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STARSHIP

THE MAGAZINE ABOUT SCIENCE FICTION

ISAAC ASIMOV
Exclusive excerpts from his forthcoming "In Joy Still Felt"

FREDERIK POHL
Could Aristotle define what makes good SF work?

Interview with Hal Clement

ROBERT SILVERBERG
Climates clash in another episode of "The Silverberg Papers"

RICHARD LUPOFF
Will commercialism ruin SF conventions?

Gregory Benford
Jerry Pournelle
Arthur C. Clarke
Ursula K. Le Guin
Robert Bloch

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EDITORIAL

INFLATION: I have raised the price of the magazine, from $2.25 to $2.50. The price has stayed the same for two years, and frankly I can't afford to live without a price increase. There is no guarantee that the price will stay the same for another two years. In the last year the distributors have raised the percentage they take by a full 10%. The 25 cent raise in price barely covers this. Let us not even mention inflation, which is currently hovering around 13% a year. For those of you who aren't aware, the press run of STARSHIP is a few thousand copies. STARSHIP is a very specialized magazine with a very limited audience. It makes a very small profit, which is sufficient to cover the cost of my rent and very little else.

I am my own boss, a decided advantage in managing my life, but the only people making a good living from STARSHIP are the printers and the post office.

Actually, the price I'd *like* to charge for the magazine is $2.95, but I don't have the nerve to raise it that high that fast. (The price went from $1.50 to $1.95 back in 1976; that was a major increase back then, perhaps to be repeated.) The subscription price stays the same, $8 for 1 year, $14.00 for 2 years. Perhaps the impending threat of further increases down the road will be an incentive for more people to subscribe. I'd like to think so.

I've also changed the cover, adding more type. This is a trend that's been very evident in consumer magazines in the last few years. There are the people who subscribe, who are pre-sold on the magazine; there are the people who buy every issue, often regardless of what's on the cover. And finally, there are the people who see interesting artwork, and stimulating topics, and buy an issue. Those are the people I'm after: impulse buyers, and those willing to try anything once, and the casual reader.

Finally, I've raised the price of available back issues to a uniform $2.25. Some magazines I could name sell their back issues at twice or three times the cover price. Rather than do that, I'm simply making bookkeeping a little easier, and the totalling of costs for back-issue-buyers a little faster.

THE ISSUE: Not as promised, the cover is by Mike Hinge. Hinge's last cover was the first I ran in full color, back in Spring 1975. The promised Paul Lehr cover was tied to an interview by Vincent DiFate; neither Lehr nor DiFate are in this issue. Vinnie tells me that the backlog of artwork due from when he moved, plus another load of covers due over the Christmas season, forces him to cut back on something besides eating, sleeping, and saying hello to his kids. The interview, and Lehr cover, will be in the Summer issue.

The long-promised, long delayed excerpt from Isaac Asimov's book, *In Joy Still Felt*, appears in this issue. Like the first part of his autobiography, *In Memory Yet Green*, the new volume is a diary covering years in the evolution and life of Isaac Asimov. It is at once very interesting and very casual. I've chosen to publish excerpts tied together by a common theme: Isaac's attendance at the annual World Science Fiction Conventions. The Worldcon is the social high of each year, these days increasingly important as places for professionals (editors, artists, writers, publishers) to do business with each other, all the while surrounded by a lightshow of panels, programming, parties, fans, readers, parties, costume events, banquets, cigarette smoke, no sleep, parties, and parties. It's not that surprising the number of people who get back home with the flu or a bad cold: add up little sleep, smoky parties destroying nasal protection, strange hours, irregular eating times, constant near exhaustion from walking and standing all day, and it's a wonder that more people don't die from exposure to the Worldcon.

Isaac's autobiography carries us through these hectic days, down through the years, providing a continuity and managing to show how both Worldcons and Isaac have changed, deepened and evolved. I think you'll find it fascinating.

Also in the issue is Dick Lupoff's Guest of Honor speech from the 1979 Westercon, in which Dick attacks the creeping, insidious forces of stratification, racism (fan sapiens vs. pro sapiens), and commercialism. Can the Worldcon be saved from itself? Does it want to be? Look to Lupoff for a little light on the subject.

Bob Silverberg, continuing *The Silverberg Papers*, discusses gardening, drought, floods, and other topics of a green-thumbed nature. And you thought Bob was a skiffy writer—surprise!

Fred Pohl, staging a miraculous recovery from an attack of the gigglies, shows us just what he's made of in another erudite column about the meaning of life and the construction of world by Hal Clement. Stubbing his feet on the firm foundations of Clement's work, Fred removes his socks to display toes that are—hairy! Pohl will leave you gasping as he departs from his usual practices and reviews books and people with no regard for the disastrous emergence of a blue event horizon, into which this editor is fast if slowly disappearingggggggggg. . . .

Susan Wood, springing in miraculous fashion from the burnt-out and fevered brow of Dick Lupoff's *Book Week*, takes on the task of reviewing the latest SF. Boldly going where no Vancouverite has gone before, Susan squares her

shoulders and plunges into the new releases, reprints, anthologies and freezing waters of reviewerdom with a zest which leaves this editor slackjawed in amazement. I fervently hope Susan can overcome the deadliest peril the columnists in STARSHIP face: attack of the deadly deadline beast. Future issues will detail that struggle in detail. Or maybe not.

Finally, Bhob Stewart reviews strange and esoteric films—it's hard to write about exactly what he's doing when all the columns and articles are away being typeset—for viewers of the celluloid screen. Bhob's 2,000 words are easily worth a couple of films, at the very least.

I've had a letter recently from Derek Carter, who's moved to Chicago from Toronto, pausing in the process to marry Lynn Parks and become a proto-naturalized citizen (that's where they stick you in a blender with an american flag, some apple pie, and turn on the switch). As opposed to becoming a homogenized citizen. Derek tells me, "in moving from that blighted colonial spot to this rebel stronghold my interest in matters Canadian has diminished to nothing. Being away from the country's conflicts has left me without interest or inspiration. The indifference felt by the average American for that wilderness to the north is easily understood. So, should you wish my talents to appear in your pages again it'll have to be in some different form."

So *Derek Carter's Canadian History* goes the way of the Pogo Stick, Pogo, and Walt Kelly hisself. Sorry to see it go.

THE ECONOMY: I voiced my fears in an earlier issue of this magazine [Fall 1979] about the impending doom possibly hanging over the field. Unfortunately, that's hit home with an uncommonly small amount of advertising dollars available for this issue. Accordingly, I plan to cut back the size of the issue, withdrawing from a few chambers of my nautilus into somewhat smaller dimensions. Right now, this magazine is planned as a 32 plus 16 plus covers: total folio of 52 pages. Unfortunately, and largely, I feel, due to recessionary thinking which is causing quite a few publishers to cut back on their promotion budgets, when the giants sneeze I catch cold, to paraphrase an expression. If additional pages of advertising come in after these words are committed to paper, there is some possibility of a larger issue. Some: I make no promises I can't keep.

SCIENCE FICTION CHRONICLE: In early January, I now have about 500 subscribers to SFC. Elsewhere in this issue you'll find an ad for my news magazine. It makes an offer few people can refuse, and I invite you to take me up on it. SFC continues strong subscription and retail growth, and despite the vast increase in time needed to work on it, I'm happy with the directions it's going in. Like STARSHIP, SFC has started to settle down into a specific format: front page with news headlines, interior departments—booksellers, publishers, events, SFWA report, editorial, events, market reports, letters, reviews, classifieds, conventions—with a unified design element and location within each issue. All within five issues (as of early January). All at great cost, alas . . . I add that unlike certain other newspapers, news digests, galactic newspapers, etc., SFC contains unadulterated news, and is mailed first class—airmail overseas—to subscribers.

THE FUTURE: Next issue, DiFate willing, will mark the return of Vincent DiFate to these pages. To tie in with his interview with Paul Lehr will be a Lehr cover. In the unlikely event that the Lehr interview doesn't appear next issue, two alternate covers are hovering in the wings: a hardcore SF painting by Eddie Jones, and a genuine sexist cover which particularly struck my fancy, by David Mattingly of Los Angeles. Mattingly, a matte artist who worked on backgrounds for *The Black Hole*, sent in a piece of artwork which prominently features a beautiful girl in a skintight space suit. Oughta sell a lot of copies, I suspect . . . The point to sexism is to use it to the best advantage: sexism as a policy in office employment is immoral and illegal. Sexism to sell magazines is an accepted practice and policy of everything from *Playboy* to *Cosmopolitan* to *Time*. Other contents of the Summer issue will include the major article by Sam Moskowitz, tentatively entitled, "I Remember Derleth," plus short articles by Harlan Ellison, possibly Michael Bishop, and James Gunn. Plus columns by Pohl, Wood, and others. The next scintillating installment of *The Silverberg Papers*. Wonderful artwork, printed in all new ink on all new paper, made by cutting down trees in national forests in the middle of the night, stealing lumber trucks and having paper made by mafia-owned paper mills, using ink made from Iranian oil . . . Certainly is a wonderful world we live in. Excuse me, I think someone's trying to break in—gotta go check the lock on my bomb shelter . . .

Deadline for letters for next issue's letter column is April first. See you all next issue. ■

—Andrew Porter, Editor & Publisher

The Scenes of Life

ISAAC ASIMOV

Robyn was half a year old on August 19, 1955, and David was four the day after. The unprecedented summer heat had been broken by hurriances which, fortunately, did not produce extensive power failures (the worst losses of power lasted only twenty minutes). Hurricane Diane, however, dropped over a foot of rain on the Boston area on August 18 and 19, and large parts of New England were badly flooded.

This was inconvenient. The World Science Fiction Convention was about to come up in Cleveland over the Labor Day weekend of September 2 to 5, and some of the key highways from Boston to New York were flooded and closed.

My original plan had been to drive the family to New York and leave them there, going to Cleveland by myself (or with Gertrude, if she felt like going).

As it was I would have to go to New York by train, and taking two children plus the necessary luggage on the train seemed too severe a task. So I went to New York by myself, and Mary Blugerman traveled in the other direction to keep her daughter and grandchildren company.

I left for New York by train on Monday, August 29, and went on my rounds on the thirtieth. I saw Lillian McClintock of Abelard-Schuman and got her to agree to my doing a book on the chemical elements as my fourth juvenile science book (though my second and third were not yet published).

I visited Leo Margulies and his wife, Cylvia, in the evening. Leo and I were good friends, now, something I wouldn't have believed possible when he drove Merwin to reject "Grow Old with Me" eight years before. I also met Fred Dannay ("Ellery Queen") for the first time that day.

On September 1, 1955, Marty Greenberg picked me up in Manhattan, just two blocks from the old apartment in Stuyvesant Town, and we drove to Cleveland through mostly cloudy weather, without incident. It took us twelve hours—which Marty took in stride. I can't think of anyone who drives more smoothly and effortlessly.

That night I met Andre Norton who, writing excellent science-fiction juveniles under that name, was actually a woman. The masculine character of science fiction at that time made that sort of thing seem sensible then.

As guest of honor, I had a two-room suite (at the convention's expense), and I had parties in my room, as the guest of honor was supposed to do. It meant messing up the place with cigarette butts and liquor glasses and not being able to have any privacy or go to sleep till everyone decided to leave (and they never decided to leave). It seemed fun at the time but I never again gave parties at conventions.

A very pretty twenty-five-year-old girl named Ruth Landis attended that convention. It was her first. She looked, to my dazzled eyes, exactly like Grace Kelly. Dave Kyle saw her first and, like a fool, told her to wait at the elevator while he ran an errand somewhere. When he came back, she was gone, for I had seen her waiting there and had spirited her off. Thereafter, Randall Garrett, Forrest Ackerman, and I (and, I imagine others, when we weren't looking) kept squiring her here and there. On the night of Saturday, September 3, Randy and I found an all-night diner and we sat up all night with Ruth between us, talking all sorts of gibberish and loving it.

Dave Kyle had the last laugh, however. Though he was completely helpless during the convention, he managed to grab Ruth after the convention and eventually he married her.

On the whole, the Cleveland convention may have been small (only three hundred attended as compared with one thousand at some earlier conventions and four thousand at some later ones), but it overflowed with *Gemütlichkeit.* Randy and I saw to that single-handedly. Wherever we went, a comet tail of noise and laughter followed us, much of which we created ourselves.

At one point (I think it was at this convention, though it may just possibly have been at another) the program was delayed in the morning, and the audience was restless. Randall suggested he and I get up on the platform and engage in some snappy patter. We did and for a while we stood there (of approximately equal height and girth) and did well, I thought—until Harlan Ellison appeared at the back of the hall and called out, "There they are—Tweedledum and Tweedledee."

And I called out, "Come up here, Harlan; stand between us and be the hyphen." (That got the bigger laugh, I'm glad to say.)

The most characteristic joke (if you can call it that) of the convention arose accidentally. Judy Merril was there, glooming over an unhappy break in her relationship with a certain writer, and I did a lot of arm-on-the-shoulder-buck-up-old-girl routine.

Then came the awarding of the Hugos—and I'll have to explain about those.

The annual award of the movie Oscars has inspired annual awards of all kinds of named figurines for all kinds of activities, and science fiction did not lag behind.

The idea first occurred to a gentleman by the name of Hal Lynch, who passed on the idea to the fans who were organizing the eleventh convention, in Philadelphia in 1953. Several awards were manufactured by Jack McKnight of Lansdale, Pennsylvania. They were small stainless-steel rocket ships, finned at base and center and set on a cylindrical wooden base on which an appropriately inscribed plaque was set.

There was no feeling at the time that such an award ought to be repeated; it was just a feature of the eleventh convention. At the twelfth convention, held in San Francisco in 1954, there were no awards. At the thirteenth, though, the awards were presented again, and this time a new design was worked out by Ben Jason of Cleveland. It was larger than the earlier one, lacked the central fins, and was set on a cubical base. It could be mass-produced.

These awards were, very naturally, named Hugos (for Hugo Gernsback), and from the thirteenth convention on, they have been a feature of every World Science Fiction Convention. The banquet at which they were awarded has always been the convention's high point.

At Cleveland, it was Tony Boucher who was toastmaster, and it was Tony who handed out the Hugos in his own gentle way. The room was not air conditioned, and it was warm; Tony therefore began by suggesting that those gentlemen who felt that the warmth was excessive might feel free to dispense with the usual formality and—

About halfway through his hesitant suggestion, I got the drift, stood up, and took off my jacket. Since, as guest of honor, I was at the dais and conspicuous, everyone else did, too, but, as I recall, Tony didn't.

One of the Hugos was awarded to the very same science-fiction writer over whom Judy Merril was mooning, and he was not present to accept the award. Tony noted that and said, "In his absence, the award will be accepted by Judy Merril, by whom he has been so often anthologized." No one could have thought of a more graceful way of putting it.

However, I turned to the person next to me and said, jokingly, "Anthologized?—Always euphemisms."

It was a bit of mockery I need not have voiced, but I *did* whisper it. I *did* mean it to be just a quick, private joke. What I *didn't* know was that the microphone in front of me was live. The statement boomed out, and the entire banquet audience burst out into laughter. Judy Merril walked up as the waves of merriment parted before her and accepted the award—while I sat stricken on the dais. I think I was the only person in the room not laughing.

It wasn't just that I was horrified at having perpetrated so heartless a joke. It was that I was certain that as soon as Judy could get her hands on me, she would kill me.

She didn't. The next time I saw her, I noted that she looked sweet and gentle. I therefore sidled up to her (making sure my line of retreat was clear) and began a kind of incoherent apology. She thrust the whole thing aside. "It's okay, Isaac," she said. "It was a good thing. When I heard everyone laughing, I thought: What's the use of carrying a torch when no one else can possibly take it seriously? So I quit. I feel much better now."

She apparently meant it. Even though everyone in the place was shouting "Anthologize you!" and "Go anthologize yourself," Judy returned good for evil. On Monday the fifth, when I felt low because the convention was coming to an end, Judy dragged me off, fed me coffee, patted my shoulder, and made like a mother hen until I brightened up again.

I took the train back on the evening of the fifth and got home Wednesday afternoon.

It had been a hundred very unusual hours. I had never spent so long a time being idolized and lionized and made much of. When I got on the train and walked its length with nobody looking at me or whispering, "There's Asimov," I felt as though I couldn't bear the workaday world again.

On the morning of the twenty-fourth [of August, 1956] I felt the familiar abdominal stab that meant I had a kidney stone, the first of consequence in four years. I promptly drank two quarts of water and the pain abated, at least for a while.

It came at a particularly bad time, since the World Science Fiction Convention was to be held in New York that year and I was planning to go. I did *not* want to be immobilized by a kidney stone. I was going alone, by train, and I had made arrangements to room with Harry Stubbs. Harry made the ideal roommate (if one overlooks the fact that he is male). He didn't drink or smoke or carouse; he slept quietly without the trace of a snore; he was gentle and agreeable at all times.

Rather it was I who was the pest, involuntarily. I, too, didn't drink or smoke or carouse. I am told I snore, but Harry slept too soundly to be bothered by it. No, my problem was my kidney stone. It didn't have me in agony, but there was a dull pain associated with it that made it very hard for me to be pleasant, vivacious, and effervescent. Worse yet, the stone managed to get itself into a position where it activated the "I have to urinate" button, and I was up all night long trying to urinate, and failing. No amount of intellectual awareness of the fact that the bladder was empty kept me from the bathroom. What's more, the function rooms were not air conditioned, and therefore we had a very hot and humid weekend (don't tell me there's no connection), which didn't raise the level of my spirits.

Nevertheless, I did what I could. I met science-fiction writers Walter Miller and Mildred Clingerman for the first time. Randall Garrett and I shrieked it up in fashion reminiscent of Cleveland, whenever I could forget my kidney stone long enough to allow it.

Sunday, September 2, 1956, was my worst day. During the afternoon, I stood in the ballroom, signing books with a scowl on my face, for I was in agonizing discomfort.

