. Benford looks at the game of professional SF writing in the hard glare of sobriety (Avram Davidson seems to be looking at it in the ultraviolet of despair); but to SF fans the illumination is hazy, because we're all drunk on science fiction and have been most of our lives.

Jack Wodhams
Box 48 P.O.
Caboolture, Queensland 4510
Australia

Greg Benford is right about writing when he says that it's a mug's game. Imagination is a rare commodity in this world, and is a curse to its possessors. For we look about us, and we can see abounding the workers who have not the imagination to create for themselves. And these workers work

for masters who have no imagination beyond what can be measured by a buck, and giants like Ford and GM, in all their brilliant managership, cannot produce the wit to find the means to keep their man on the assembly-line happy. The sweet milk from contented cows. Right up to the very top, to the rulers, the controllers, the legislators, to find that these our politicians, these most powerful of men, are positively notorious for their lack of creative initiative.

Up and down and sideways, through all grades and ranks of life, dependable, repeatable, consistent imagination is so rare, so infrequently encountered, that a new mousctran that really works becomes a gratification beyond extolling. And so, of course, we must know that publishers have no imagination -- otherwise they would not be publishers. And this fact in particular places a fiction writer straightway into a dilemma, because how is he, the writer, to impart truly imaginative conceptions to someone who is congenitally incapable of imagining the picture? It is a case of the blind leading the seeing. A writer writes emotionally, from his senses, from an instinctive feel of the psychology of humanity, in order to say, to speak, to convey the image, the whole scene, the impact of his several ideas. Yet how galling it is when editors write -- and it happens -- to infer, to suggest, to even plead, that the writer write "more conventionally."

Writers do not write for the public. Writers write, are constrained to write, for publishers. And publishers -- look in your bookstore and count the reprints -- are pathologically conservative. My best writing -- that which I know to be my best writing -- has had thumbs down from the Caesars to this present time. So if your authors disappoint, oft seem to strike below par, please remember that to make a living they are obliged to write what the unadventurous unimaginative think they imagine is what the public wants. They cannot imagine the public wanting anything but the familiar old reliable uninspired pap. Ah me, the pimps, they would make prostitutes of us all.

John Bangsund can write too, the bastard. Quiveringly sensitive, introverted soul, he got his message across very well, quite unconventionally. I grieve fear that his spirit be not crushed. I can blast John W. Campbell for dying -- he left us orphans, left me an orphan, and methinks that foster-parents of anywhere near his generosity, perception, of his caliber, are going to be bloody hard to come by. Aye, but he had a grand imagination.

Mark Mumper
1227 Laurel Street
Santa Cruz, California 95060

I enjoyed Bloch's article; Feep was much, much before my time, but I now have an urge to start hunting his exploits down. Bloch has been one of the better SF humorists, among other things.

Greg Benford speaks true on the SF scene. It really could use less new authors rewriting worn out themes and more people devoted to seeing that better standards are used by publishers and editors. It could also use more new good authors, but then that's not something you can ask for. I doubt if Greg's warnings to future writers will be well heeded, however; if a person is set on becoming one, not much will stop him. And I believe we all have to learn the hassles ourselves. I myself have hopes of becoming an author, SF or otherwise, but I want to do so to say something of my own, not to copy another or to capitalize on being a pro. The idea of getting into the publishing/editing end of the business seems fascinating, but I know I couldn't live in New York.

John Campbell's effect on the world has yet to be fully realized -- I surely have no idea what his total influence has been, but it's possibly much larger than I or many others give him credit for. As usual with great figures, his work will receive its greatest attention after his death. Perhaps now the Campbell mystique will become a little more clear. I doubt if even he himself at any time could conceive the impact he might have on the future. John Bangsund has hit squarely on the fascination of the man, and I must agree that the whole thing is rather frightening. Campbell may be one of the most underestimated figures of the last forty years, inside the SF field and out. It's quite awe-full to think of one man making a part of the future: our future.

Michael Glicksohn
32 Maynard Avenue, Apt. 205
Toronto 156, Ontario
Canada

Bloch was Good. "Sigh."