Attending the convention (for that day only so that she and her brother could attend the banquet that night) was a young woman named Janet Opal Jeppson, who had just turned thirty.[1]

She had been introduced to science fiction by her brother, John (who was going to turn twenty-one later that month). Janet fell in love with science fiction as a result of reading Arthur C. Clarke's *Childhood's End*—and he was guest of honor, which accounted for her interest in the banquet. She then went on to my books and loved them as well.[2]

Seeing me signing books, Janet rushed to the huckster room to get something for me to sign. (Every convention has a huckster room where small dealers sell their secondhand magazines and books, and science-fiction-related paraphernalia.) She obtained a copy of *Foundation and Empire* and waited in line.

Finally, she reached me, rather put off by the fact that I was scowling and looking angry. She had no way of knowing I wasn't angry, but suffering torture.

I took the book from her, without looking up at her, and said, "What's your name?" so I could inscribe it properly.

"Janet Jeppson," she said, spelling it.

I signed appropriately, and said, making conversation, "And what do you do?"

"I'm a psychiatrist," she said.

"Good," I said, quite automatically, for, believe me, I was in no mood for dalliance, "let's get on the couch together."

Janet stalked off, furious, deciding that while my books were great, I was, personally, a "pill" (her most extreme derogatory term for anyone) and someone whom she never wanted to see again, lest repeated exposure to my nastiness spoil her pleasure in my books.

That was my first meeting with Janet.

The banquet that night was long and elaborate. Al Capp was a special guest and delivered a very funny speech that was excellently well received. Randall Garrett got up to sing the patter song from *The Gondoliers* ("Rising early in

1. I have this story from her, for I don't remember it at all.

2. Clarke and I are remarkably similar in our appeal. Anyone who likes his books seems sure to like mine, and vice versa.

the morning/We proceed to light the fire") but was a little high, I suppose, and didn't remember the words. So, since I was sitting at the dais and was supposed to give a talk of my own, I whispered across to Bob Bloch, who was toastmaster, "Quick, Bob, introduce me."

He did, in two sentences, and I was up and grabbed Randall and made him sing it along with me. I didn't know all the words either, but I knew enough to put them into his mind, we interspersed it with our own brand of lunacy, and it went better than singing it straight would have.

Then I vanished momentarily to visit the nearest men's room. I had warned the people who were organizing the convention that I would be periodically leaving the dais and explained why, and they said that it would be perfectly all right.

But when Arthur Clarke got up to speak, I was determined *not* to leave the dais until he was through, lest the audience assume that I was demonstrating my disapproval of what he was saying. I turned slightly green, therefore, when he rose with something like thirty sheets of typing paper, which he proceeded to read slowly. I can't remember ever spending a more agonizing hour.

There was no use trying to sleep that night. I spent the early part in Dick Wilson's room, and the later part in a cafeteria with A.J. Budrys and Jim Blish, and at 5 a.m. of September 3, I visited the men's room, and out came the kidney stone. It was not a very large one at all, but it had a crystalline outgrowth like a tiny sword.

Why the devil couldn't I have passed it three days sooner?

The next day, Al Capp drove back to Boston and took me and Harry Stubbs with him. Al and I alternated jokes all the say back (with Harry an appreciative audience), so that the ride was like an extension of the convention.

I had not attended a World Science Fiction Convention since the fourteenth in New York three years earlier. The fifteenth had been in London and the sixteenth in Los Angeles, and both had been out of the question.

The seventeenth World Science Fiction Convention, in 1959, was, however, slated for Detroit, and I was tempted. I had made it to Cleveland four years before, so why not Detroit? I wouldn't drive it, of course; I would take the train. So there I was in a roomette on Friday, September 4, 1959, on a 2 p.m. train that would have me in Detroit the next morning.

I suppose it's impossible not to have a little fantasy about finding a pretty girl in the roomette across the way and having a very pleasant conversation with who knows what added features (anything is possible in fantasies).

And that's what happened. When I settled down in my roomette who should be in the roomette across the way but a pretty girl. She smiled at me and I smiled back and we had a very pleasant conversation much of the way to Detroit. There were, however, *no* added features, because she was a nun. So much for fantasies.

As though to make up for it, almost the first thing I encountered at the convention was a fan I had never met before, a woman named Djinn Faine. She was 21 years old, 5 feet, 10 inches tall, 157 pounds in weight, and I believe her measurements were 40-25-40.

Someone (it may have been Bob Bloch,[3] but I honestly don't remember) warned me as soon as I showed up that there was a plan to bring me face to face with a spectacular woman in order to watch me faint dead away. (There was a rumor that had arisen, somehow, that I was extraordinarily susceptible to feminine beauty.)

I arranged to be introduced to her privately and asked permission to carry out a plan of my own. She was amused and agreed. Later on, when the wiseguys deliberately brought me face to face with her, I walked up coolly, put my right arm about her waist, my left behind her shoulder blades, bent her back, and kissed her soundly. I then walked off, dusting my hands and stifling a yawn. That is a bright moment in my memory.

I did hang around her, however, whenever I could, though a fat lot of good that did me. The line was incredibly long and, as nearly as I could tell, Djinn was equally pleasant and equally unattainable to all.

Harlan Ellison, who was still quite thin, and shorter than he seems to be now (no elevator shoes, perhaps), came up to her to ask for a dance and said, with a humility I have never heard from him, either before or since, "I suppose you wouldn't be interested in dancing with a little *vonts* like me."[4]

"I would be glad to dance with you," said Djinn, with perfect courtesy, and off they went, dancing delightfully.

For all I know this was the occasion that inspired the undoubtedly apocryphal story that Harlan once went up to a gorgeously stacked woman and said, in his customary direct manner, "What would you say to a little f——?"

And the woman looked down at him and said, "I would say, 'Hello, little f——.'"

Also dancing court on Djinn was Gordon Dickson. Gordie is a large fellow who, in person, seems rather bumbling, as though he were forever trying to gather his wits together and was in a constant state of mild befuddlement over their refusal to stay together once gathered. This, or course, is pure illusion, for if you listen quietly you find he is making perfect sense, and his writing, at least, is sharply incisive.

Gordie is still another one of those singers with whom science fiction is cursed. Like Sprague de Camp and Poul Anderson, Gordie Dickson has a singing voice of which any walrus would be proud.

On this occasion, though, Gordie wasn't relying on his singing voice but, I presume, on his masculine charm. (I suppose he has it; I'm no judge of such things.) He was clearly making every effort to ensnare the young woman. He was, in fact, *so* assiduous and *so* friendly that I assumed he was not only a long-time friend but that he was also on intimate terms with her. Naturally, I backed off. I love Gordie like a brother and he's also bigger than I am.

I thought I had guessed right when, not long after the convention, he married Djinn. But then I learned that their first meeting had been at the convention and that he had known her no longer than I had. Oh well, he was a bachelor and I was a married man.

I toastmastered the banquet on Sunday, September 6, and, as I recall, I spent part of the time making Willy Ley jokes.

Willy Ley, at the time, and for years afterward, wrote a monthly science column for *Galaxy*, as I did for *F&SF*.[5]

I said, for instance, "I happened to refer yesterday to Willy as the second-best science writer in science fiction, and I was told that that was a terribly rude comment to make under the circumstances and that I ought to apologize. Well, Willy, I don't understand what the circumstances are that made it rude, but I'll be glad to apologize right now and in public. Willy, I'm *sorry* you're the second-best science writer in science fiction."

I also told a couple of stories that I borrowed from Randall Garrett and that may quite possibly have been true.

In one, Randall said, "Tell me, Willy, do you prefer to be called Willy or Veelee?"

And Willy, in his thick Teutonic accent (which some people said he practiced before the mirror so that he

3. Bob is a tall, lean fellow, who is quiet, soft-spoken, and looks rather like an absent-minded accountant, but he is very possibly the funniest man in science fiction. He's not particularly ready with a quick upward jab of the verbal knife, as Harlan Ellison is at all times, or as I am if caught offguard, but give him time and he can build up enough in the way of dry comedy to inundate anyone.

4. *Vont* is Yiddish for "bedbug." *He* said it, not I.

5. There were even periods when we sent each other postcards telling each other our plans for future columns so we would not overlap. It wouldn't have mattered if we had, though, since our styles were so different.

would never lose it), answered, "Veelee oder Veelee, id mages no divverenz."

In the other, Randall came up to Willy, who was sitting relaxed, with a cigar in his mouth. Randall looked sadly at Willy's majestic corporation (for he was no longer the slim youth he had been when I had met him—and neither was I), tapped it lightly, and said, "Willy, Willy, you ought to diet."

And Willy looked down upon his abdomen indulgently and said, "All righd. Vot color?"

Finally I made up a story. The night before, I said, Willy had spent hour upon hour sweet-talking the girls. (That part was true. He spoke to them most earnestly indeed, and since I had better things to do than watch him all night, heaven only knows where it all ended—though somebody told me afterward he guessed the answer to the question "Willy Ley?" was in the affirmative.)

In any case, I said he spent hour after hour and that I came up to him at last (this part is the lie) and said to him, "Willy, Willy, you'll pay for this in the morning."

And Willy looked surprised and said, "Vy? Nobody is charging."

Each time I told a Willy Ley story, I looked down the head table toward where Willy was sitting to make sure that he wasn't showing signs of anger. Since the line of notables were shaking in uniform laughter, I kept going. It was only after it was all over that I found out I had been looking down the line in the wrong direction. Oh well, Willy was a teddy bear who never grew angry at anything or anyone.

I met Avram Davidson for the first time toward the end of the convention. He had a full beard, a keen intelligence, and was a practicing Orthodox Jew. I didn't meet many.

"Next year in Pittsburgh," I said to him, raising an imaginary glass of wine, for that was where the convention was scheduled to be held.

"Next year in Pittsburgh," he echoed, automatically, and looked chagrined at once at having been lured into a semimockery of the sacred "Next year in Jerusalem," which is part of the Passover Seder tradition.

Earlier, during a discussion in which he had stressed his orthodoxy just a little too hard for my comfort, I said, when asked my stand on the matter, "I'm an atheist."

"Yes," said Avram, without batting an eye, "but what kind of atheist? A Baptist atheist, A Hindu atheist? A Seventh-day Adventist atheist?"

I got the idea. "A Jewish atheist," I said, "which means I have to fight the irrational elements in Judaism particularly."

I finally caught the 7:30 p.m. train Monday evening. I had no nun to talk to on the way back but I did have George Scithers, an active science-fiction fan, who was also returning from the convention by train. (He got off at Worcester, Massachusetts.)

It was my first extended time with him. He was an electrical engineer, an Army officer, and a good and patient listener (something I always find soothing).

I was back in Newton the next day and found Gertrude and the kids waiting for me at the station.

I was planning to go to the eighteenth World Science Fiction Convention, which was to be held at Pittsburgh, and I intended to go by train. There was a train strike, however, and I drove instead.

I set out on Thursday, September 1, got to Reading, Pennsylvania, where I put up at a motel and then the next day got to Pittsburgh.

Almost the first thing that happened when I got there was that I found that Janet Jeppson was attending, too. I was delighted to see her, except that when I did see her she was with Theodore Cogswell. Ted is an English teacher as well as a science-fiction writer; has deep-set eyes, a slow way of talking, a fey sense of humor, and always appears to be intensely attractive to women.

I decided I didn't approve of Janet's being with Ted; I felt she wasn't safe. When I finally pried her loose, I managed to hang about her fairly constantly and saw to it that she was secure from all the predators. I don't honestly know that she wanted to be secure from predation, but it didn't occur to me to ask her, and she was too polite to send me away.

Early on, too, I met Gordie Dickson, whom I greeted with loud outcries of joy.

"Gordie," I said, "where's Djinn?" Naturally, I wanted to see that spectacular creature again even if she and Gordie were married.

But Gordie said, morosely, "How the hell should I know?"

It turned out that they had remained married only two months and were long divorced. Djinn was not at that convention, and I have never seen her again.

Judy Merril was there—radiant—with a new flame named Dan Sugrue, an oddly morose young man (whom Judy later married and divorced).

I remember one late-night session at the convention, when someone brought his sixteen-year-old daughter and left her there in our midst, apparently unaware that he was abandoning her to the mercies of some of the raunchiest characters in the world.

She was a sweet-faced girl, more beautiful than any sixteen-year-old girl I had ever seen, and who seemed much older than her age (though that might only have been my wishful thinking). She was a considerable damper on the conversation, though, except for Dan Sugrue's attempt to tell a joke fit for her virginal ears, which, however, quickly turned out to be something capable of embarrassing even Randall Garrett and myself—which Dan nevertheless was unable to turn off.

Judy Merril looked at the sixteen-year-old girl and said, sentimentally, "Four years ago, my daughter was sixteen years old."

"Really?" I said. "No one looking at you would guess you were young enough for that."

So she hit me, but not really hard. I managed to get to my feet again with hardly any assistance.

On Saturday, September 3, I helped auction off some authors and I was bought myself (for an hour) by three kids and an older person who was acting as their sitter.

I was toastmaster at the Sunday awards-giving banquet and that meant I handed out the Hugos. Generally, I did so without excessive enthusiasm, because I was only too aware that the coming of the Hugos and the ending of my science-fiction phase had very nearly coincided so that I had never had the chance of having my most famous stories compete for the award.

The Hugo-winning novelette this time, however, was *Flowers for Algernon* by Daniel Keyes, and about this one I could not help but be enthusiastic. It was, in actual fact, a wonderful story.[7] I enlarged on its merits as I called out its name as prize-winner and waited for Keyes to show up.

"How did he do it?" I demanded of the Muses. "How did he do it?"

I then looked up at a level about nine or ten feet from the floor in order to encounter the face of the giant whom I had never, until that moment, met.

A hand plucked at my elbow and I brought my eyes down to ordinary man-height. And from the round and gentle face of Daniel Keyes, as he reached for his Hugo, emerged the immortal words: "Listen, when you find out how I did it, let me know, will you? I want to do it again."

I took off early on the morning of Monday, September 5 (my mother's sixty-fifth birthday), and managed to miss the turnoff to the Pennsylvania Turnpike. That was even worse than missing the Route 2 turnoff on Route 128. I had to find my way back to the turnpike by alternate roads, but I eventually did.

I spent much of the summer of 1963 looking forward to the Labor Day weekend, when I would be attending

7. It was later expanded into a novel that I didn't like as well, and made into a movie called *Charly*.

another World Science Fiction Convention.

The nineteenth convention, in 1961, had been held in Seattle, Washington, and the twentieth, in 1962, had been in Chicago. Neither had been in the realm of possibility for me. The twenty-first convention, however, was to be held in Washington, D.C., and that city I could reach. It would be my first World convention in three years.

And it was not just a matter of attending it. I had a notion about the Washington convention which I was keeping strictly to myself. There might be a Hugo involved.

After all, everyone knew I didn't fly, so that everyone also knew that the twenty-first convention in Washington would be the first one I would attend after the publication of *The Hugo Winners*, in which I had made it amply plain that I had never received a Hugo.

Surely, then, the fans running the Washington convention would see to it that I got one for *something*. George Scithers, who was in charge of the convention (he had been on the train with me coming back from Detroit four years before), had called me long before to make sure that I would be willing to sign up for a panel discussion.

I agreed at once and then said, casually, "Do you want me as master of ceremonies?"

"No," said George, just as casually. "Ted Sturgeon is going to be master of ceremonies."

That was a dead giveaway. The master of ceremonies handed out the Hugo awards at the banquet, and when I was at a convention, I was almost always master of ceremonies. The only reason I could possibly be at a convention without being master of ceremonies (it seemed to me) was if I were going to get a Hugo. I couldn't very well give one to myself, so naturally they would need someone else—and George had gone to considerable lengths to make sure that I would be at the convention, using the panel as a pretext.

I was in high good humor over this. The business about never having gotten a Hugo had started off as a joke, of course, but in the process of joking, it had ceased to be one. I really *wanted* a Hugo.

But then, just a few days before the convention, George called again. "Isaac," he said, "Ted can't make it after all because of family complications. I know this is short notice, but can you be master of ceremonies after all?"

I agreed, of course, but my heart sank. No Hugo after all!

I went to the convention at the end of August in a rather depressed state. In that state, I was suddenly aware of the passage of time and the on-creeping of age. My friends, whom I saw at conventions at intervals of some years, were getting visibly old.

One of the first people I saw in Washington, for instance, was Ruth Kyle, the girl who, as Ruth Landis, had been the very image of Grace Kelly and who had so enlivened the 1955 convention for a number of us. Eight years had passed and she was now a plump matron.

I escaped from these evidences of mortality and from my own Hugoless state by getting away to do some sight-seeing—the Smithsonian Institution, the Washington Monument. I even took a tour through the White House.

But then on September 1, 1963, came the award luncheon and it was up to me to hand out the Hugos. I did what I could to trade on my own annoyance and I handed out each Hugo with a carefully graded increase in my level of hostility.

When Fred Pohl, that friend of my childhood, approached to pick up a Hugo on behalf of a winner, I cried out as he came bounding up, "Break a leg, friend of my childhood!"—but he didn't.

Finally, there was only one Hugo left to be awarded, and it was labeled "Dramatic Award." I didn't think anyone would be interested in that since it would go to some movie or TV show with no one involved who was personally known to anybody, so I let the audience wait while I launched into a short speech of not-so-mock annoyance.

"You know why I've never had a

Hugo?" I finally said in peroration, waving my fist in the air. "It's because I'm Jewish, that's why. It's because of anti-Semitic prejudice in high places. It's because you're all a bunch of Nazis." Naturally, this got a big laugh, and I opened the envelope and found that the "Dramatic Award" typed on it had just been put there as a blind.

The final Hugo was, of course, for *me* "For putting the science in science fiction, Is—" and stopped cold.

I was getting a special Hugo for my *F&SF* essays.

There wasn't any question that I was surprised. The day never existed when I could fake that look of stunned astonishment on my face. The audience roared; it roared for ten minutes. When everyone died down and I caught my breath, George handed me the Hugo and I said, "You've ruined my *shtick*, damn it." (I tried to feign indignation, but I was smiling all over. I was delighted.)

Apparently, Ted Sturgeon *had* been chosen master of ceremonies because they were planning to give me a Hugo, and apparently he *had* been kept away by family difficulties.

I said, "Then why did you ask me to be master of ceremonies, George? There were plenty of other choices."

"Oh well," said George, "we thought it would be funnier that way, but I have to admit no one ever dreamed you would lead up to it so beautifully."

I said, "Didn't you think it would look peculiar to have me give a Hugo to myself?"

"Sure," said George, "but the committee decided you were the only writer in science fiction who could give himself a Hugo without being embarrassed."

"Wiseguy," I said—but he was probably right.

The twenty-second World Science Fiction Convention in 1964 had been in Oakland, California, and the twenty-third, in 1965, had been in London. I was unable to attend either, of course.

In 1966, however, the twenty-fourth World Science Fiction was to be held in Cleveland, as it had been in 1955 when I had been guest of honor. Then I had gone alone; this time I took the family.

We left on Thursday, September 1, stayed in Syracuse overnight, and were in Cleveland on Friday afternoon. We stayed at an old hotel and were put up in an old and terribly depressing room, with closets that were (I do not exaggerate) six inches deep.

Gertrude was furious, and it was almost like our first trip to Hilltop Lodge, twenty-three years before, when it had seemed there would be no way out but to go home.

The same lucky thing happened as at Hilltop Lodge. Then it had been Lester Weill; now, as we went down to the lobby to demand a better room or, if one did not exist, to go home, we met Harlan Ellison, bubbling over with enthusiasm and charisma.

To me he was just a little, sharp-featured guy, highly intelligent and as lively as quicksilver; but to women, somehow, he was a lot more than that. God knows what they see, but they see it. In five minutes flat, Gertrude was filled with delight and I could see that even Robyn was sparkling.

We had dinner with Harlan, and he kept us all thoroughly amused. We then attended parties till 5 a.m. and all was well. Even our closets seemed bearable.

At one of the parties, Evelyn del Rey was sitting on a windowsill and greeted me with some sardonic statement. She and I were always fencing when we met, and she was quick-witted enough to force me to extend myself.

This time I didn't feel like being extended. She had been Evelyn Harrison before she had been Evelyn del Rey, and she had been at the New Year's Eve party a dozen years before. I had kissed her then, and I had never forgotten that. I thought of it now, and since we were alone in the corner—or at least since everyone was talking to someone else—I said to her on impulse,

"You know, each time I see you I remember the time at Roz Wylie's New Year's Eve party when I kissed you. It was the first time any girl kissed me quite like that, and it meant a lot to me. I didn't think any girl ever would, so I'd rather not cross swords, Evelyn."

She looked at me with her defenses all down and said, "You remember that?"

I said, "Of course."

She said, "I didn't think you did."

From then on, for the rest of her life, she never fenced with me again. We were, whenever we saw each other, always warm friends.

There was no mystery to it. She had remembered and she had thought the episode had been of so little importance to me that I did not remember it, and she resented that. I have always been sorry, and annoyed at my own stupidity, that I had not made it perfectly clear long before. I could then have avoided mangling her self-esteem.

I met Gene Roddenberry at the convention, and we were all shown a preview of the new TV show "Star Trek." I must say that I watched it without any notion of how important it would become to science-fiction fandom. No breath of prescience stirred within me.

At 1 p.m. on Sunday, September 4, someone decided that Harlan and I ought to share the stage and engage in an impromptu battle of wits. Harlan was quite eager to do so, being quite confident that he could demolish anyone, and I was quite reluctant to do so because I was quite confident of the same thing. However, I couldn't very well back away, partly because I didn't want to seem to be a coward and partly because everyone kept telling me that I was the only person at the convention who could keep up with Harlan-in-full-cry, and I turn soft as a grape under flattery.

Harlan is a lot more voluble than I, but a lot less flexible. He is prone to use vulgar language and cannot prevent himself from doing so. My own strategy, then, was to deliberately lead the chain to insults as close as I could to obscene implications without using a single improper word, quite sure that Harlan, in his eagerness to go me one better, would find himself stuttering over obscenities.

In the end, though, Harlan began to tell the story of an encounter between himself and Frank Sinatra, in which Harlan had stood up to that show-business despot and had come off the winner. I willingly suspended the dialog to listen, and in the end we all cheered him as the worthy representative of the science-fiction fraternity; I, loudest of all.

That was the first of a series of encounters between us at conventions. It was all in good fun and was intended as in-humor for in-people, but some of the more unsophisticated fans inevitably assumed the battle to be a serious one and Harlan and me to be the deadliest of enemies. As it happens, of course, we are buddies, and though we live three thousand miles apart, one of us frequently calls the other for advice or help, and we never fail each other. Yet I must forever assure people we are friends, and I'm sure that so must he.

That same evening was the award banquet and Sprague de Camp, who was guest of honor, delivered a sober and interesting speech. I myself, as usual, was on the dais, for I was to hand out the Hugos—but this was a matter of only academic interest to me for once, since I had already gained a Hugo three years before in Washington, and one was enough to establish the principle.

Yet one thing of mine was nominated. The organizers of the convention had the intention of awarding J.R.R. Tolkien a Hugo (at least I think they had the intention). Tolkien's Lord of the Rings trilogy was out now and it had taken fandom by storm.[8]

The convention organizers, therefore, proposed a Hugo nomination in a new category, the "Best All-Time Novel Series." They defined a "novel series" as consisting of at least three interconnected novels, and advanced Lord of the Rings as an example of what they meant, which, to me, was a clear hint as

8. It had taken me by storm, too. Since it came out I have read it, and *The Hobbit*, four times and have liked the books better each time.

to how they wanted the voting to go.

However, to make it look unforced, other series were nominated. These included Heinlein's Future History series; E.E. Smith's Lensman series; Burroughs' Mars series; and my own Foundation series.

I felt that Tolkien was certain to win, and fairly so, and that Heinlein, Smith, and Burroughs all had enough devotees among the young fans attending the convention (and who did the voting) to give each a good shot at second place. Foundation, I honestly felt, would finish in last place, and I grieved at being the sacrificial lamb. I was reconciled to losing, but I hoped against hope that Burroughs or Smith would manage to place fifth. I would be delighted to make fourth.

When it came time to hand out that award, however, the organizer of the convention hastily whispered to me that Harlan wanted to handle the novel series item and said, in a shamefaced manner, "We had better let him. You know Harlan."

I certainly knew that Harlan was capable of creating a giant-size fuss if he didn't have his way, and I didn't want him spoiling the banquet, so with what grace I could muster I gave way.

Harlan came dancing up, made a few rapid remarks that had everyone laughing, and then announced the nominees and *omitted* the Foundation series.

I called out from my seat, in real outrage, "Hey, Harlan, at least *mention* the Foundation series."

Harlan didn't even hear me, or at least he made no sign that he had. He reached for the envelope, tore it open, waited the inevitable heartbeat for the sake of suspense, and said, "And the winner: Isaac Asimov for the Foundation series."

I thought it was Harlan's idea of a joke and sat there without moving and looking rather annoyed until everyone started laughing, and I gathered I had really won. And there were Gertrude and the children beaming, and everyone still laughing and applauding, and I got up to accept my Hugo, thoroughly and utterly speechless.

I don't think the organizers of the convention had thought anyone would take the award away from Tolkien, and it was the first indication I had had, the first really *convincing* indication, since the first of the Foundation series had appeared twenty-four years before, that the series was so popular. In fact, I suddenly realized that just as "Nightfall" was the most highly regarded science-fiction piece among the shorter lengths, *The Foundation Trilogy* was the most highly-regarded science-fiction item among the longer lengths.

That I could bear off the prize, so to speak, both long and short, seemed utterly improbable to me, yet I had done it, and I remember feeling utterly delighted that John Campbell was alive to see it. It seemed to justify the faith he had had in me when I was eighteen and when no one but Campbell himself could have seen anything at all in "Cosmic Corkscrew."

According to my diary, "The evening was one great, gorgeous triumph! I spent hours laughing, hugging, and singing, and didn't go to bed till 4 a.m."

And the next day we left for home.

The twenty-fifth World Science Fiction Convention was being held in New York in 1967. It was the first time the convention had been held in that city since 1956 (the convention at which I had met Janet Jeppson for the first time and during which I had been tortured by a kidney stone).

Now, in 1967, it had been five years since I had had a troublesome kidney stone, and I was the proud owner of two Hugos and was virtually an elder statesman in the field.

On September 1 I took the family to New York, and that evening we had dinner with Gene Roddenberry and his wife. Since the children watched "Star Trek" with fascination (and so did I), they were fearfully impressed at my easy cameraderie with Gene.

Not everything about the convention was friendly, however. Harlan Ellison had written a "Man From U.N.C.L.E." segment in which a character was alleged by Judy Merril to be modeled on herself in a defamatory way. During the convention, Judy had Harlan served with a summons in preparation to suing him, and I spent some time going from one to the other, trying to get Harlan to apologize or Judy to reconsider.

It was a case of shuttle diplomacy years before Kissinger made it famous. The only trouble was that my effort did not succeed. Neither would bend.

On the night of September 3, we and Henry Blugerman, too,[9] had dinner with the de Camps. It was quite a sedate affair, and as we left, I saw a bunch of my convention buddies (including Lester del Rey, Fred Pohl, and so on) seated at a long table and just getting ready to begin theirs.

For a moment I was inclined to regret my own family involvement and to wish I were with the group. It turned out just as well. Although our dinner had passed without incident, the group could not get service, and when the salads came, after long delay, they were the wrong ones. Lester del Rey, unable to get his salad changed, lost his temper and scaled it across the restaurant as though it were a Frisbee, and then all left.

The next night, the Hugo awards banquet was even more of a shambles in some ways. Harlan Ellison was master of ceremonies (rather to my chagrin, for I felt that I had a stranglehold on that post any time I was there), and he did not conduct it properly. He was very witty and funny, but he kept the stage interminably and made it a Harlan evening, which was not what it was supposed to be.

Taking their cue from him, those whom he finally allowed to speak, also went on forever. Sam Moskowitz got up and stolidly insisted on a ten-minute eulogization of an award-winning fan, ignoring the restlessness of the audience. Finally, when Lester del Rey arose to make his guest of honor speech, there was no time left and he could only say a few words.

The next day we went home, stopping at Windsor Place first to greet my mother on her seventy-second birthday.

The twenty-ninth World Science Fiction Convention in Boston was the most smoothly run convention I ever attended, thanks to the hard work of Sue and Tony Lewis, who ran it, and who were my friends from the old NESFA days.

Janet didn't come with me, reluctant to interfere with the reunion I was bound to have with my children, and the del Reys promised her they would take care of me. And so they did; they scarcely ever let me out of their sight. They even arranged to have the room next to mine, and we had breakfast together in their room every morning.

The Hugo-award banquet on September 5 (my mother's seventy-sixth birthday) was the high point of the convention. I sat at the dais, for I was going to hand out the Hugos, and Bob Silverberg was the toastmaster (and an excellent one—no one is better than he at sardonic humor).

Robyn, radiantly beautiful, was at my side, knitting calmly. Good old Cliff Simak, now sixty-seven, was guest of honor and, in the course of his talk, he introduced his children, who were in the audience. Robyn whispered to me, "You're not going to introduce me, are you, Dad?"

I whispered back, "Not if you don't want me to, Robyn."

"I don't." She knitted a while, then said, "Of course, if you want to refer casually to your beautiful, blue-eyed, blond-haired daughter, you may do *that.*" So I did.

Bob Silverberg made frequent references to the argument that had taken

9. Things had not worked well with Henry after all. The initial euphoria after his operation gave way to gloom when it turned out that the cancer had metastasized and was inoperable. He was undergoing x-ray treatment, but things looked dark.

place in St. Louis in 1968 when Harlan Ellison had taken up a collection to pay for some damage inadvertently done to hotel property and, on collecting more than the required sum, had calmly assigned the excess to his own pet project, a science-fiction class at Clarion College.

Bob therefore made frequent mock announcements of various objects that would be "donated to Clarion" and got a laugh each time.

When it was my turn to stand up and give out the awards, I couldn't resist invading Bob's turf by singing a limerick I had hastily constructed while listening to the toastmastering. It went:

There was a young woman named Marion
Who did bump and did grind and did carry on.
The result of her joy
Was a fine bastard boy
Which she promptly donated to Clarion.

The audience saw where it was going halfway through the last line and the roar of laughter drowned out the final three words.

In the course of the banquet, Lester presented a moving encomium on John Campbell. He is excellent at that sort of thing and constantly threatens to deliver one on me if it becomes necessary; and that does provide me with a marvelous incentive to outlive him if I can.

I was back home on September 7, and the next day I finally finished all of *The Gods Themselves.* It had taken me seven months, and it was ninety-three thousand words long.

We were home on the twenty-third and prepared for the thirty-first World Science Fiction convention, which was to be held in Toronto. That was a little far for me, but *The Gods Themselves* had been nominated for a Hugo and I wanted to be there on the chance that it might win.

En route we stopped off at Niagara Falls, where I had the odd sensation of being a seasoned traveler. Janet had never seen them, but it was my third visit there, and I squired her around. By the afternoon of August 31, we were in our hotel in Toronto.

The Hugo awards banquet was on the evening of September 2, 1973, with Bob Bloch giving the guest-of-honor speech and Lester del Rey toastmastering. The Bovas and Pohls were at our table, along with Gordon Dickson.

It was a prize-winning table, indeed. Ben won the Hugo for best editor, and Fred Pohl won in the best-short-story category for a story he completed that Cyril Kornbluth had once started. Fred therefore had two Hugos, one for himself and one for Cyril. And, of course, I won the Hugo for the best novel, thanks to *The Gods Themselves.*

Afterward, I went up to Ben Bova's suite to help celebrate. I had promised Janet, who favored early-to-bed, since we would be on the road the next day, that I would only stay for fifteen minutes. After an hour had passed, however, she called to make sure I was all right, and we begged her to join us.

In ten minutes more there was a knock at the door and I said, jubilantly, "Janet is here" and threw the door open, dashing through.

Ben opened the real door to let Janet in, while I emerged, shamefaced, from the closet. Ben at once gleefully informed the assembled multitude that "the greatest mind in science fiction" couldn't tell a closet door from a hall door.

The thirty-second World Science Fiction Convention was being held in Washington and, on August 29 Janet and I took the train to Washington in order to attend. It proved to be the largest World convention we ever attended—four thousand people.

The de Camps were there, with Sprague looking quite well.

On August 30, Harlan and I had a public duel of the kind we often had to amuse the fans. This time we had a larger crowd than ever and we stood on two separate platforms, answering questions and poking what we considered to be good-natured fun at each other. Harlan was his usual salty self.

This time there was a Washington *Post* reporter in the audience, and the duel was written up in most unflattering terms. Harlan was horrified.

I said, "Forget it, Harlan. It was an in-joke for SF fans only and the reporter just didn't understand."

Harlan would not be soothed. He said we must never do it again and, of course, I said that if he didn't want to, we wouldn't.

The awards banquet on September 1 was not very successful. A relatively new hand at it, Andy Offutt, was the toastmaster and the task got away from him. Harlan didn't help with his comments from the audience.

We got home on September 2.

It may seem to you, by the way, when you read my descriptions of my stays at conventions that they consist entirely of idle chatter. That is not so, of course; they are considerably more than infantile fun and games.

Science-fiction conventions have a serious purpose, one that is primarily aimed at the science-fiction reader who is given his chance to participate in a subculture that is important to him. That is why the conventions shift their site from year to year. This gives the average fan of a particular region, one who has perhaps little in the way of pocket money, a chance to attend, now and then, without having to travel far.

Most of the fans attending are young people, many of them in their teens. It is a great opportunity for them to meet those writers who are, in their eyes, legendary heroes.

There are celebrity introductions for the readers, and autographing sessions. There are fans who cart in a pile of books taller than temselves in order to get each one signed. If, for some reason, there are fans without books to sign, there is invariably the huckster room, where books and magazines (both new and secondhand) are sold in incredible profusion.

In one way, autographing became an increasing problem for me, since it supplied me with more and more work; partly because the number of my books was increasing steadily, and partly because those books were individually popular. In another sense they were not a problem, because I loved autographing. Some writers cut down on their labors by refusing to sign anything but hardcover books, but I have never refused anything and will sign torn scraps of paper, too, if that is asked of me.[6]

When I am feeling particularly suave during the autographing sessions, which is almost all the time, I kiss each young woman who wants an autograph and have found, to my delight, that they tend to cooperate enthusiastically in that particular activity.

The conventions include talks and panel discussions on every aspect of the writer's/artist's/editor's/agent's life; on the problems of writing and of publishing: and on all the fringe areas, too, from Hollywood to comic books. Readers are fascinated by this, since so many of them are aspiring writers.

Every talk, every discussion is thrown open to questions from the floor, which would continue (sometimes with articulate hostility) to the end of time if the question period were not arbitrarily cut off.

Yes, indeed, there are serious aspects of conventions, but the serious parts and the laughter, too, inevitably come to an end eventually. ■

—Isaac Asimov

6. There is the occasional joker who hands me a blank check. I just sign it along with everything else, but when the joker gets it back he finds I have signed it "Harlan Ellison."

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BRIAN M. FRASER

HAL CLEMENT

When hard-core science fiction fans get together to argue the technological niceties or scientific discrepancies of their favorite SF stories, the name that inevitably crops up as synonymous with the hardest of "hard" science fiction is Hal Clement.

But Hal Clement is really just the SF writing pseudonym of Harry C. Stubbs, a Massachusetts teacher of astronomy, chemistry and physical sciences at Milton Academy in a suburb south of Boston.

As Clement, Stubbs has been writing science fiction since the early 1940's and has nine full-length novels to his credit, as well as many short stories published in the genre's monthly digest magazines.

As it turned out, he didn't really need to write under a pen-name.

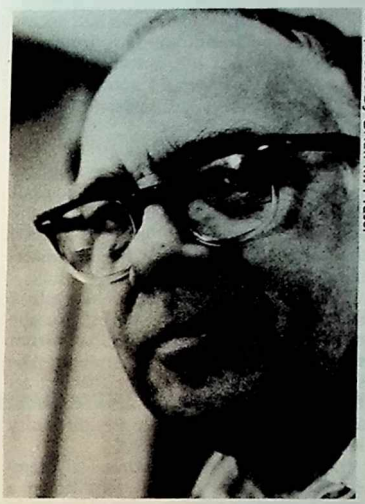
"When I sold my first science fiction story," says Harry Stubbs, "I was a college undergraduate in astronomy at Harvard. I had done a couple of articles for *Sky and Telescope* magazine, which was published at Harvard at that time, and I was a little uneasy at the reaction of people like Donald Menzel and Harlow Shapley at having the same name appear in their dignified, slick astronomical publication and in a pulp magazine.