Lupoff, however, was Bloody Good. I think he fits perfectly that somewhat overworked adjective "uncompromising." I've seldom seen two of fandom's more popular personalities laid bare in all their apparent shortcomings in quite such a dispassionate manner. And yet one sees immediately that this is merely Lupoff the Critic taking his job seriously and in no way a personal attack. He demands much, and refuses to temper his disappointment for a friend or likeable personality. For me, easily the best part of the fanzine.

John Bangsund's article is certainly one of the better pieces of writing I've seen in a fanzine lately. I regret deeply that I couldn't publish it myself. It creates a mood, quite brilliantly I think, and connects together in a way I've heard ascribed to Elmer Purdue. It's a powerful, moving piece which draws a frightening conclusion with some truly effective writing. I don't know if Campbell would have liked some of the comparisons, but for me it captures much of the power of the man.

Then there's the letter column. What can I say? All those serious and constructive discussions; I have nothing to add. See what you've done? You've brought back my inferiority complex, that's what you've done! No wonder we fannish fans shy away from ALGOL. The balm of countless dozens of printed letters in PROCRASTINATION and OSFiG eradicated by one issue of your pretentious highbrow journal. Well, all I said was I'd write you a letter of comment, not that it'd be worth publishing! But send me the next issue anyway: my wife understands it...

[I suspect it's rather obvious now that Lupoff manages to evoke quite a range of response, ranging from heated response to cool observation. It's pretty obvious, too, that the sort of response that ALGOL generates is limited by the reservations of those who would write letters but don't simply because they're put off by the tone of the lettercolumn. The tone isn't due to a bunch of erudite letter writers but rather, I suspect, the process of judicious editing of the letters received. Having seen the response to ENERGUMEN come literally pouring in (with more letters of comment on an issue of ENERGUMEN in 4 days than I receive in 2 months) I am sort of dismayed, to say the least, over the lack of response to the last issue. Surely 30 to 40 letters out of 500 copies sent out is not very good at all... If you are afraid your comments will be forced and stilted, let me be the judge; published letters of comment result in free issues, after all. A small but helpful incentive.]

Will Straw
303 Niagara Boulevard
Fort Erie, Ontario
Canada

I can't get all worked up about graphics the way Jerry Lapidus seems to be these days; I think that most of the best pieces of artwork I've seen in fanzines have been those which wouldn't have been included if art had to be related to the writing it accompanied. I think we'd get a situation where artists would be terribly limited in what they could do. It's not very likely that writers are going to write something to go around a piece of art but Jerry seems to want art to be made to fit an article... not merely subject-wise, but as far as size and shape are concerned. I don't think that the art/writing relationship should be forgotten completely, but I do believe that it's rather a waste of time to put more into graphics than people are going to get out.

Greg Benford makes some good suggestions for anyone trying to get into the SF field, but I think he assumes too much that people are trying to go professional because it is the SF field, and that they take writing because it seems the easiest way in, whereas I think it's more a matter of fans being interested in writing for a living, and finding the SF field the easiest to break into because of the knowledge they possess of the way it works.

I think most of fandom is adopting that laissez-faire attitude you advocate with regard to the fannish-sercon thing, though you're one of the few that is doing so by publishing a hybrid zine, as the others seem to be going into two pockets that leave each other alone. I think the cause of this has been the disintegration of 8th fandom, so that fannish fanzines no longer have to consider themselves insurgent and sercon fanzines don't play the part of a threatened and defensive Establishment. The result of all this will probably be that there will never again be a true Focal Point of All Fandom, or we will have one that straddles the fence, so to speak, like ALGOL, or ENERGUMEN.

[Of course, since last issue the fannish/sercon debate has died down, its energies expended in the midst of the Noreascon. Besides, there's room for all sorts of dumb things in the microcosm... The Ultimate Illustration requiring a story to be written about it was the cover of a mid-fifties prozine showing a spacesuited figure and cannon, with a neat stack of cannon balls, adrift on a wooden raft in the further reaches of space. Besides, providing illustrations for articles is time consuming and one must take what one can get, rather than choosing from the best artwork one has available. If you must have illustrations and you're too selective to work with artists you'd better be something of an artist yourself. Otherwise you're liable to lose friends and contributors...]

Dick Lupoff
3208 Claremont Avenue
Berkeley, California 94705

"The Phoenix And The Mirror" was labelled science fiction by Doubleday; it was not SF. [And as for the line attributed by Susan Glicksohn to Damon Knight ("Science fiction is what we mean when we point to it") that's so much garbage. Susan (or Damon) could point to Hemingway, Zane Grey, Ralph Nader or the Constitution of the United States and say, "That's science fiction," but, baby,

that don't make it SF. As Mr. Korzybsky was wont to say, The map is not the territory.]

By "historical" I meant that "Phoenix" was set summiny centuries ago, but not in a "prehistoric" age; thus: historical. No? On the other hand, it contained distinct elements of fantasy in it, so: "Historical fantasy." Is this an outrageous categorization?

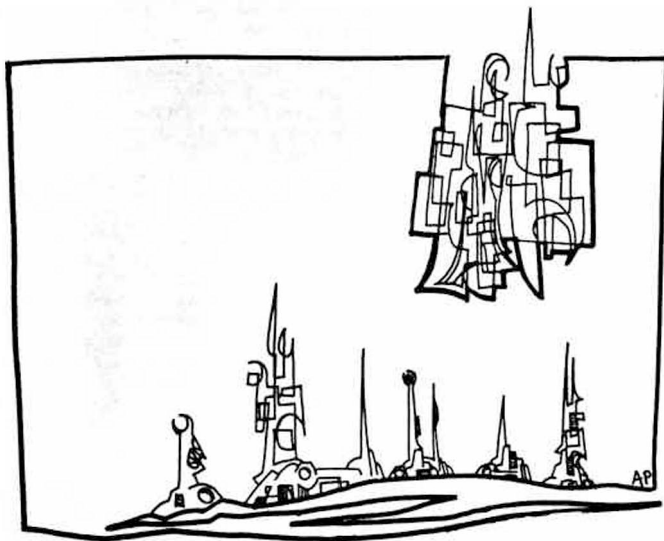
Avram asks, when I call Doubleday's SF line, "a tidy, profitable operation," ...profitable for whom? In a word, sir, for *Doubleday*. If it weren't, they'd drop it. Diane Cleaver said as much, quite openly and ingeniously, at the SFWA meeting in Berkeley last spring. The occasion was a speech (by me) in which it was urged that authors unite and start demanding better treatment from publishers. Miss Cleaver said, in essence, do so and we'll just drop our SF line. Well, well, well.

As for the generally shabby treatment received by Avram from Doubleday, I have utter sympathy for him. This is just the skiddlyteenth example of authors being badly treated by publishers; I think I can match Avram horror story for horror story. That's why I spent much time and energy yammering for SFWA to reconstitute itself a *de facto* labor union. Well, at Noreascon it seems that SFWA decided that, No, it would rather be a Lit'ry Sassiety, which is okay too...and which means that authors like Avram -- and me -- will continue to get fucked over.

It's sad.

Harry Warner, Jr.
423 Summit Avenue
Hagerstown, Maryland 21740

I wish Lowndes had taken up the question that all the pros evade, no matter whether they're for or agin fandom. How much correlation exists between the desires and preferences of fans and those of the silent bulk of science fiction readers? I've always felt that the two groups think pretty much alike, as evidenced by the general tendency of prozines and authors who are oftenest commended in fanzines to sell well. But it should be possible to gather more specific data through some digging into fan poll results, letter sections of the prozines, and other places for facts about fan's preferences, then comparing them with whatever circulation and sales figures can be obtained for magazines and books. Without such a study, we can never be sure. Did the Acc Specials with covers by the Dillons really sell poorly in comparison with other good SF novels, or did they sell poorly in comparison with what the publishers expected for titles that cost somewhat more to publish? Was a short-lived prozine favored by fans doomed to early death because it catered to their whims or because the venture was inadequately financed from the outset?