"So when I sent in the story to John W. Campbell, Jr. I said that I wanted to use a pen-name, without specifying what kind.

"He wrote back when he accepted the story, saying that this was all right with him but advising me to use a name whose source could be known because it was statistically certain to be someone else's name as well and I should be prepared to defend myself.

"Hal, of course, is a perfectly ordinary contraction of Harry, my first name, and Clement is my middle name, so I used that.

"By the time I discovered that neither Dr. Menzel or Dr. Shapley would have minded in the least—they both liked science fiction and had tried to write it themselves—I had sold two or three stories, the name had commercial value, so I stayed with it."



All photos by Brian M. Fraser

All of Stubbs' writing, as Hal Clement, whether it's speculative fiction, hard science columns or articles for such SF magazines as *Unearth* and *Galileo*, is spare-time activity, crammed into evenings, weekends or school vacation periods.

At any free moment, he will plunk his typewriter down, on a kitchen or dining room table and continue his article where he left off. Behind his two-story suburban residence, on a tree-shaded yard, Stubbs has built a small working study, a writing retreat, where not too much typing was currently being done, however, because of the piles of publisher-supplied paperback reprints of his and other authors' works. Books, papers and magazines cover the desk, floor and tops of the already-overflowing bookshelves of hardcover fiction, reference books and old magazines. Meanwhile, the disorganized but creative thinking environment is suitably decorated by original art and science fiction prints by Kelly Freas and others, including the framed cover painting for Clement's latest SF novel *Through the Eye of a Needle.*

The first published story under the Hal Clement by-line was titled "Proof," and appeared in the June 1942 issue of *Astounding.*

"The main character was a native of the sun," recalls Stubbs. "I'd cooked up a situation where you could have fairly stable structures at rather high temperatures and he (the protagonist) was quite unable to believe that matter could be in the solid state; he was used to only gas and plasma. And the story dealt with his collision with the Earth."

Even this brief outline of his first published piece of fition indicates the strong basis of science to his story concept and the importance of consistent scientific thinking which has been his trademark.

"The 'hard science' SF story," according to Stubbs, "simply implies that the author has been as careful as he possibly could not to violate any of the rules we think we know in the physical or biological sciences. Or—there's one exception—if he did, he gave a reasonably solid excuse for it somewhere quite early in the story. The implication in a sense is rather like the mystery story where it's considered fair play to provide all your clues fairly early in the book.

"In 'hard' science fiction, it's not exactly a mystery but there is a problem always involved in the story. And it's considered fair game, at least by me, to make the problem solvable by someone who knows enough science and thinks of it at the right time.

"The aim, of course, is to make it a surprise," says the author. "You sneak your solution in and take the reader unawares. At the same time, he should kick himself afterwards for not spotting it."

Hal Clement's specialty is inventing strange new worlds and alien life-forms, both of which seem scientifically and psychologically believable to the reader.

"Usually, I cook up a planet as different from Earth as I can but that is still as reasonable as I can make it. Having done that, I try to figure out

what might logically happen on it and hope eventually some story will crop up. But the fun part is making up the planet or developing the general scientific background.

"There are two ways to do this. One is to find some strange solar system in *Sky and Telescope*, or some such publication where you read an article on a peculiar star, and try to figure out what its planets would be like in as much detail as possible, and then go on to the story. The other technique is to have some idea of the sort of environment you want and cook up a planet which will have that environment. Both ways are okay; I've used them both.

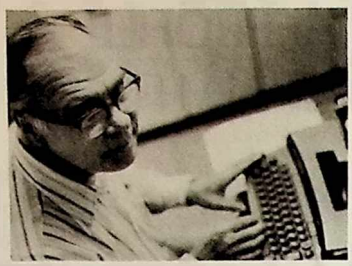
"But I think what I do most often is to be contrary," says Harry Stubbs' SF persona Hal Clement. "Any time that I hear someone use the words 'of course,' I immediately start wondering what things would be like if that 'of course' weren't true. This was the origin of my own favorite of my works, *Mission of Gravity*.

"I had read for years before writing it, stories taking place on Heavy Gravity worlds, many stories taking place on Low Gravity worlds and off worlds entirely where effective gravity was zero. But, *of course*, you could never have on any one world several different effective gravities.

"So I cooked up the planet Mesklin over a period of several years and eventually wrote a story about it. The world itself was believed to exist at that time, although it wasn't quite sure whether it should be called a planet or a star. There appeared to be a third object in the binary star system of 61 Cygni whose mass was worked out and its orbit was worked out.

"So I had a mass to start with, several times that of Jupiter, though its volume would actually have been less than Jupiter's because we'd start with collapsed matter at the center. I took the volume as suggested by one of the early articles on the planet as one of my fixed values. That would have given 200 or 300 Earth Gravities if it had been a spherical object. So I decided instead to set the planet spinning so rapidly that centripetal acceleration at the equator would take care of most of the gravity. This, of course, would have given it an enormous equatorial bulge. And I had some difficulty with this calculation," admits Stubbs, who now carries a pocket electronic calculator affixed to his belt for any on-the-spot mathematical estimating. "This was before the time when it was so easy to steal computer time and I had to work it all out on a slide rule. This was '53 when I was doing most of the writing.

"But I had an ellipsoidal cross-section for a spheroid just under 20,000 miles in equatorial diameter and 12,000, less than that I guess, in polar diameter,



spinning with a period of just under 18 minutes. According to my slide rule at the time, this gave me just about 3 G's effective at the equator and 660 Gravities at the poles.

"More recent readers who had access to high-speed computers have informed me that this was not a stable arrangement—the planet would actually come to a point at the edges instead of a nice smooth ellipse.

"But I don't mind too much. I'm sorry to be wrong but if some people enjoyed the story enough and got sufficiently interested in it to do the computer work, then I guess I satisfied the story requirements of being entertaining anyway.

"I think basic research is Man's best line to survival," says Stubbs, "so the motivation for visiting an oddball planet seems to me to be clear enough. The specific problems faced by the characters are generally numerous enough on an odd planet not to have any difficulty in putting a story together."

Mission of Gravity author Hal Clement continues, "They've sent down a very expensive remote control probe in the 600 Plus gravity region to conduct experiments, take readings and so on. Presumably—I don't think I said this specifically in the story—it telemetered some of the results back but there were also little experiments, films and tapes that they wanted to get back up.

"But when they pressed the Lift-Off button, nothing happened. And there they were with billions of dollars worth of equipment and impossible-to-calculate knowledge down there at the Pole. Something really had to be done to retrieve it."

To resolve this "scientific problem" central to the whole plot of *Mission of Gravity*, and to introduce another story element intriguing to the reader, Clement designed a unique alien life-form native to his variable-gravity planet Mesklin. These Mesklinites were small creatures, a cross in shape between caterpillars and lobsters.

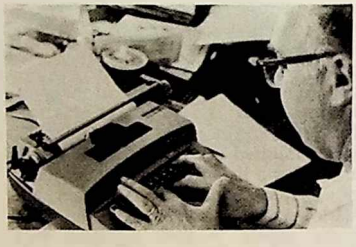
"I felt the horizontal structure with a large number of legs seemed the best engineering in a high-gravity situation," says their creator. "They were supposed to have two pair of pincers, one at each end—I think I specified rear ones occasionally.

"I didn't want any 40 pound masses running around on that planet; with that gravity, smaller size would certainly be favored. So I made my creatures smaller and I left a good deal of their details to the readers' imagination. I've implied in later books that they were very long-lived and I have carefully avoided any discussion of their reproductive systems."

As in the invention of the planet itself, in which he considered all the implications of astronomical position, temperature, gravity, geology and physics, Stubbs had fun using the sciences of chemistry and biology to explain how his aliens could withstand the extreme gravity conditions of Mesklin.

"I implied that the chemical bonds in their systems were stronger, composed of carbon-to-carbon bonds mostly, as in diamonds," he says. "And the implication that in their biochemistry they used a redox (oxidation reduction) metabolism analogous to ours but that they got their energy by reducing unsaturated carbons to saturated ones by the free hydrogen in the atmosphere."

Despite this somewhat technical description, the specific aliens in the actual story are real individuals, with definite personality traits of their own. The main non-human protagonist, a sea captain by the name of Barlennan, is particularly captivating—a very sharp schemer.



But, obviously, it's the working out of the science which is paramount in a Hal Clement science fiction story. It is, in fact, the high "hard science" content and internal consistency in his stories that appeals to the really devoted coterie of SF fans.

Almost twenty years after *Mission of Gravity*, Clement wrote a sequel titled *Star Light*, published by Ballantine Books in 1971. In it, he employed the same basic cast of aliens, his Mesklinites, working in cooperation with a new set of human scientists to explore another High Gravity planet or star called Dhrawn.

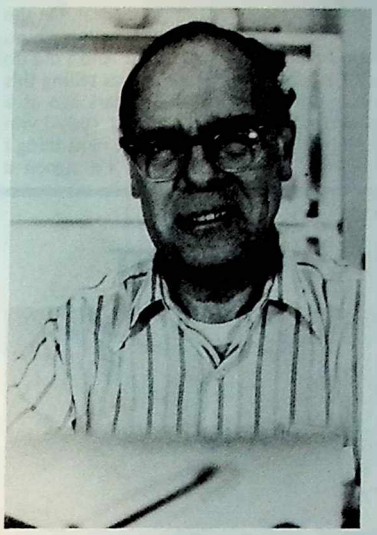
Another of his strange planet novels, *Iceworld*, came with a ready-made globe, Earth, but viewed from the perspective of extraterrestrials originating in a very hot solar system who consider our environment practically frigid.

"The non-human characters came from a planet, which I did work out in a fair amount of detail, circling an A-type star like Altair or Vega at a distance at which its surface temperature was enough to vaporize sulphur. And sulphur, which is right under oxygen in the periodic table," says Stubbs, continuing his chemical explanation, "was their oxidizer.

"Oxygen, considering its availability in the universe, would be on their planet in compound form but they certainly would not have run into it in gas form with a free-sulphur atmosphere because the two would have combined immediately. But what they really didn't know was the most peculiar of compounds—water."

The latest Hal Clement novel, *Through the Eye of a Needle* (Del Rey Books, 1978) is another sequel, this time to his own novel *Needle*, originally published under the title *From Outer Space*, some 28 years previously. And *Needle* is regarded by many as a science fiction "classic" on the theme of human-alien symbiosis.

The fantastic but conceivable premise of both books involves the presence of a four-pound jelly-like extraterrestrial who crashlanded on Earth in search of another villainous member of his race. These beings exist in symbiosis with other life-forms, living within their bodies and disposing of germs, infections and internal threats in return for the greater mobility and strength of their hosts.



In Clement's stories, the good alien, called simply "The Hunter," takes residence in the human body of Robert Kinnaird, a teenager who lives on an island in the South Pacific. In *Needle*, this pair must discover the bad alien, who could be residing within anyone on the island or even have departed into the greater mass of humanity, hence the analogous title for their search.

The sequel concerns the desperate health situation in which Bob Kinnaird finds himself after seven years as a symbiotic partner or "symbiote"—sorry, that should be "symbiont" and this semantic difference is one of the reasons that Clement wrote a sequel after almost three decades.

Says Clement about *Needle*, "In that story, I frequently referred to one of the partners in the biological relation called symbiosis as a symbiote. It will be obvious to many that I was never exposed to a course in the classic tongues of Italy or Greece. A biology-teaching colleague pointed out to me, gently and courteously but much too late, that the proper word is symbiont."

"Unfortunately," he continues, "my erroneous contribution to the language has appeared quite frequently in other stories and even in their titles. I regret this, but don't know what to do about it except what I am doing now."

"I formally withdraw the word symbiote," says the science fiction author, "and in this book (*Through the Eye of a Needle*) replace it with the proper one."

But there's another behind-the-scenes explanation why Harry Stubbs as Hal

Clement produced a sequel to *Needle*. Basically, it was the result of talking himself into a corner.

"A friend of mine, William Bachrach, a science fiction fan now living in St. Croix, V.I. was always bugging me to do a sequel to *Needle*. Whenever I met him at a convention, he'd ask: 'When's the *Needle* sequel coming?'

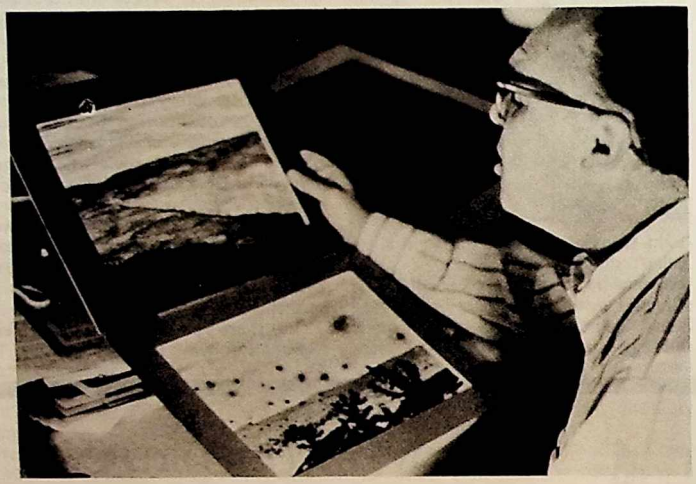
"One time, four years or so ago, he came up to me at a convention and said, 'All right, Hal, you promised me that if I'd stop smoking you'd write a sequel to *Needle*. Well, I've stopped. When are you going to get to it?'

"Well, I had not the faintest recollection of making this deal. On the other hand, I hated to discourage him. So I said OK, I'll get to it. And I did do a little bit on it. Then, I was telling this same story about three years ago at a convention in Toronto and Judy-Lynn Del Rey overheard me. The next thing I knew," divulges Stubbs, "I'd signed a contract. So I was committed."

Some of Hal Clement's other SF titles are: *Close to Critical*, *Cycle of Fire*, *Space Lash*, *Natives of Space* and *Ocean on Top*.

Clement has a contract with Ace Books, one of the leading paperback publishers of science fiction, and is working on his next novel for them, carefully researching the background science involved, then he'll develop story implications and expects to have it

The Writer As Artist



Besides writing science fiction under the pen-name Hal Clement, Harry Stubbs paints scientifically-extrapolated astronomical art with the "brush-name" of George Richard.

"I've always liked astronomical art," says the author, "and a dozen years or so ago I got tapped to judge the Art Show of all things at a science fiction convention. Though I've never had any sort of art course, it got to be very common that I was always being asked to judge art shows. So I had a chance to look at paintings close enough to see how they were done. But I also developed a very strong yen for some of these paintings—Chesley Bonestell astronomicals and illustrations of that sort—which I couldn't afford," admits Stubbs.

"I finally got tired of drooling for all this, bought some paints and discovered that I could, after a fashion, put down pictures on canvas or illustration board. And," he says, "I discovered that I could even do it well enough to sell them. So since then, I suppose I've sold more than 150 paintings at science fiction conventions."

In his so-called "hard science" SF stories, the astronomical mathematics, planetary mechanics, gravitational forces, geology, biochemistry and extraterrestrial biology are all carefully worked out in advance so that they do not contravene any known scientific laws. Similarly, the content of his artwork also concerns itself with extrapolated science and the accurate representation of possible outer space scenes.

For instance, not too long ago, he completed a series of paintings of possible landscapes on Titan, one of Saturn's moons, for use in a slide presentation at a major science fiction convention, posing a challenge to his illustrative abilities and to those potential SF writers attending.

The purpose of the speculative art and imagination exercise was to "set up situations from which people could write stories," says Stubbs, "so I picked Titan, a very interesting object, and which I now think is about the third most likely place in the solar system to have life."

One painting, in shades of yellows and browns, shows plant-like organisms giving off little fuzzy brown balls which break up and scatter a dust into the atmosphere.

"The dust is largely made up of enzymes," says Stubbs, "and the implication I was suggesting here for people who want to write stories is that life on the satellite is not so much independent organisms—animals, plants, different species such as we have here—but is interrelated much more closely."

"The enzymes given off by one object and scattered throughout the atmosphere," he explains further, "are taken on and used by others; you could make a case for calling it all one big organism."

"I don't swear that's the situation," the writer cautions, "but what I was doing was trying to set up situations from which people could write stories."

The scientific evidence, according to Stubbs, suggests that Titan is somewhat around the density of water and is probably largely made up of water-ice or a methane-ice clathrate or compound.

"The temperature, which is hard to determine because we don't know its exact size, is such that there will be a crust of water-ice or this methane clathrate. If you had a volcano, they would be giving off water instead of lava. And this particular picture shows a crack, a fault in the crust from which steam is emerging."

"If Titan's crust is as thin as seems likely, this sort of thing would happen pretty often. Its orbit is somewhat eccentric so that it gets alternately nearer to Saturn and farther away. This would change the tidal stresses and produce cracks," he concludes.

The Boston teacher says he didn't experience any major difficulty in shifting from science

written perhaps by the end of this summer's school vacation.

The particular sciences involved, according to Harry Stubbs, the professional teacher, "are more chemistry and geology, because, rather unusually, it's taking place right here on Earth."

So come this spring, watch the bookstands for *The Nitrogen Fix* by Hal Clement, science fiction's premier planet-builder. ■

—Brian M. Fraser

fiction writing to illustrating.

"I think visually anyway, so the painting part of it was merely a matter of finding out what to do with the paints in order to make whatever you wanted on the board, to make it appear as you visualized it."

"Sometimes, I succeed, and sometimes I definitely don't," he admits quite candidly.

He utilizes acrylic paints for his scenes of planets and stars.

"A very well-known fan named Bjo Trimble was the one who got me started on this game. She advised me to start with acrylics.

Stubbs puts his artistic alias George Richard on the back of his paintings. He chose the name, he says, "because when I first showed paintings at a science fiction convention, I wanted to find out whether or not anyone would buy them because they liked them or merely because they were by a Name Author."

"So I combined the names of my two sons and called myself George Richard when I paint."

Stubbs is quite modest about his painting abilities.

"I still need an art course somewhere; I couldn't paint a human being, much less a human face, in recognizable form. But planetscapes or spacescapes are quite easy because if the brush doesn't go quite where you wanted it to, it's still probably all right.

"Again, it's a hobby, a paying hobby, I sell paintings for small sums or even give them away."

However, amateur artist George Richard would not be averse to doing a cover painting for a science fiction novel by professional author Hal Clement.

"That, I believe, is up to the editors and publishers," he says. "I'm perfectly willing to mention to them that I paint. If they want me to try a cover, then I wouldn't fight it." ■

THE SILVERBERG PAPERS Part 2

Robert Silverberg

1977, JOURNAL OF THE DROUGHT YEAR: It is the eleventh of July, a bright sunny day in Northern California, not even a hint of the familiar San Francisco Bay Area fog that one often finds on summer mornings here. It did not rain yesterday, it will not rain tomorrow, and it would be cause for considerable surprise and much local hubbub if any rain at all fell between now and, say, the tenth of October. But dry summers are normal around here. If it rains as much as once between mid-April and early October, that's an oddity. The winters are when the rains are supposed to fall, in coastal California's Mediterranean climate, and if we fail to have a rainy winter this year it's going to create social and environmental dislocations that will be felt all across the United States.

I knew about California's go/no-go weather system when I moved out here six years ago, although it turns out that most Americans are unaware of the extraordinary alternation of wet and dry seasons that this state alone enjoys, and many native Californians are virtually unaware that it is quite common to have rainy summer days in Illinois, say, or Pennsylvania. My first summer in California was totally dry, the rains having given out in late March, and as each bright, warm day succeeded its predecessor I wondered why anyone bothered to listen to weather forecasts. The only variation, from May through September, was the degree of fog incursion; some nights the fog that came through the Golden Gate was so voluminous that it stayed around all the following day, and some days the fog hovered until ten or eleven in the morning, and some days were not foggy at all, but that was about it. Of rain we had none until early autumn, and I grew accustomed to leaving perishable things like paper cartons outdoors overnight, confident that no sudden rain would appear to damage them. When the rains finally did come, I had almost forgotten the whole concept of water falling from the sky.

The rains came with a vengeance that year—the rainy season of 1972-73 was the third wettest since records began to be kept in these parts in 1849—and as deluge after deluge drenched us through October and November, I began to wonder how much I was going to like six straight months of it. The rains were interrupted for nine clear, cold days in early December—days of recordbreaking frost, when the temperature dipped into the twenties every day for a week and a whole ecology of subtropical vegetation was wiped out in the Bay Area—and then the wet stuff returned. It went on raining, every two or three days, a ghastly gray squishy winter, until early April, when, as suddenly as though a switch had been thrown, the skies were bright again and we settled into our dry season. And dry it stayed until the first of October, when there was a bit of a drizzle, and later in October the rains returned once more.

The wet winter of 1972-73 dumped about 35 inches of rain on the hillside where I live. The "normal" rainfall is 22 inches a year. The rainy season of 1973-74 was almost as soggy—32.09 inches, again about 50% above normal. By early 1974 I had begun keeping a chart of such things, for I was now deep into my horticultural phase and wanted to know as much as I could about local weather conditions; my records show that there were eight rainy days in February 1974, thirteen in March, seven in April. I was busy during that muddy spring trying to excavate the site of a planned cactus garden, and, as I slogged around in slippery gunk trying to create a desert, I looked worriedly toward the sky and said, "God, I think I'd like to try a drought for a while." I really did.

So I guess I'm the one who did it.

The weather started going wonky in July 1974. On July 8 and 9 we got 1.75 inches of rain, which broke every record for California summer rainfall. An occasional July drizzle occurs here every four or five years, adding up to perhaps a tenth of an inch of rain, and that two-day downpour was something like ten times the total record rainfall for any entire month of July here; I forget the exact dimensions of the abnormality. It was, at any rate, an awfully uncommon event, and didn't bode well for the drought I had requested. But then no further rain fell until October 28, 1974, when we got three quarters of an inch, followed by half an inch three days later. That was a slightly late start for the rainy season (it usually begins up here by mid-October, and in the Los Angeles area five or six weeks later) but not abnormal.

It rained again on November 7, and then on November 18. That eleven-day gap brought sighs of relief from me—I had planted my cacti by this time, and I was troubled by the thought of their going through another wet winter similar to the last two, but evidently that wasn't going to happen. Indeed we got rain every three to five days through late November and early December—a decent, manageable interval—and then came strangeness again, because everything was dry from December 4 through December 27, three weeks of sunshine in what was supposed to be the pits of the wets. The arrival of Bill Rotsler in the Bay Area brought a little post-Christmas rain, and then came another long dry spell, from January 8 through 26 of 1975. I recall holding skinny-dipping parties at my pool on balmy January afternoons, the temperature a Los Angelesesque 70° or so, and thinking that this sort of winter weather

wasn't really so bad.

The rains finally caught up with Northern California that season—there were twelve rainy days in February, sixteen in March, seven in April. It was a weirdly divided winter, dry in the front half, wet in the back stretch, but it all added up to 22.79 inches, just about exactly normal—which tells you a thing or two about the relevance of statistics. We had a few scattered little drizzles in June and July, barely measurable, and in the fall of 1975 came the return of the wet, neatly on schedule—tenth of an inch on October 6, a 1.7 inch downpour on October 9, then a couple of dry weeks and a fierce 2.2 inch dunking on October 26, and 1.12 more four days later, adding up to a very wet October of over five inches of rain, more than twice normal and nearly equal to the ghastly wet of October 1972.

What none of us knew was that that was the end of California's rains for a long time to come. God was about to give me the drought I had so wantonly requested the year before. There were two teeny rainstorms in mid-November, and otherwise the month was dry, to my great delight. (For in those far-off days I thought of rain as an enemy of my pleasures, and looked longingly toward arid Southern California, where even in a normal year rains are few and far between.) Warm golden November gave way, weirdly, to the second straight sunny December; my records show a quarter of an inch of rain on December 12, .30 on December 22, and otherwise nothing—in effect, complete zilch now for two months in a row. Ah, I said, we had two wet winters in succession, and now we're going to have two of these dry-and-then-wet ones. Sure. But January brought three drizzles, a total of .41 of rain, or about 10% of normal, and February was mostly dry too, and March had just one significantly rainy day, and only with the aid of two fairly wet days in early April were the total statistics for the rainy season brought up to even drought levels. I recorded 13.34 inches of rain in the 1975-6 season, nine below normal; across the bay in San Francisco it was even drier, and just to the north in Marin County, normally the wettest district in the immediate Bay Area, rainfall was about a third of what is considered customary.

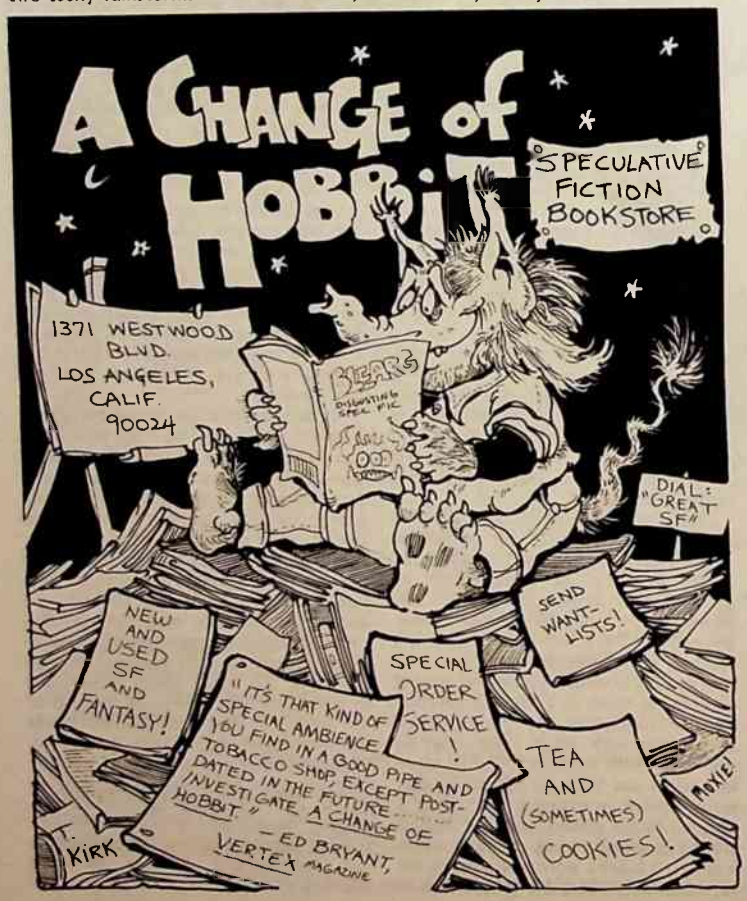
So that is a drought year, I told myself. Well, not bad. I could live with a climate like that quite happily. We had had about 25 rainy days in the entire season, which is more or less the San Diego situation year after year, and I had enjoyed the mild, sunny winter inordinately; how nice, I thought, to get Southern California rainfall patterns while enjoying Northern California scenery and civilization! Next year, of course, things would go back to normal, and I'd have to put up with week after week of rain, but at least I had had the fun of the 1975-76 winter.

Some fun.

God uncorked another weirdness in August 1976. It rained on August 14, August 15, August 18, and August 22—a solid week of pure February weather, ruining crops, rewriting the record books, upsetting vacation plans for millions of people. It was even more implausible than the big downpour of July 1974, for this was a whole week of typical winter storms right in the middle of the summer, and nothing remotely comparable had ever happened in Northern California before. (Southern California occasionally gets summer rainy spells that wander up out of tropical Mexico, but our rainfall comes out of the northern Pacific and isn't supposed to be able to penetrate our shield of high-pressure air in the warm months.) The August rains, though, turned out to be the longest rainy spell we were going to see for a long while. A storm on September 28 appeared to betoken an early arrival of the normal rainy season, but by October 3 the skies were clear and the rest of the month was downright hot as well as dry. We went six weeks without rainfall—until November 11—and then came a wholly unprecedented *seven*-week absence of precipitation, broken at last by a two-inch fall that began on December 30.

By then, the wisest among us knew that we were in the soup.

There had been plenty of dry years in California history—as recently as 1971-72 the rainfall had been half normal—but there had never been two severely dry years back to back, and even the years of moderately dry weather, as for example 1923-25, had occurred at a time when California's population was a fraction of what it is today. There are few great rivers in California, and most of the water supply derives from the runoff of melting snows from the Sierra; some localities have underground water, and Los Angeles is served by aqueducts bringing water in from the Colorado River and the Owens Valley, but up here we



depend on what God sends in the winter, which is usually quite a lot. The dry winter of 1975-76 had made a notable dent in the reservoirs, and the dry November and December of 1976 had made things a lot worse. Some of us began to wonder what would happen if the weather stayed this dry. In suburban Marin County, the future was already at hand, for Marin, by its own choice, is unconnected to any of the big water-delivery systems of the rest of the state. (The idea was to limit population growth.) Marin gets a lot of rain, usually, and believed itself to be self-sufficient. When it turned out otherwise, the Marinites began to parch, and water rationing was instituted there in 1976, limiting people to a hundred gallons a day or thereabouts per capita. The rest of us went on using water as before, although there was grumbling about hosing off sidewalks, flushing toilets after urinating, serving unwanted water in restaurants, etc.

Now I have an acre of land here, and it is entirely landscaped, much of it in drought-resistant plants like cacti and aloes and California natives that I have planted myself, but much of it also in things like rhododendrons and fuchsias that require a lot of water. I also have a swimming pool. I am a large consumer of water, as homeowners go; in an ordinary summer month I use about 50,000 gallons, which is about 1600 a day, including a lot of lawn watering, constant topping off the pool, liberal hosing of the fuchsias, and so forth. In the winter I normally use a lot less, since it's raining, but I observed in early 1977 that I was having to water the garden almost as frequently as in summer. If I am consuming water at a greater than normal rate, I told myself in January of 1977, and no new water is reaching the reservoirs, then the lack of rain is having a doubly depleting effect, and, by golly, we're going to run out of water before long if it doesn't start raining. Is such a thing possible? This is California! This is 1977! They'll figure out something.

And we started to run out of water.

The total rainfall between January 3 and January 31 was .16 of an inch. There was a quarter of an inch on February 8, half an inch on February 21, a quarter of an inch on February 23, and that was it for February. March had six rainy days. April had two. The ground, of course, was so dry by now that whatever rain did fall was soaked up instantly; there was no runoff into reservoirs and nothing got down to the roots of plants. Worst of all, the rainfall/snowfall up in the mountains, where the main reservoirs are, was even farther below normal than along the coast. Ironically, arid Southern California got normal rainfall all winter. But I ended up with another 13-inch rainy season, and that figure is highly deceptive, because it was padded by unprecedented August rains and by abnormal rains in May of 1977. What counts, for irrigation purposes here, is what falls between October and May, and for the past two years that has been virtually zilch.

Water rationing, of course, finally came to us somewhere around February or March of 1977, after it became apparent that the rains weren't going to arrive "next month," because there weren't enough next months left in the rainy season to make a difference. Each water district set its own rules, depending on its population and the condition of its reservoirs; San Francisco simply ordered its people to use 25% less water per household than the year before, which would have suited me fine, since it would still have left me with something above a thousand gallons a day to use if I cared to. But over here in the East Bay we were given much more egalitarian treatment: every household was allotted 280 gallons a day. Consumption beyond that point brought cash penalties that rose steeply with each hundred gallons or so, and if your consumption exceeded 900 gallons a day, they said, they would reprimand and warn you, and if after thirty days you were still overconsuming they would come around and put a flow restrictor on your water system so that it would be impossible to overconsume. 280 gallons a day is okay for Terry Carr,

who has only a small garden and no swimming pool; but I am living on an acre of fully landscaped land, and the new regulations imposed something like an 80% reduction in my water supply. And thus does God teach us not to ask lightly for miracles.

I am learning all about drought. I learned a lot in the early 1960's, when New York City went through five dry years in a row, but I'm learning more now, because things are a lot worse here. (We had the Hudson River as our emergency water supply in New York, and toward the end of the drought we were tapping it. The Hudson may be polluted, but at least it's potable in its northern reaches, whereas the local emergency water supply is San Francisco Bay, which is salt water.) I stopped using the dishwasher and began sponging dishes by hand—saving perhaps 10 gallons a day. Toilet flushing is held to a minimum, and I pee in the compost heap. Saving, 50 to 100 gallons a day, depending on how many people happen to be staying here. Showers are limited to two minutes; that saves another 100 gallons a day or so. Laundry is saved until there's a full load. And so on and so on.

In the garden, the highest area of water consumption, cutbacks have been equally drastic. The fuchsias get watered by hand, with a bucket, instead of getting zapped from afar with a hose. That saves about 50 gallons every time I water. The rhododendrons, which used to get watered twice a week for 45 minutes at a time, now get watered *once* a week for 30 minutes; I don't know how much of a saving that is in gallons, but it's better than a 50% reduction in consumption. The lawns get watered every fourth or fifth day instead of every other day, and for shorter periods. During the last sputtering weeks of the rainy season I rigged a catch-barrel so that whenever any rain did come down, I was able to store fifty gallons of it, and I used that on the house plants instead of drawing from the tap. When the water-bed had to be drained to make repairs to the frame, I siphoned the water into the pool instead of dumping it. And so on and so on.

It is all a great nuisance, but running out of water entirely will be an even greater one. And I have achieved a dramatic cutback in my water consumption here. During the billing period that ran from February 16 to April 16, I used only 266 gallons a day out of my quota of 280. That represented approximately a 75% reduction from normal springtime use here. Unfortunately, on May 1, after reexamining the state of the reservoirs, the water district cut everybody's base quota to 225 gallons a day. And now the weather began to turn warm, meaning that the garden would require more even under these stringent conditions, and now the rains were gone for the season, so there wouldn't be even their slight aid to rely on. During the billing period that ran from April 16 to June 16, I used 355 gallons a day—well over my quota, but still a 75% reduction from the year before. Now we are into the heat of summer, and I imagine my consumption these days is running 500 gallons a day despite all efforts, and this is not going to please the water district; but last year at this time I was using 1600 a day. I'm trying. I'm still peeing in the compost heap, I have purchased a pool cover to retard evaporation, the lawn is brown and crinkly, and guests are advised to take showers at home before setting out. It's a drag. It's a monstrous drag. I eat on dirty dishes, I recycle bath water into the toilet tank, I calculate how much water a 30-year-old 20-foot rhododendron really needs and hope I'm not going to kill it by September.

And it is July 11, and we have 90 days to go, probably, before it rains again, and the reservoirs are nearly empty, and what will we do if it's dry again next winter?

Nice question. Don't have nice answers.

They talk about towing icebergs up from Antarctica for us, they talk about building desalinization plants on the shores of the Pacific, which is handily located right next door, they talk about stringent water conservation that would eliminate just about everything except

toothbrush moistening. But I haven't heard of any real contingency plans. We are all assuming that the drought will end, but the universe may not know about that. Down in Los Angeles they have finally instituted a mandatory 10% cutback and made the hosing down of sidewalks illegal, but the Angelenos are still doing it, or were the last time I looked, a couple of weeks ago. They say they don't have to conserve because most of their water comes from the Colorado River, but the drought has reached as far as the sources of the Colorado by now, out in Wyoming, Colorado, and Utah, and some of the dry states upriver from Los Angeles are apt to be asking for bigger water allotments soon, and the river level itself is falling. There will be very little sympathy for Los Angeles and even less help if their reservoirs ever get down to the levels ours have reached.