Greg Benford is correct about the shaky economic grounds on which a science fiction writer treads. But much the same is true of any creative writer nowadays. TV Guide ran an article about income enjoyed by members of the radio-television writers union: as I recall, slightly more than half of all members were earning less than \$5000 per year. Or consider the fact that at least 3/4 of a newspaper's appeal must lie in its news content, and contrast that with the proportion of the newspaper's budget that goes to its writers. I can think of only two reasons for spending a lot of time trying to sell professional SF: honest enjoyment of this kind of creativity or self-confidence that there's enough talent to produce exceptional stories that will lead to much better than average income.

I liked John Bangsund's article very much. It's odd that one of the first major reaction pieces to Campbell's death should come all the way from Australia. But simultaneously, couldn't we have some people doing equally impressive writing about pros before they die? Why doesn't someone honor in print Lowndes, who has been editing pretty good publications almost as long as Campbell did? Why isn't there national agitation for the next worldcon to give Terry Carr a special Hugo for the Ace Specials, which 30 years from now will be remembered with the same reverence we now give to golden age Astounding?

[[It will be quite difficult to judge the response of non-fans to the same things that fans have responded to without sinking a bit into market research. To my knowledge the only queries in that direction were taken when F&SF and Analog ran market-research questionnaires through their subscription lists in order to provide a base audience for prospective advertisers. What you want can be done, provided at least \$10,000 and a lot of time are available. At the moment, we'll simply have to go on wondering.]]

John Piggott
17 Monmouth Road
Oxford OX1 4TD
United Kingdom

Malcolm Edwards gave his copy of ALGOL 17 to a certain SF writer whom Hank Davis finds boring and mainstream (he had a good laugh at that), and said writer then gave it to me. That, at least, is why you are getting this letter from me now.

Why do you call your fanzine ALGOL 17? It's come fully a year after ALGOL 16. The letters of comment you print were all written months and months ago -- chances are your correspondents don't remember a thing of what they wrote you. A yearly fanzine isn't a continuously running thing, it's a series of one-shots, with a few petrified comments on the last one-shot buried within them. It's ludicrous.

Okay, so ALGOL's a smart job. But seriously, anyone who spends \$300 on one issue of a fanzine is, in my book, completely nuts. The copy I have was crunched in the mail, it's covered in sweaty fingermarks and mimeograph ink stains; on one corner is what looks like tea stains, it's had beer spilt on it... Every little fingermark shows, man, and christ, does it look cruddy now.

I like fanzines for what I can read in them. Within reason, I couldn't give a damn whether they're mimeographed, printed, hectographed, or even laboriously written out one by one, just as long as I can read them. Sure I can read ALGOL. I enjoyed doing it. But I could have read it just as easily if you'd mimeo'ed it, and it would've cost you far less. You could produce three or four issues a year, get a lot more comments coming in (you could even get a decent letter column going) and even get a crack at that Hugo if you're that way inclined.

[[Taking your letter point by point, one thing that gets me mad is that people who receive a free copy of ALGOL, in your case evidently Malcolm Edwards, don't even bother to send me a letter acknowledging receipt of the copy. Instead they turn around and give it to someone else; in this case the writer, D.G.Compton, by inference. Compton repeated the impolite procedure until it came into your hands. As I obviously put a great deal of care and work into the issue, and as it costs quite a bit of money to produce each copy, such actions are pretty damned thoughtless, as far as I'm concerned.

Admittedly the time between ALGOL 16 and ALGOL 17 was a long one (actually slightly over 10 months); however, effective with ALGOL 17 this fanzine has become bi-yearly; that is, published every six months. It is now late March as I type this and this issue is scheduled to be published in mid-May, with the next issue to see the light of day in mid-November. Although there is a possibility that my correspondents will not remember what they wrote, that does not make their comments and letters inaccurate or inappropriate.

A word here about the editing of a letter column. The best way to edit the letters that come in

is to make each one a separate identity, each letter a short article that illuminates one particular point or facet of the subject in question. Agreed that letters which merely say "I liked this" are pointless and easily outdated; but carefully edited a lettercolumn can be made to stand on its own, each letter reinforcing the others before and after it and each throwing more light onto the subject. I would hope that the letter column showed this careful editing. Too, because of the fairly rapid growth in ALGOL's circulation (this issue going out to more than 700 people) this approach to editing the letter column is almost mandatory.