And so we live our happy lives under the cloudless summer skies, and we turn the taps off while soaping ourselves in the shower, and we water our gardens with buckets of used laundry suds, and we wonder what's going to happen come winter. Those of you who have visited my garden will be glad to know that so far, despite strict conservation here, nothing significant has died—a few ferns have withered, the lawn of course looks awful but should recover in the fall, and the cacti, having enjoyed two dry winters in a row, are robust and flowering mightily. But even though nearly everything is surviving, most of the non-succulent plants are struggling along, and will barely make it into the fall, and if the winter is dry again they'll probably die next summer, when all outdoor watering will be prohibited.

It's been instructive. We've learned that we're vulnerable to whims of the weather, even here in the gaudy twentieth century. We've learned how much water we can really do without. (I could probably have kept my garden as green as ever on 50% of the water I used to use. If the drought ever ends, I probably will never go back to watering as liberally as before.) We've discovered that jobs, the cost of living, the quality of life, and a lot of other things depend on a cheap and reliable water supply. And—as the strains of the shortage begin to show, as the setting of social priorities begins—we're learning more about the primordial drives within us.

What happens next? Will there be water wars, raids by night on the reservoirs of neighboring towns, blockades? Will breweries and car-washes and nurseries be forced to close? Will tourists be banned from San Francisco? (Appalling to hear them flushing toilets!) We'll start getting our answers by November.

You, out there, who suffered through the Big Freeze of 1977 while we were lolling by the swimming pool—I wish you a little California sunshine this winter. Wish us a little rain. Wish us a lot, in fact.

—Bob Silverberg, 1977

1978, WEATHER REPORT: In the last installment I was probably preoccupied with the dread drought that had smooten California. There I was with an acre of cherished garden, not all of it planted in cacti and succulents, and like everyone else up here I was recycling the bath water and washing dishes once a month and spending as much time talking about the weather, or lack of it, as we currently do talking about Proposition 13. And a dry October was followed by a dry November and we all began to believe it was *never* going to rain again.

Early in December I took a little holiday in San Diego, a town that seldom sees much rain, and as I headed for home up Highway Five I picked up a news report that said it had begun to rain in the San Francisco area. Indeed it had. It rained very nicely on December 10, and December 11 also, and just about every other day until March,

including a string of something like fifteen consecutive days in January during which we had measurable rainfall. By the time the mud had settled, we had had approximately twice our normal annual rainfall, all of it packed into the period between the middle of December and the middle of March. The reservoirs were overflowing, the lawns were green, and the water restrictions were canceled. A more astonishing reversal of a climatic phenomenon could not have been imagined. I keep a rain gauge in my garden, and in the 1975-76 rainy season I recorded something like 13.77 inches (I'm doing this from memory) and maybe 13.25 inches in 1976-77. But in 1977-78 we got *46* inches of rain, including 10 inches in the first 15 days of January alone.

Meanwhile, down in arid Southern California, they were learning that it never rains but it pours, so to speak. Places that normally get ten or twelve inches of rain got thirty or forty. Los Angeles turned into a sea of mud. San Diego (nine inches, normally) looked like a lake. Bakersfield (five inches a year) got somewhere around four inches in a single day, and you can imagine how well equipped Bakersfield's storm drains were to handle that. The customary storm track involves rain coming out of the Gulf of Alaska, spinning down through the Pacific Northwest, hitting the Bay Area somewhat less copiously than Seattle, and tapering off somewhere between Los Angeles and Tijuana. This year, though, storms came broadside out of Hawaii, marching eastward across the Pacific right into Los Angeles, with the weird result that Northern California often enjoyed pleasant sunny weather while the drier southland was getting lashed by ferocious wetness.

It was all over up here by early April, and no damage; our storms were regular and occasionally unremitting, but not torrential. Down there it went on raining a little longer, and there were floods, mudslides, and other messes, some of them fatal.

The garden survived it all admirably. During those endless days of rain in January I worried about the cacti, but they didn't seem to mind the deluge at all. I lost a few minor plants in pots—potted plants simply can't shed surplus water as easily as plants in the ground do, and they drown in prolonged rainy spells—and a few things growing in heavy soil became waterlogged and perished, but basically everything important came out okay, and the spring growth was astonishing. A very neat side-effect of the constant rainfall was a milder-than-usual winter: since there was cloud cover just about every night during our period of maximum frost risk, which runs from Christmas to late January, there was little loss of heat by radiation on clear nights, and in the Bay Area we had no temperatures below 40°. (Normally, we can expect one or two nights that dip close to 32° in my locality, and quite a few in the mid-30's.) So the various borderline oddities that I grow here—bromeliads, for example—did not suffer at all from their winter outdoors.

And now it's midsummer and the long dry days are upon us again. It has been two months and then some since the last rain, and in the normal course of events none should fall for the next ninety days or so. By late October we'll have some inkling of what's in store next winter. Back to the drought regime? Another deluge? Or perhaps, finally, the statistically blessed God-given true and proper 22.8 inches? Some theorists think that last winter's downpours marked just an interruption in a prolonged period of severe drought. We'll see. In any case, we have enough water to see us through a year or two of new drought. And this time, I hope, mild water restrictions will be imposed as soon as the trend toward dryness is noticed, so that it won't be necessary to impose panicky severe restrictions as the reservoirs run dry. (People were still hosing down their driveways, with the blessing of the authorities, after a year and a half of drought here. I trust that won't happen again.) ■

—Bob Silverberg, 1978

Very Near To My Heart

Richard Lupoff

It's customary in guest-of-honor speeches to start with a word of thanks and a few lines to the general effect of, Isn't science fiction wonderful. I'll bow to that tradition.

The first book that I ever read was a Big Little Book by the late Russ Winterbotham. It came out in 1941, when I was six years old, and it was science fiction, and I loved it. I didn't *know* it was science fiction because I'd never heard of science fiction, but that's what it was.

Within ten years the rush of post World War II magazines had started. I read *Galaxy* and *F&SF* and *Other Worlds* from the first issue of each. And through the fan columns in magazines like *Amazing* and *Startling Stories* I learned that there was such a thing as fandom. And that was as wonderful a discovery, I think, as my discovery of science fiction itself had been.

I was your typical junior-high-school aged fan. Overweight, nearsighted, thoroughly inept at the social graces, too smart by half for my own good, and just *awful* with girls. Science fiction and fandom gave me a refuge from a pretty bad situation. They offered an alternative *set of values* from the rather tough, macho, anti-intellectual standards of my supposed peer-group. They placed value on learning, on rationality, and on co-operation.

They were a Godsend.

I was strictly what we used to call a "postal" fan all through high school and college. It was only when I spent two years in the middle west, courtesy of the US army, that I actually hooked up with the Indiana Science Fiction Association. Out of that group emerged at least four pro's—Robert Coulson, Juanita Coulson, Eugene de Weese, and myself. I think that's quite a few for a small, local club. Most of the time we had only about six or seven members.

In fact, I think I "always" wanted to be a science fiction writer. At least, ever since I moved past the usual childhood ambitions of being a fireman or a fighter pilot—remember, I was a child during the Second World War—eager to go out there and shoot down enemy airplanes.

And this is where I think I've been very lucky.

Most of us have youthful dreams of the things we want to do when we grow up. The things we *really* want to be. Become a rock and roll star. A roller derby demon. President of the United States. A brain surgeon. Pope. I have one friend who still wants to be Pope—and he's Jewish, at that!

But most of us—I'd say *at least* ninety-nine percent—wind up working as factory hands, or insurance sales rep's, or junior-high English teachers, serving as faculty advisor to the student literary magazine and pretending to ourselves that it's *Colliers* or *The American Mercury* or even *Thrilling Wonder Stories.*

Of course there's nothing *wrong* with people doing these jobs. The world needs factory hands—at least I suppose it does. And everybody has to earn a living one way or another. But it's kind of tragic when somebody really doesn't get to follow his or her star. Sometimes there's just no opportunity. Sometimes the economic pressures are too great to bear. Sometimes we make a try and discover to our chagrin that we just don't have the talent to become a professional lion-trainer.

I know that it's easy to succumb to those pressures. I spent twelve years in the computer business before I became a full-time free lance, and when I quit my job the computer industry lost the services of a guaranteed third-rate program analyst and manual writer. I want to thank the people who made it possible for me to get out of the computer business. Those include all of my editors and publishers, especially Larry Shaw, who bought my first novel. All of the booksellers who put the things out there where people can buy them. And certainly, all the readers who are really the reason that literature exists.

I want to thank everyone who sacrificed and who encouraged me to keep slogging through years of rejection slips. Not that I've seen my last one of those. But the late James Blish refused to accept, "I can't make it," from me, no matter how many times I tried and failed. My three children, who missed allowances and new clothing, and who made do on spaghetti and skimpy rations because Dad was too stubborn, or too lazy, or too proud to throw in the towel and go get a steady job.

And especially, I want to thank one who has stuck with me for more than twenty years, who has endured atrocious behavior on my part, and done menial labor for miserable wages . . . so *I* wouldn't have to leave my typewriter.

Thank you, Pat.

Now through all of this, one of the things I have most enjoyed in my association with science fiction, is this our community. Of course the literature itself is significant, and I won't minimize its value. But quite aside from that, our community is quite unlike any other that I know of. We are not like the people who invest their passions in baseball, or bestsellers, or ballet.

The basis of our community is not that of a fan/pro dualism, but a sort of brotherhood and sisterhood of people who are interested in science fiction. Some of us are writers, some are editors, illustrators, readers, collectors, dealers. It is not a two-sided relationship, but more that of a group of people, however diverse, who all share a dedication, of whatever degree, to a common interest.

This came about naturally in science fiction. The early fans—I'm talking about the science fiction fans of the 1930s, but this is true to a certain extent even of the old Lovecraft-Long-Kleinert-Greene fandom of the 1910-1920 era—the early fans of the 1930s were largely the pros of a short time later. There was Charlie Hornig, plucked from the ranks of fandom to edit *Wonder Stories.* There was Ray Palmer, writing for the pulps in his teens and editing *Amazing* not long after. There were Don Wollheim, Elsie Balter Wollheim, Fred Pohl, Julie Schwartz—who was literary agent for both Lovecraft and Stanley Weinbaum before he could drink beer legally in New York

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Originally presented as the Guest-of-Honor Speech at the 1979 Westercon.

. . . Judy Merril, Virginia Kidd and more.

At the early science fiction conventions, circa 1940, you couldn't tell the fans from the pros because the fans *were* the pros. To a large extent that's still true, and the continuing flow of fans who become professional writers, editors, illustrators, publishers, and critics, continues to amaze me.

This is the science fiction community that I have known and loved for the past thirty years, and I'm afraid it's a sign of incipient middle age—or worse—when I see those institutions changing, and instead of keeping up with the change I get all grouchy and reactionary.

But I do see those institutions veering, and it *is* making me, I'm afraid all grouchy and reactionary.

I think the major change started to come into our community in the 1960s. At first it could be seen only in the peripheral fandoms created by the special-interest groups that spun off from general science fiction fandom in the 1960s and 1970s. The first of these was comics fandom. The next was the special *Star Trek* fandom that later expanded to take in other media-oriented groups like the *Star Wars* fans, *Close Encounters* fans, *Logan's Runners, Battlestar Galactica, Alien,* etc.

These special fandoms and their institutions share a number of characteristics with one another, that they do not share with the more traditional, community-based science fiction fandom.

First, they are not spontaneous, they are artificially created.

Second, they are *not* community based upwellings of energy and joy, but are externally controlled.

Third, they are heavily oriented to media, particularly visual media; spectacular, powerful, but usually trivial in content and intellectually shallow.

Fourth, they are dominated by the well-known Hollywood mentality. They are heavy on hoopla and glitter. They are very concerned with money, are often well-heeled and able to spend money, and certainly are designed to make money. And they are molded to the configurations of a rigidly stratified caste system. That's *caste* with an *E* on the end.

Let me tell you a little bit of my experience with this kind of operation.

The first convention of the sort that I attended wasn't *totally* dominated by this kind of thinking. It was put on, in fact, by a very good-natured, local group. But it was a group that had evolved out of *Star Trek* fandom, had had experience only with *Star Trek* type conventions, and naturally followed their example.

I was invited to their convention, stood in the registration line, and received my badge. It was just like everybody else's membership badge, except it had a little green circle on it. In short order I discovered that green circles were for officially designated privileged characters. Pros, top members of the convention committee, folks like that. They didn't make very much difference in the way one was treated, but I discovered that there were minor—well, what sociologists call, *rituals of deference* attached to having a green circle on your badge.

I attended some program item where the room was very crowded, and I saw a person leave a seat near the front of the room. I figured he was leaving for the rest of the hour and slid into his chair. In ten minutes he came back, looked at me in distress, and indicated that he wanted his seat back.

I started to leave. He *was* in the right, of course.

At this point, the poor fellow spotted my horrid *green circle* and fled! Great Klono! What would have happened to him if he'd actually thrown an officially designated privileged character out of his seat!

Well, that was my first exposure to Privilege, and I did not like it.

My second was at a *Star Trek* convention. I had been invited to attend, and to participate in a panel discussion. I didn't know much about *Star Trek*, I told the committee-person who had invited me, and didn't think I really would have much to say to that audience.

Oh, no, I was assured. This was a *science fiction* panel. The members were all science fiction people, not just *Trek* personalities. So I consented—somewhat reluctantly.

Shortly before the convention, I discovered that the panelists were being paid. I'd never heard of such a thing. Well, some of the panelists were being paid. The person regarded as having the Biggest Name was to receive $500. One or two lesser lights were to receive $200 apiece. And a couple more of us were expected to perform *gratis.*

Now I found myself doubly offended. I really didn't like the elitist notion that the panelists were being paid, at what I was still very naively thinking of as some sort of community gathering; and I was personally insulted that I was considered "big" enough to appear there with, well, let's call them Jules Wollstonecraft Wells and Clare Kinnison . . . but they were getting paid and I wasn't.

So I quickly changed my plans and didn't participate.

My third encounter with this kind of outfit, came at a supposed "charity event" sponsored by a *Star Trek* group. Since this was for charity, I was willing to perform—notice the change coming over my vocabulary—at this function, *gratis.*

I arrived at the appointed site and was met by a cordial member of the committee, and was given my membership badge. There was nothing subtle this time. No green circle. There was a little shiny gold star pasted on my badge, just like I used to get for good spelling in second grade.

I was led to a backstage area, ushered into a VIP lounge generously stocked with lavish coldcuts and expensive booze, and introduced to my personal gopher, a very pleasant young person who hovered so close that at one point I wondered if I would be permitted to visit the rest-room unaccompanied.

I met a number of real Hollywood stars, had an altogether pleasant time, and learned how such personages are

treated.

Well, for starters, I was wrong about everybody-donates-to-charity. The Hollywood attractions *were* paid, and very generously so. Also they were met at the airport by limousines, chauffeured to their hotel, surrounded by security squads, driven to the hall where their eager fans awaited them, snuck in through a back door, presented onstage, hustled backstage again to stoke up and tank up at the BIP room, and eventually limo'd back to their hotel and/or airline.

Everything was spelled out by contract. Mr. Luminary agrees, in exchange for a fee of X dollars, payable in advance, to make *blank* many appearances of *blank* many minutes duration apiece. He will appear in costume . . . in street clothing . . . in formal wear. He will deliver a prepared talk of *blank* minutes length, will/will not respond to questions from the audience, will/will not be available for *blank* many periods of so-many minutes apiece, to shake hands and sign autographs for the fans.

All of this leads to a whole new form of social organization. In place of the familiar community of fans, writers, editors, collectors and so on, we have a fairly clear-cut, two-tiered system.

The upper tier, or privileged classes, are further stratified into:

• *Stars* (that is, the actors; Trekkies don't realize that William Shatner is an actor who once portrayed a space-captain; to them, he *is* a space captain) . . .

• *Associates* (this includes producers, directors, writers, technicians, etc. On one occasion an executive producer's *secretary* was a Special Guest. Not wishing to cast aspersions on the profession of secretary, but what did she have to say? "Oh, working for Mr. Big was the most wonderful experience. I got to meet so many Stars! Well, let me tell you what Ms. Sexpot is *really* like, off the screen!") . . .

• *Committee People* (who get to rub elbows with Stars and the Associates of Stars, thereby obtaining a sort of merit by osmosis). Also associated with this class of lesser privileged characters are the security squads, gophers, and lesser functionaries who don't quite rub the illustrious elbows, but are allowed to stand nearby and warm themselves in the Presence. . . .

Well. In the lower echelon of this new order are the—why, you and I would call them fans, or convention members. To the Hollywood mind they are customers, or audience, also known as hayseeds, rubes, or marks. They buy the tickets to support their betters in luxury and comfort. Their function is to pay their money; in return for this they are permitted to seat themselves and see the show.

Somehow it works. Of course, it isn't community. It isn't family. It's business. Show business.

Unfortunately, I can see some of this stuff—some of these attitudes and practices—creeping over into *our* community. Specifically, into our conventions. Signs of this were visible last year at the Worldcon in Phoenix.

For instance, there was Class A (reserved), and Class B (general) seating at the Hugo ceremony. There were blue badges for the peons, and red badges for the officially designated privileged characters—the pros, key committee members, and recognized Big Name Fans. At one point during the program I mentioned that I found these practices objectionable. Specifically, I mentioned the red badges and the blue badges. I felt as if I were back in the army, where officers had one color parking stickers for their cars and enlisted troops another for theirs.

Well, one of my colleagues on the panel challenged me. "Lupoff," he said—words to this effect, anyway—"Lupoff, you've got your head fifteen years in the past. You can't run a convention for six thousand fans the way you could run a convention for six hundred.

"These badges aren't for *our* benefit. They're for *their* benefit. These poor

kids travelled thousands of miles to see us, and these red badges are to make us visible for them!"

He had a point, but I still don't like the VIP system. Maybe I picked up a radical, egalitarian streak as a small child in the Great Depression, but I don't like a caste-system society.

Besides, it leads to this kind of thing. . . . One well-travelled writer has made it known that he just won't attend *any* convention, unless he's paid to do so, or unless he's named Guest-of-Honor.

Word of this, and of others being paid to attend conventions, spreads; and those *not* paid start to feel mistreated. I had a letter recently from an east coast science fiction writer, one of the finest literary minds and one of the most splendid persons in the science fiction world.

I'd written and urged that, if at all possible, the person attend this Westercon. Back came a letter saying, "Am I just being paranoid, or are there now two classes of pros, the ones like—X—who get paid to attend conventions, and the ones like me, who get played for suckers?"

It's divisive. It's discrimatory. It's exploitative.

And the ones who are being exploited are—you, the fans.

What can the science fiction community do about this? Well, we can't stop Space Gems Conglomerate Limited Incorporated from putting on a giant star-studded show, soaking the suckers for everything the traffic will bear, and getting rich off the proceeds. Let 'em have their conventions. And if you want to attend, as a paying customer, and if you think you're going to get your money's worth, there's nothing wrong with that either. I'll tell you a secret. If any of these bozos make *me* an offer I can't refuse, I won't refuse it. I'll cash their check. Willingly.

But for decency's sake, let's try and keep them out—and keep their poisonous, insidious ways out—of our own, our real, our traditional-type, community based, science fiction conventions. Let's keep having our family reunions from time to time, and if the family is getting kind of big, that's fine too.

I said "*let's* do this," and "*our* conventions," but I don't think that I can do much about it. The established pros can't. They're too busy, and it's somehow a little bit unseemly for a science fiction author to put on a science fiction convention. I've spoken of this science fiction community as a sort of seamless garment, but even so it does have a body, and sleeves, and maybe a cowl or hood; the parts are one but they're not interchangeable.

The *fans* run the conventions, and I hope that you fans will keep control of your conventions. Whatever you do, don't let them fall under the sway of the big-buck, it's-all-show-biz, caste-system-oriented Hollywood sharpies or it's all over now, baby blue.

One more little bit. I've taken a lot of time. I've kind of broken the rules by speaking beyond the usual pleasantries and reminiscences and talking about some real stuff that is very near to my heart.

But I want to take just a couple more minutes and examine, briefly, what those Hollywood types think of science fiction as a cultural form, and of the science fiction community that you and I are all members of.

First of all, it's obvious to Hollywood that there's money to be made in science fiction. *2001* in the movies and *Star Trek* on TV were the early indicators of that.

Secondly, fandom—or, the rubes—can be a nice little source of revenue themselves, if not for the big-buck producers then for a crew of smaller fry who cluster around them.

Thirdly, fandom can be useful in other ways. The skillful manipulation of fandom in the famous *Star Trek* letter-writing campaign was an outstanding example of successful exploitation.

Fourthly, fandom can't *always* be manipulated. The total flop of the attempted *Battlestar Galactica* letter campaign proved *that*.

Clearly, Hollywood is interested in science fiction because we're a good potential source of money-making stuff. But don't kid yourself that they give a damn about *us*. This is mainly the pros' problem, not the fans', but it might be of interest to you anyhow.

Let's take, for example, Brother George Lucas. I've never met Brother Lucas but he's obviously smart and energetic, and I understand that he's a nice fellow into the bargain. All of this I concede. He also made one hell of a movie.

He brewed up a mixture, so-many percent Doc Smith, so much Jack Williamson, a generous portion of Heinlein juvie, a little dash of Frank Herbert, a touch of the Wizard of Oz and a whiff of Laurel and Hardy, and *voila!—Star Wars*. A billion-dollar, that's billion-with-a-*B*, dollar, property.

No credit and no payment to Messrs. Smith, Williamson, Heinlein, etc., however.

Don't find that objectionable? I do. I really do.

But it's legal. You know the old maxim. Take from many sources and it's research.

Well, along comes Brother Dan O'Bannon. I've never met Brother O'Bannon, either, but he's also reputedly a prince of a chap and I'm sure, in fact, that he is. He wrote the screenplay for a movie called *Alien*, based on a story by himself and one Ronald Shusett. A splendid movie, too.

It's a delightful adaptation of *The Voyage of the Space Beagle*, also published as *Mission: Interplanetary*, by A.E. van Vogt. Specifically, *Alien* comes from two episodes in Van's book, "Black Destroyer" and "Discord in Scarlet," that appeared in the old *Astounding Science Fiction* fully forty years ago. It's all there, fans, every bit of it, all the way down to poor Mr. Executive Officer Kane and his really excruciating tummy-ache.

Take from one source and it's plagiarism, friend.

Now these Hollywood people aren't really *evil* people. They didn't set out to rip off Jack Williamson or Frank Herbert or A.E. van Vogt. That's just their little old Hollywood way of doing things.

They think of themselves as business entrepreneurs. Even as creative artists.

But they have no concept—just no concept—of what the creative process *really* is. They're brilliant technicians but they think a photograph is superior to a painting because it has greater precision and finer detail. They do not understand what A.E. van Vogt went through, or what he accomplished.

So they just take and use.

Just take and use.

It's just a product, isn't it?

Isn't it?

Or is it?

Does it mean anything more? I think it does, and you must think so, too, or you wouldn't be here. If it were just a product, you wouldn't be at this convention. You wouldn't attend a Lifebuoy Soap convention, and it's fine soap. But it's just a product.

Well, I've wandered a little. I was talking about this science fiction community that we have, and it seems to me that the guardianship of this community is first and foremost in the hands of the fans. Of you.

You've created a splendid thing, and I would rather see it destroyed outright—much as I'd regret that—than to see it snatched from you and perverted to the purposes of privilege and profit.

Take good care of fandom. ■

—Dick Lupoff, 1979

Frederik POHL POHLEMIC:

THE IMAGINERS & OTHER REFLECTIONS

According to Lester del Rey, Hal Clement (aka Harry C. Stubbs) denies that he is a writer. In his introduction to *The Best of Hal Clement*, Lester says:

> His first story was published in *Astounding Science Fiction* in 1942 when he was just 20 years old. Thus he has been a writer for nearly 40 years. During most of that time, Hal Clement has been considered one of the major writers in the field by all except one person.
>
> The exception is Harry Stubbs. He doesn't call himself a writer, much less a major one. He considers himself merely a rather fortunate fan.

I don't share Hal Clement's diagnosis of himself. It rests on a drastically Aristotelian two-valued definition of what a writer is (i.e., major premise, a teacher is not a writer; minor premise, Hal Clement is a teacher; conclusion, Hal Clement is therefore not a writer); and the reason I cannot accept it is that he has given me too much pleasure through the reading of words which he has put on paper for me to care what he does with *most* of his time.

Hal modestly adds that he does not consider himself a "real" writer for stylistic reasons. I wish he were not so modest, because he is giving aid and comfort to the people who miss the point of what science fiction is all about.

Now, the proper exploration of this topic would get us all into that tired old argument between the New and Old Waves about what science fiction is, really. I don't want to do that. All I want to do, really, is exult in a couple of victories that have come to my attention recently. But in order to do that properly I want to touch—briefly, friends!—on what writing is, really. And the place I want to start is the place where literary criticism began, a couple of thousand years ago, in good old Aristotle. He laid down the law in his *Poetics*, as follows:

> There are six parts consequently of every tragedy, as a whole (that is) of such or such quality, viz. a Fable or Plot; Characters; Diction; Thought; Spectacle; and Melody; two of them arising from the means, one from the manner, and three from the objects of the dramatic imitation; and there is nothing beyond these six.

"There is nothing beyond these six." Whatever you say about Aristotle, you can't call him indecisive. Of course, he wasn't talking about science fiction, or even about novels, because neither of those things were going to be invented for some centuries yet. What he was talking about specifically was poetic drama. But more generally he was talking about literature in all of the ramifications known to him—that is, about created experience given to an audience. And, you know? He was right. Or close enough.

Exactly what Aristotle *meant* by those words is subject to argument, but I think I do him no disservice by equating "diction" with "style" and "thought" with "disciplined imagination";* and what strikes me as relevant is that he gives them equal weight.

So do I. I have not yet worked out any quantitative system for generating a figure of merit for SF novels, but I know what elements go into the equation. A lot of them are Aristotelian, although for my own convenience I translate them into more personal terms. I evaluate the performance of a writer, among other things, by his sense of the sound of language ("diction" is close enough); by his capacity for evoking emotion ("spectacle" and "melody" play a part in this, interpreted rather freely); and by his ability to help the reader, i.e. me, understand himself, by drawing upon the universalities of human experience ("characters," with an assist from "fable" or "plot"). And I apply these standards to every novel I read, at least in some subconscious way—and to every writer. Including Hal Clement. I don't think it's unfair to do this. I think any person who has the temerity to publish a written work exposes himself to that sort of judgment. But what I do think unfair is to stop there, without adding in a term for Aristotle's other indispensable part: thought.

Thought, you see, is what science fiction is all about. A special kind of thought, not found in any other kind of writing: an insight into potentials. Science fiction is not the literature of what is, but of what might be; and the truest test of greatness in science fiction, qua science fiction, is what the writer has imagined that no one has imagined before.

There are constraints on the imagination, of course. The strongest of them is plausibility. (Perhaps that is the distinction between science fiction—or the reason why most fantasies strike me as pretty silly.) One of Hal Clement's great strengths is his ability to operate within these constraints. In fact, he has articulated them for all of us in his writings on "The Game" of science fiction. Without these constraints, the imagining becomes silly. But without the imagining—the "thought"—there isn't any science fiction.

So of course Hal Clement is a writer. But beyond that, he is an imaginer, and one of the very best.

And so were Doc Smith, Edgar Rice Burroughs, Stanton A. Coblentz, W. Olaf Stapledon, Jules Verne, S. Fowler Wright, Stanley G. Weinbaum and many others whom it is now fashionable to disdain. In *A Reader's Guide to Science Fiction*, for instance, Baird Searles et al dismiss Smith as "naive, sloppy [and] totally innocent of the concept of plot," among other things. I would quarrel with all three terms. As to plot, most readers would agree that Doc's

* Any Greek scholars in the audience are invited to jump right in.

work was, if anything, over-plotty; God knows, the action never stops in any of his stories. As to the word "sloppy," the accusation comes ill from the people who tell us that "William Tenn" is the pseudonym of the fellow who writes UFO-debunking articles (who is in fact quite a different Philip Klass). But the word that rankles is "naive." Doc Smith *invented* whole areas of science fiction. Other writers have carried his themes much farther, to tell stories far more subtle and profound; but the Skylarks and the Lensmen are what they built on. If Doc was naive, then all innovators are naive. They are entering unexplored territory.

What Doc Smith was not, of course, was a stylist. In computing his literary worth, plug in a low value for the Aristotelian term of "diction." But he was certainly an imaginer, which is to say he gets high marks for the equally important Aristotelian quality of "thought."

And now we come to the exultation.

I gave up reviewing books twenty years ago, because I can find a lot easier ways of making enemies than that. But every once in a while a new book comes my way that I want to tell people about, and this month I have four. Each one gave me a personal tingly feeling of pleasure. Three of them, as I write, are not out yet, but they will be before long, and what I want you all to do is go out and buy them.

The first is quite personal to me, because I was involved in its creation. It is called *Dragon Lensman*, and it is a Bantam book written by David A. Kyle. When Doc Smith died he left a few fragments, a lot of scattered notes and an agenda. (Not the parliamentary kind of agenda, the literary kind: a statement of books he wanted to write, if he ever got around to it.) One of the books he proposed to give us was a Lensman story in which the main character was Worsel the Velantian, the great old "royal snakeship" who battled by Kimball Kinnison's side against all manner of wrongdoers. Doc didn't write it; but while I was Bantam's science-fiction editor I secured the rights from Verna Smith Trestrail, Doc's daughter, and commissioned the novel from Dave Kyle. And now it's done, and will be out soon.

Since I have a vested (if non-pecuniary) interest in the book, I'm not the person to pass judgment on its merits; but I will not disguise from you that I am pleased with myself for having made it happen.

In the other three books I have no personal interest at all. They came to me in the mail and caught me all unaware, but, my, but they were welcome!

To be sure, Robert L. Forward is an old friend. He wrote a couple of articles for me way back when I was editing *Galaxy*—under pen-names, because he wasn't sure then how his blue-chip employers at Hughes would react to their chief scientist writing for one of those science-fiction magazines. I ran into him from time to time at scientific conferences—and then, as he began to come out of the closet, at SF cons. For the past decade or so he has been one of southern California's great natural resources for science-fiction writers, handing out ideas and straightening out scientific concepts for any number of our L.A. brethren. Now he's taken the plunge himself. His first science-fiction novel will be out from Ballantine/Del Rey in May, and it is called *Dragon's Egg*. What it is about is a race of civilized intelligent beings who happen to live on the surface of a neutron star.

It isn't a perfect book. Forward's "diction" doesn't really compete with, say, Aldiss or Delany. But, my God, what thought! There hasn't been anything like it since Clement's *Mission of Gravity*. I started to leaf through *Dragon's Egg*, and got to the place where Forward tells about the beginnings of life on the neutron star:

> The temperature of the star had fallen since its birth. The neutron-rich nuclei on the glowing crystalline crust could now form increasingly more complex nuclear compounds. Since the compounds utilized the

strong nuclear interaction forces instead of the weak electronic molecular forces that were used on Earth, they worked at nuclear speeds instead of molecular speeds. Millions of nuclear combinations were tried each microsecond instead of a few per microsecond as on Earth. Finally, in one fateful trillionth of a second, a nuclear compound was formed that had two very important properties: it was stable, and it could make a copy of itself.

Life had come to the crust of the neutron star.

From there on, he had me. I *believed* in his "cheela" as they evolved, and grew, and learned. If there aren't any such creatures somewhere in the universe, it isn't because Forward got his facts wrong. It is simply an oversight of God's.

And then I got another set of uncorrected proofs, this time from Dave Hartwell at Pocket Books, and the miracle repeated itself. The book is *Waverider*; the author is Hilbert Schenck, and he too is a scientist turned to writing SF. Schenck's specialty is the ocean, and that is what *Waverider* is about.

Waverider isn't a novel, but a collection of stories "knit together (the author says) in many ways."

If the collection has a single theme, and I think it does, it is simply that if you intend to work in and with the ocean, you must start by knowing what you are doing. This was true when the Greeks sailed for Troy three thousand years ago, and it has never been truer than today.

Or tomorrow, one would add, for most of Schenck's stories are about tomorrow's ocean (though one is about yesterday's).

There are five stories in *Waverider*, and if it is satisfying to find that they do have some sort of thematic link, it is even more so to find that they are all so different. Schenck does not play on a single string. His voices are diverse, and they all delight.

And equally delightful in a quite different way is the fourth happy surprise that came in my recent mail. It's *Barlowe's Guide to Extra-Terrestrials*, published by Workman Publishing Company, and it's *pretty*. It's more than that. It's thoughtful.

One of the least successful efforts I made as a science-fiction editor was to find artists who would actually read the stories, figure out what the various aliens should look like, and draw them in photographic detail. Such creatures required an unusual assortment of traits. They had to be able to understand what an author intended, even when the clues were sparse—or, for that matter, contradictory, because the author hadn't really thought his descriptions out. They had to be able to draw well. And they had to be willing to put in a lot of extra work. Artists like that were rare. Virgil Finlay met all the requirements—beautifully—when he would take the job on—when I could spare the extra months to wait for him to deliver. Jack Gaughan, in his early days, did it superlatively. I still remember his beautiful work for Jack Vance's *The Dragon Masters*. (Those illustrations won him a Hugo nomination—if I'm not mistaken, the first time the nomination had ever been for the illustrations for a single story, rather than for a complete body of work.) But what I really needed, I see now, was Wayne Douglas Barlowe.

Until *Barlowe's Guide to Extra-Terrestrials* came in the mail, I must admit I had never heard the man's name. But there he's been, all this time, sitting out in his studio in Massapequa, Long Island, reading all the science fiction he could get his hands on, and drawing the aliens the authors were describing. There are pages out of his sketchbook at the back of this volume, showing them in anatomic detail, in motion, at various stages in their development, all done in a sepia wash that looks like faded pages from Leonardo da Vinci's private studies. But the creatures themselves are in full color: Ursula Le Guin's Athshean, from *The Word for the World Is Forest*; Hal Clement's Abyormenite, from *Cycle of Fire*; James Schmitz's Old Galactics and H.P. Lovecraft's Old Ones, Clement's Mesklinite and Phil Farmer's Mother, and other beasties from the work of John Campbell, Robert A. Heinlein, Doc Smith and me—to name only a few out of the dozens Barlowe has painted for us.

One of the great things about great science fiction is that it doesn't stop when you come to the last page; the author (or the artist) has given you some content of thought, something to ponder, or play with, so that you go on writing stories in your head after you've put the book down. Schenck and Forward have done that for me with their writing, and Barlowe does it with his drawing. And that is what I exult.

Personal Post Script: I happen to be writing this on my birthday, which chances to fall near enough to the end of the year for me to consider a couple of New Year's Resolutions, and I would like to tell you about one of them.

For the past decade or so I've been telling everyone who would listen—lecture audiences, SF conventions and the readers of *Omni* among others—that we're heading for bad trouble. The "energy crisis" is not going to go away. It's going to get worse. In the long run, there is only one solution, and that is to use renewable resources; in the short run, we don't even have that option, and so we must concentrate on conservation. I'm not going to repeat the arguments here. They are not simple, and neither are the conclusions to be drawn from them. Much evidence suggests that if the present exponential increase in generated energy continues, at some point the reject heat and other pollutants will bring about catastrophic, and irreversible, changes in our environment. One person looks at the evidence and says, yeah, but that's not for sure, and anyway our scientists will figure out a technological fix if they have to. Another, looking at the same evidence, says no, by the time we found out we were in trouble it would be too late to do anything about it, and anyway nobody knows just what technological

fix would work, if any. It isn't an argument of fact. It is an argument of faith.

How do you resolve an argument of faith? Well, a good way (if you've a mind to it) is to accept the terms of Pascal's Wager. His dilemma, three or four hundred years ago, was theological, and personal; but the principle is good even if you don't share his religion. Blaise Pascal was a mathematician as well as a theologian, and he took a minimax gaming approach to God. The evidence for a deity, he admitted, was pretty tacky. Even less satisfying was the church's claim that if you obeyed God's commandments you would have eternal life in heaven, whereas if you disobeyed you would burn, baby, burn—and forever. So he put it as a sporting proposition. If you sin, he said, you risk damnation—maybe a very *small* risk, since you can't really believe all the bishops say. But *some* risk. If, on the other hand, you live a Christian life, you can *hope* for eternal bliss. (Maybe a very *faint* hope.) But what does worst-case analysis show? If you sin, the penalties in the worst case are terrible. If you don't, at worst you may be cheated of your promised reward, but at least during your life you will have had the respect and admiration of your fellow humans, and is that, after all, so bad?