The sweaty marks, beer and tea stains you refer to have been put there by the two others who read and passed on the copy of ALGOL before you; let me not hesitate to say that I make sure not to get dirt on anyone else's fanzine I read; if they've sent me their own labor of love the least I can do is make sure it stays as clean as when I received it. Care of personal property, especially books and magazines is one of the criteria by which I think a civilized person should be judged.

Obviously, since I'm producing the fanzine, I think the cost of each issue worthwhile. It is the kind of fanzine I have always wanted to produce; there are many ways I could improve it, but the material is, in my not so humble opinion, pretty good. Tom Reamy's TRUMPET exemplified the height of the good looking fanzine (cold-type composition, set headlines, slick paper, color covers) but the material counts as well and I would like to think ALGOL combines the best of both worlds, as available to me at this time.]]

Gregg Calkins
150 Las Juntas Way
Walnut Creek, California 94596

Lowndes' article concerning Gernsback's discovery of fandom and their suggestions for stories to be reprinted in AMAZING reminds me of my own experiences with FAMOUS FANTASTIC MYSTERIES a quarter of a century later, when fans were constantly [sending] stories to Mary Gnaedinger for her publications and she seemed quite interested and appreciative in getting them. Not only did fans send suggestions -- but on occasion they even loaned books and magazines to her so the stories could be copied. I presume the copyrights had all expired on the stories she used in this manner.

Benford wrote an interesting article, all the more because I am getting more and more interested in writing that first novel, myself. I'm not at all sure it will be SF, though, for just that reason: money. Not that \$1500 seems all that bad to me for part-time work, particularly when you can parlay all of the extras like the tax advantages of your house/office and travel/conventions as business expenses. Reducing outgo is as effective a way of increasing earnings as is stepping up income, and often easier.

Jerry Lapidus
54 Clearview Drive
Pittsford, New York 14534

Dick Lupoff's book reviews are excellent this time out, well-written and remarkably well-thought-out, and my agreeing with him 90% of the time is only icing. Seeing these, I'm surprised he hasn't done more...professionally; this is some of the best book reviewing I've seen all year. Dick presents his thoughts both clearly and interestingly, and yet he doesn't go into such exhaustive detail and analysis as to become practically incomprehensible to someone not intimately familiar with the book at hand. He treats his column as a little more of a "buying guide" than I'd like, but that's a really minor quibble. My only complaint is that, like last time, his column as a whole is too short.

Greg's column is also one of his best, but I think he misses -- perhaps on purpose? -- a major point in his argument. He says, essentially, "If you really want to have some influence on the SF field and make a decent living, don't be a writer, be an editor or publisher." That all seems well and good, but it seems to me based on the wrong premise, the premise that people become writers mainly because they want to improve the field. Most writers I know -- both beginning and successful -- write because they want to have to; they write, and particularly SF, because this is what they want to do, this is what they find fulfilling. This, to them, is how they wish to make a living; except in rare cases like Larry Niven, it isn't something they choose because it simply looks interesting. Someone who wants and likes to write -- SF, because that's what we're specifically talking about here -- isn't going to become an editor because that's the best way to help the field. The obvious analogy would be with my own profession: the theatre. I want to/I must work in the theatre; I can't see myself spending my life doing anything else. Now, to really succeed in this, what I should do is study technical theatre: lighting, sound, etc. The technical jobs pay more, technical people are much more in demand than actors/directors, and the technical unions are far stronger than any others. If I want to make changes in the theatre, this is what I should do, and then do what I want when I reach the top of the profession. But this isn't what I'm interested in doing. I'm interested in creating theatre, specifically in directing; there is where I feel I

can honestly contribute something, and where I must work. Chances are good I'll never make much money, or be as influential in the field, as I could by going into sound, but that isn't really a factor in my decisions. I think Greg is asking prospective SF writers to make that same choice.

I'm surprised that no one has commented on the curious case of Franz Rottensteiner. Far be it from me to even attempt to criticize his critical standards or abilities, but has anyone else noticed this: I don't think I've ever seen him really praise any modern SF writer, with one single exception. That exception is Stanislaw Lem, for whom Rottensteiner himself is apostle to the masses; Lem works of criticism occasionally appear in English-language fanzines, but only through the graces of Franz. I've read "Solaris", and I must confess that Lem is good; but must he also be ghod?

Also, Franz's statement that the higher level of reviewing in England and Australia is due to the absence of pros in fandom is pure bullshit. 100% wrong. If it is true that the overall level is higher, that is true only because Peter Weston edits SPECULATION from England, and Bruce Gillespie and John Foyster edit SFCOMMENTARY and J.O.E. respectively from Australia. Look at the majority of other fanzines from these two countries, and can you seriously say the level of reviewing is higher than in the US? Two of the best critical magazines currently come from Australia and England, but this doesn't mean the critical level is really any higher. Further, it's a fallacy the pros are not active in fandom there. Lee Harding, Jack Wodhams, and Phil Harbottle are pros, active in Australian fandom. And a number of British professionals are so active as to contribute to SPECULATION: the Bulmers, Chris Priest, Moorcock, Redd, and others. As in the past, Franz has a point he wishes made -- whether the point has anything to do with minor details like facts or not.

Alpajpuri
1690 East 26th Avenue
Eugene, Oregon 97403

I'm still pretty down on fanzines in general. People don't experiment enough!!! They don't explore the innumerable permutations of graphic elements they work with. I have to admit that is someone wants to publish ENERGUMEN or STARLING or GRANFALLOON or FOCAL POINT and that's what turns them on, I can't impose my goals & desires & drives on them -- but I am dissatisfied with what's being produced by SF fans. OUTWORLDS and THE ESSENCE have good things going for them: Bowers and Zaremba are very aware that the manner in which material is presented is a communication of information in itself, and they do a lot with this knowledge. Other people, like the Kattes, realize this, but they're more interested in publishing conventional material frequently than spending lots of time (and money) on elaborate constructions. I would say, just from seeing the latest issue of ALGOL, that you fall somewhere in the latter category. Your zine is executed admirably well, it's clean, neat, lucid and attractive, but I think it's to your disadvantage to stick with the solid-page format. Your layout is pleasing to the eye but it doesn't MOVE, it isn't DYNAMIC. It just sits there looking pretty, not really moving the reader one way or another.

I don't believe that artwork and writing constitute a valid dichotomy -- or at least a very far-reaching one. The writing process -- using dashes and commas and colons and sentences and paragraphs and pages -- is a graphic process. You're influencing the relationships between words by drawing pictures with your typewriter. Typewriting is a very condensed way to communicate information -- a drawing usually takes up more space and the bits of information it contains are not always as clear or as specific -- but it's the same kind of trip. Writing is (usually) linear, whereas unless a drawing is very rigidly designed, there are a number of variable sequences in which the eye can pick up details. But I don't believe the distinctions between the two areas of graphic communication -- writing and drawing -- are many and strong.

The layout in ALGOL 17 would be great if your readers were computers, assimilating word after word, but a human reader is influenced to a large extent by the shape of the textblock on a page, the amount of text on a page, and the total design, the graphic dynamics, the tension between illustrations and blocs of text and whitespace. Since you apparently spend as much as a year putting together an issue, I would think you could devote a large number of hours just playing around with the layout. You don't even have to use small illos -- you can produce stimulating designs just by drawing a line here, leaving that side of the page blank, typing the text on this page in a circle or small square or sweeping shape flowing down one page and rushing over onto the other...

Designing layout is drawing pictures: they shouldn't be such strong pictures that they overpower the other elements (words and drawings), but they should be there all the same. I don't wish to sound negative -- to be sure, ALGOL is one of the best fanzines I've seen, graphically and materially. With the exception of the book-reviews, which I always avoid, I enjoyed each piece in ALGOL and am moved to compliment your editorial taste -- as well as your connections, you bastard... Lowndes, Bloch, Benford... "Sigh".

I find myself becoming very concerned with communicating to the reader of my [own] zine at all

times just what it is he's reading. In CARANDAITH 5 and 6, each article is printed on a different colour of paper from the former and latter articles, so you know when a piece ends and the next one begins. In CDTH 7 I'm alternating mainly-verbal and mainly-graphic pieces, on grey and white paper respectively, grey fibretint/rough textured, white bond/smooth. (Words in dark red ink, pictures in purple.) If every article is laid out differently, and in a way that suits the subject matter strongly, then just at a glance you'll be able to tell basically what kind of an article you're looking at, and once you're read the issue and glance back through it, you'll be able to recall more clearly what was in the article. Maybe no one but me thinks this is particularly important. One of my primal urges is to make clear confusion, to mold an amorphous mass into a singular, immediately comprehensible unit. Hence my fascination with McLuhanesque graphic communication manipulation.

[From a later letter] If Space Is \$Money\$, then use only 2/3 or 1/2 your material on hand. Donate some column inches (so to speak) to create pleasing and stimulating designs on the pages by organizing graphic weight -- typewriter letters, blocs of typewriter letters, drawings, titles, white space. If you can do a good job at it, your readers won't feel cheated for getting "less material" in the issue. The Medium is the Message. The structure IS the material. The magazine is an object in itself, instead of being just a vehicle for the material.

99% of the fanzines I get in the mail are a kind of passive vehicle. Very few really possess an identity, almost a *consciousness*, of their own. These fanzines are like sheep-people, assuming the social and political attitudes and roles of stronger individuals and institutions around them, but affecting nothing, effecting nothing. Freaks who stay stoned all the time, social groupies, politicians, people like that who are merely vehicles for other people's trips. Perhaps my desire to make my fanzine a living being is a manifestation of my wish to make myself a stronger more self-assured personality. Perhaps. But I am concerned with this sort of thing in fandom.

[Most of your points are quite valid. I've let you do the speaking, although Jerry Laoidus said much the same things in his letters, because your points are clearer and more solidly expressed. There are purely physical reasons why much that you suggest is not/cannot be done in ALGOL. First there is the obvious factor: cost. The cost of different paper stocks and colors (and the physical problems of different stocks in a saddle-stitched magazine) renders their use prohibitive and almost completely out of the picture. Also, only in a side-stitched book, as an ordinary fanzine is (i.e., staples going from front to back, coming out the last page before being crimped closed), can you use single sheets of different colors. Even then, if you are printing your magazine, you begin to encounter problems with form breaks and insertion costs and the thousand other problems that make the job of magazine production so hard.

That, incidentally, is my full-time job: I work in magazine production, dealing with web-offset, sheet-fed offset, and letterpress magazines. I am constantly surrounded by the problems you speak of, and know my limitations. I could easily spend \$1,000+ for each issue of ALGOL if I wanted to freely indulge my desires for a better looking magazine.

The primary problem with layout is caused by the type format of the pages. Sure you can put in blocks of type and white space (and very effectively, too) to heighten articles, create contrasts and moods. But limited to a solid page-wide bloc of type as I am such effects are hard to produce. Should ALGOL ever achieve the heights of actually making a profit, the monies made would be poured back into set-type interiors, such as TRUMPET and the professional magazines have. Effective graphic design can be done with two column format, but for the best affects three column is the ideal medium. Alas, 3 column makeup will not soon appear in ALGOL, despite the very rapid growth in our circulation.

Although in the past as much as a year -- or almost two! -- has elapsed between issues, I must admit that the length of time I have spent on preparing the next issue is much shorter. After each issue I rest a bit -- although that need for rest was greatest when I was publishing the issue myself, on the ditto machine I have at home. Believe me, after running off 250 copies of as many as 84 pages, then collating and stapling them by myself (even in New York, it's impossible to find fans willing to collate or staple) and finally addressing the envelopes, putting postage on and mailing them, you need to rest. Now I simply type each issue out, do the paste-ups for the printer, and then have the printer print, collate, staple and deliver the issues to me. It's a lot simpler and saves me a great deal of time and energy. Of course, TANSTAAFL: I pay for what is done...

But all the time I am not working on ALGOL, I am thinking of what I would like to do as regards layout, choice of material, artwork, composition of each page (limited always by the format) and other things: promotion, printing costs, etc. This issue has seen wide promotion, for example: ads in NOSTALGIA NEWS, LUNA, F&SF. Plus, of course, the time-honored method of button-holing people at conventions to sell them subscriptions.

I think you may have some comments on the layout and structuring of this issue; please (including the other readers, of course) don't hesitate to write your comments. The contents alone I think I can be justifiably proud of; the design I leave for others to judge.]]

Terry Carr
11037 Broadway Terrace
Oakland, California 94611

The highlight of the issue is of course Doc Lowndes' article. A good rambling discourse that covers areas of fan history both familiar and unfamiliar to me. It's hardly an exhaustive article, though, and I for one would probably have been happier if Lowndes had left out his digressions (announced and unannounced) and used that space to consider such interesting incidents as the Ackerman/Palmer ballies in the 40's and overall trends in fans-turned-pro compared to writers who came into the field without having passed through fandom. Still, this is a minor cavil; the article is certainly complete enough for an overview of its subject, and it's highly enjoyable.

Bob Bloch forgets one Lefty Feep story in his article: the story he wrote in 1958 for INNUENDO, titled "The Return Of Lefty Feep". As a onetime fan of the Feep series (in my very younger days), I asked Bob to disinter ole Feep for a fan story, and he obligingly did a short piece in which Feep wandered into the Solacon and recorded his impressions of the fans there. It won't appear in the MIT indexes, but that was the last true Lefty Feep story.

How odd to see Dick Lupoff referring to "that old saw 'The Golden Age of Science Fiction is 13.'" I suppose maybe it is an old saw by now, but it was originally just an offhand crack made by Pete Graham in about 1959, when filling out a questionnaire on FAPAns' opinions: "What was the Golden Age of Science Fiction?" asked the question, and in the blank following it Pete wrote: "13." I've repeated that several times in the years since, because I loved it and thought it marvelously apropos, and I guess enough other people have picked it up to make it an "old saw." Wow. I must tell Pete, who's off studying English Lit at Oxford University.

And how terrifically odd a display it is when Jack Wodhams passes on his advice about how "to write from the gut, baby," to quote him. Jack Wodhams writes from the gut? Far out. Well, if Robert Moore Williams considers himself a spiritual descendant of the Celtic bards, as he's said a few times, I guess everything's possible. (Personally, I consider my own stories a subtle and complicated amalgum of classic tragedy, epic poetry and inner-space autobiography.)

WE ALSO HEARD FROM: Murray Moore; Rick Sneary; Aljo Svoboda; Tim Kirk; Paul Walker; Gary Kimber; Robert E. Toomey, Jr.; Grant Canfield; Fredric Wertham; C. Lee Healy; Leo J. Murray, Jr.; Dave Hulvey; George Proctor; Avram Davidson; Terry Hughes; Glory Lee Ptacek; Ron Clarke; Sandra Miesel; Susan Glicksohn; and David C. Piper.

BEATLE-JUICE [Continued From Page 15]

I personally think this is the best issue I've yet had, and I want to thank a lot of people who've provided the necessary feedback so important in doing a fanzine, the people who care enough to provide comment and encouragement to faneditors in what at times becomes a rather thankless task. A special serving of egoboo to our official kept femmefan, Glory Lee, who's done so much to support the paper and postage industries. If you like this issue, write and tell me; if you don't, write and tell me that also. Next issue will be out in November; I'd like all response/etc. by the beginning of October.

-- Andrew Porter

THE PENULTIMATE TRUTH: AN EXPLANATION OF YOUR MAILING LABEL

- CON - You contributed to this issue. T - This is a trade copy.
- LP - Your letter has been published in this issue.
- L? - Something in this issue may cause you to comment.
- SUB - You're a subscriber in firm standing.
- SUBEX - Your subscription expires with this issue. Renew now!!!
- LAST - This is the last issue you'll receive unless you respond in some way.
- FC - Your contribution/artwork is on file for future use.
- REV - Your company's book is reviewed in this issue.
- LPB - Exchange copy for a co-member of the Lindsay/Porter/Bangsund Co-Prosperity Sphere.
- CP - We'd really appreciate a contribution of artwork/written material.

algol