As I see it, the energy dilemma is a modern and concrete analogue of Pascal's old and theological problem. If you live by the principles of the optimists, you may condemn your children to misery or death. If you live by the pessimist creed, you may find out it wasn't necessary, but all it has cost you is a couple of air-conditioners and maybe a snowmobile.

(Because, remember, nobody says you have to stop using energy totally and at once—it is only the *increase* in energy use that may drive us all to destruction.)

So, over the past few years, I've been playing at Pascal's crap table. It hasn't been all that hard. It began by turning off unneeded lights, which became second-nature before long. Then I started using public transportation whenever I could (I haven't owned a car for several years now), and doing things like turning off hotel-room air-conditioners whenever I could find a say to do so. But, although I wear a halo of virtue about automobiles, I am not free from sin; over the past decade I have been one of our most conspicuous consumers of jet fuel. And my conscience has begun to hurt.

This year (1979) I've touched ground in about thirty states and a dozen countries, and that's not really unusual —other years I've traveled even more. The easy rationalization is that the planes are going to fly anyway, and if I'm not on them it isn't going to make any difference; but that isn't really true. A plane like a 727 gets maybe four-tenths of a mile to the gallon in flight, and it has an average load of a hundred passengers—per passenger consumption, therefore, about forty miles to the gallon. If I fly a hundred thousand miles I have used up 2500 gallons of petroleum-based fuel, and that is the bottom line.

Therefore my principal New Year's Resolution: During the year 1980 I am going to hold down my air travel to no more than 75% of my average for the last few years.

This is going to be a little tricky, partly because I'm not really sure how many miles I've been flying a year, even more because I'm already committed to a bunch of dates in places like Seattle, Boca Raton, Italy, Yugoslavia and points north, south, east and west. I hope to reshuffle some of them to make it possible to get there by train or bus, both far better energy bargains than a jet plane; but that's not always easy, and sometimes not even possible. So what I've been doing is saying No. I'm not going to make the Triple-A-S meeting in San Francisco, and I'm not sure about the World Future Society General Assembly in Toronto; there are about a dozen cons that I would like to attend but won't; and I've turned down three or four interesting lecture dates. Maybe nothing I do will make a difference. Even if it does, it may not matter. But I go with old Blaise Pascal. If it *does* make a difference, I want it to go the right way.

And a Happy New Year to you all. ■

—Frederik Pohl

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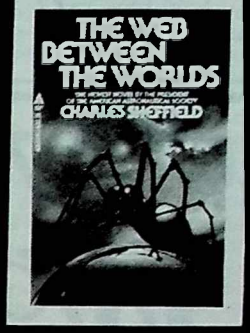

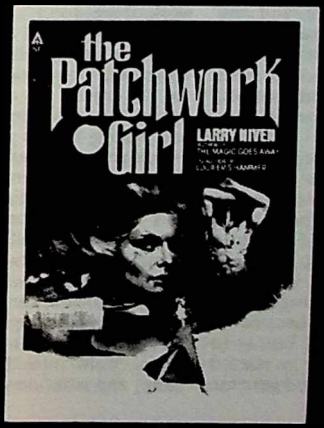

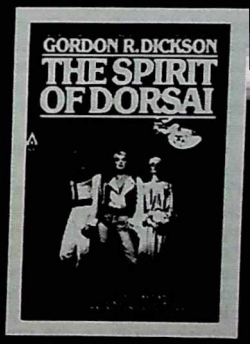

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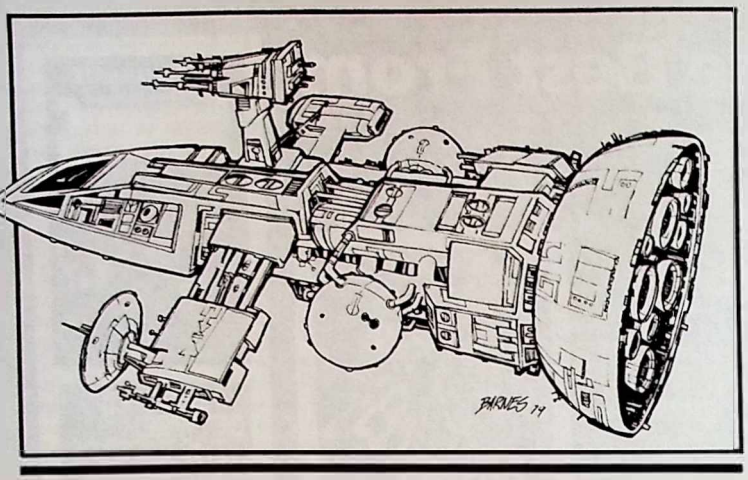


WORLDS OUT OF WORDS

SUSAN WOOD

Hi. I'm Susan Wood, and like Dick Lupoff before me (who's taking a well-earned rest from writing about other people's books, to work on his own), I'm a science fiction fan. I discovered *Lucky Starr and the Oceans of Venus* at about age eight, and loved it. I loved its excitement, its colour, its ideas. Face it, I *loved* those Venusian frog-creatures, the telepathic beasties who lived in the swamps (remember when Venus had swamps?) and ate grease. When David Starr, space ranger-superhero with the comic Martian sidekick, fighting the awesome torment of the froggies' evil mind-controls, defeated them *with a jar of vaseline* . . . wow. I was hooked.

I also read cornflakes boxes, Jane Austen, *The Wind in the Willows*, *Freddy the Pig*, and my neighbours' comics. Inevitably, I stopped being eight, and stopped reading SF, because I'd outgrown Lucky Starr, cleancut cardboard heroes, and even ideas that couldn't soar when the writing merely plodded along. Inevitably, I became an English major, to give myself license to keep reading. Inevitably, I started reading SF again when a friend gave me *Isle of the Dead* and *Babel-17*, to prove that SF could combine the sort of book I'd learned to love (with characters, good writing, all that literary stuff) with the sense of wonder I'd missed since I left the Heinlein juveniles behind.

I became, by profession, an "academic." I teach Canadian literature, SF, fantasy, children's lit, composition and technical writing, at any level from first year to graduate school. I sometimes find myself in a swimming pool at worldcon, reminding myself I'm at an, er, a conference related to my scholarly work. (I am, too.)

I have remained a fan, writing about SF (and teddy bears, Bob Tucker, feminism, conventions and wombats) for a variety of amateur magazines; organizing programs for conventions; and making friends with other fans from Brooklyn and Liverpool, Canberra and Capetown, Dawson Creek, B.C. and Jesus Maria, Argentina.

I have thus spent the last twelve years of my life falling, with what grace I could muster, between two stools.

Academics still view "paraliterature" with suspicion, and wonder exactly what I *am* teaching. (Given the current state of SF in the media, I don't blame them. Walk into the university bookstore, and what do you see, right by the door? *The Making of the Trek Conventions! I Am Not Spock!* and rows of fluorescent killer-robots, which are "in" this year as cover-art.) I get no academic brownie-points, writing a column about SF and fantasy, especially for something called *Starship*.

I'm doing it because I like SF and fantasy, and like to talk about it, about the books that please and interest me.

Meantime the fans (some of 'em) still mutter about "ivory tower academics" (over there, beside Mad Scientists, under "C" for "Clichés, outmoded") who are "ripping off the field" and "taking the fun out of SF" by "making it Serious."

Well: you will be disturbed by this column, if you are disturbed when someone suggests that SF and fantasy deserve to be judged, not in terms of *Thrilling Wonder Stories'* worst issue, but in terms of the best of current fiction; that SF and fantasy can and should provide genuine alternate worlds, not just escapist colour, 1950's white middleclass male social assumptions, and cheap happy endings; that craft matters, because a writer worth your time and mine is doing more than turning out wordage by the metre in return for the reader's beer-money; and that a "good" book is not necessarily one whose sole reason for being printed is to occupy your eyes on a Greyhound bus between Winnipeg and Minneapolis.

This approach has very little to do with my being "an academic," though it has to do with my learning to appreciate, and talk about, good books in general. It has everything to do with my being a fan. Because I enjoy SF and fantasy, I want to see them done well. There's a place for easy-listening music, and elevator muzak, but no-one pretends they represent the state of the art. There's a place for easy-reading sci-fi (hereafter called "skiffy") and formula fantasy, too; but it's not academic irrelevance to say, hey, we can all do better than *that*.

OK. I admit, I sometimes wonder what I'm doing, assigning *The Best Science Fiction of the Year* for *homework*. I also wonder what I'm doing, asking questions like: "What is SF? What is fantasy? What do they do? What *can* they do? How can they do it better? What's going on in supposedly-mainstream non-realistic fiction, and, hey, doesn't it make our cozy little genre-world seem a little, um, cramped sometimes?"

What I'm doing is having fun.

This column may end up as a mixture of speculations and market reports, theory and book talk.

A reviewer delivers market reports—buy this, avoid that—based on more or less informed assessments of a book's style, content and so on. A critic starts to develop a context for understanding and enjoying that particular work which

the reviewer persuaded you to buy. The context includes other books by the same author, other SF/fantasy books, other literature/art/popculture in general. Me, I'm a booklover talking to other booklovers. Anyone got a third stool?

The original title? It was "Schematic Models," from Samuel R. Delany's essay "Shadows" in *The Jewel-Hinged Jaw*:

> The critic sits at a certain distance from the work, views it from a particular side, and builds a more or less schematic model of the work as it strikes her. . . .
>
> Basically, however, the critic is part of the work's audience. The critic responds to it, selects among those responses and, using them, makes, selectively, a model of the work that may . . . guide, helpfully, the response of the critic's own audience when they come to the work being modelled. . . .
>
> *All* criticism is personal.
>
> The best is rigorously so.

OK, Andy. How about "Worlds Out of Words," which are what the SF/fantasy writer builds . . . and what the writer-about-books builds . . . and what Douglas Barbour (a critic who cares about SF, and a poet) called his book on Delany (a writer who's become a critic speculating about SF, language, words, and how we talk about all these things). Delany, and Barbour-on-Delany, are asking the questions I'm asking. They're the living, breathing stuff of what we're thinking about, and working on. *Worlds out of Words*, by the way, is published by Bran's Head Books, 45 Milk St., Frome, Somerset, England, and sells for $12US.

If you want a good discussion of "criticism" in SF/fantasy, I recommend Joanna Russ' "Books" column in the November 1979 issue of *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction*. Onward to the books.

TALES OF NEVÈRŸON, by Samuel R. Delany. $2.25. 264 pp. 1979. Bantam.

HEAVENLY BREAKFAST: An Essay on the Winter of Love, by Samuel R. Delany. $1.95. 127 pp. 1979. Bantam

One of the time-honoured reasons for building a world out of words is to comment on *this* world. Both of Delany's new books, one ostensibly fiction and the other ostensibly a nonfictional memoir, are in some sense "fantasies," playing with the idea of their function in presenting "reality" and in presenting "alternate universes."

Nevèrÿon consists of six linked baroque tales, set in the sort of exotic pre-industrial world you expect in "heroic fantasy." (Sorry about the quotation marks, but I'm using technical terms and trying to suggest their limitations, at the same time.) There are dragons and women warriors, enslaved barbarian princes and devious courtiers, hunters' huts, dockside slums and palaces: and they're all trimmings. (Delany is, among other things, exploring the Barbarian-Warrior-Mightythews genre, to see what lurks behind the formulas.)

The world, while interesting for its own sale, solid and richly-detailed, acts mainly as a distorting funhouse mirror of our own beliefs, social and sexual assumptions, actions and myths. In "The Tale of Old Venn," in fact, Venn uses mirrors to illustrate a point she's making about fiction, mirroring a mirror-image of "reality" and creating something new in the double-image process. Elsewhere in the tale Venn (who more than any of the characters is a mouthpiece for her creator) discusses the changes that come to a "primitive" culture when it starts to use money (what is money? economics?) and recounts a hunter's solemn discovery of penis envy (what are the differences between men and women? are they biological? social?)

The tales are crammed with ideas, ranging from sexuality, slavery and dependence, through creation myths, to speculations about language itself. Anyone misled by the cover and blurbs into expecting escapist fantasy is going to be puzzled, at best. If you want your brain pleasantly stretched, though, Delany'll do it. The tales are a "literature of ideas" in the best sense. They're also self-conscious, witty, sometimes irritating, sometimes slowmoving, and very often brilliant in language and insights.

Heavenly Breakfast is a mirror-image of a mirror-image, too, reflecting and reflecting on "real life" to create "something else entirely, with its own meaning" (to quote Venn). A man named Chip lived, in the fall and winter of 1967-68, in a Lower East Side commune called the Heavenly Breakfast, as part of a rock group of the same name. During the experience, he wrote down his observations, without shaping them into stories with predictable endings, "aesthetically manipulated lies." Several years later, Delany the writer got out the notebooks when a New York magazine requested an article on communes; he began to shape the material, and to analyse the communal experience. Still later, Samuel R. Delany published a manuscript, a memoir "basically for myself" of "the Heavenly Breakfast" as an experience.

Mirrors. The final text isn't the autobiography of Samuel R. Delany, an account of his socio-sexual-musical-lit'ry-culinary-chemical activities (a companion, reading the interim essay, says "You've left out an awful lot about yourself.") It *is* a fragment about a character named Chip, who walks empty-handed into an apartment (you look for one sandal, one bare foot), meets eleven people (characteristics and actions drawn from real people, to make characters "true" to the truth of the experience), interacts, observes other modes of living, thinks about the experiences he's having, leaves with three notebooks in a guitar case when group and commune disband: and who—this is the important point—spends the months trying to create an alternate world, trying to create a new way to live.

The book is random, diffuse and full of irrelevant details of what (for example) people ate, not what they said or thought or hoped they were doing. It's idyllic, too—surely no commune can work with so little space, so many different people, so few ripoffs/freakouts/illnesses, so few hassles (not over sex or money, but over possessions, dirty dishes, decisionmaking and the sheer pressure of numbers)? It does recreate a vision, though, not of media-idealized middle-class 1967, but of practical dreamers in a time when building a new world seemed possible. The narrator says "We stand on the brink of tomorrow" and it's not just stoned rhetoric or escapist self-deluding fantasizing, but vision and creative dream: the roots of fantasy.

Like *Nevèrÿon*, *Heavenly Breakfast* kept me up late, at my bourgeois dining room table, talking about communes, dreams and realities, alternate universes and this reality.

And the nightmare bikers' commune at "334 Eleventh St.." ("real" that address, or a nod to Disch?), the creation myth from the Western Crevasse, and the work done by "K. Leslie Steiner" on the "Culhar' text," the "source" of the Nevèrÿon tales: they're all equally true. □

THE BEST OF NEW DIMENSIONS, edited by Robert Silverberg. $2.50. 333 pp. 1979. Pocket.

Recently, someone asked me what I thought were the best SF stories of the '70's. Trying to work back beyond 1977, I started going "uuhhh . . ." and fumbling for titles that turned out to have been published in the late '60's. My memory was jogged by *The Best of New Dimensions*, 18 stories published between 1971 and 1979, in the prestigious original anthology for which, Silverberg says, he sought stories which combined "early 1950's craftsmanship" with "late 1960's sensibility." Many of these are *my* kind of stories: ideas and solid plotting combined with good character development and controlled experimentation.

The collection includes "Nobody's Home" by Joanna Russ. Silverberg calls it "one of the most vivid and plausible depictions of the daily life of the future

ever written," and I agree; it rings absolutely true. There's Le Guin's "The Ones Who Walk Away From Omelas," Tiptree's "The Psychologist Who Wouldn't Do Awful Things to Rats," Lafferty's "Eurema's Dam," and other examples of what SF in the 1970's could do when it tried. Silverberg encouraged both established writers, and some of the best new talent of the decade; and the collection reflects this. His own introductions give a fascinating picture of how an anthology is put together. This *Best of ...* is an important package, for anyone interested in contemporary SF; and it gives me cause to rejoice that *New Dimensions* is being revived, from Pocket Books with Marta Randall as co-editor. □

THE SCIENCE FICTION ENCYCLOPEDIA, edited by Peter Nicholls. $24.95 hardback, $12.95 paperback. 672 pp. 1979. Doubleday/Dolphin (US), Granada (UK).

Recently, the Noreascon Two committee—the group running the 1980 World Science Fiction Convention—announced it was exercising its right to create a special Hugo for the SF field's "best non-fiction book" of 1979.

The walk-away winner has *got* to be *The Science Fiction Encyclopedia.* If ever a project deserved to be praised, this is it.

If ever a book demanded to be used, this is it.

The *Encyclopedia* contains some 2,800 entries, ranging from bio-bibliographies for 1,817 authors, editors and critics, through histories of SF magazines and entries on films, to 175 general essays on SF themes: aliens to xenobiology. It's so complete that (statement of interest follows) Nicholls asked me to do an entry for "SF in Canada"; it's so trustworthy on trivia that he got my number of Hugos right (though he got my academic rank wrong—I hope he's as good a prophet as he is an editor).

I can pick nits as well as anyone. John Clute and Nicholls get Ted White's middle name wrong (apparently a mistake copied from Tuck). Nicholls gets Ron Ellik's middle initial wrong. Malcolm Edwards insists that *Warlord of Kor* is a novel. Etc. In a book like this, the little details are exactly what matter; I mention these only to point out that the editor and contributors care about details and, as far as I can tell, overwhelmingly get them right. (Nicholls includes the address of his British publisher, Granada, and urges readers to send corrections for future editions. Since the British edition went into a second printing immediately on publication, such new editions should be guaranteed.)

There are 35 contributors listed, though the bulk of the work was done by Nicholls, associate editor John Clute, and contributing editors Malcolm Edwards and Brian Stableford. (Technical editor was Carolyn Eardley, who "wishes to firmly dissociate herself from some of the split infinitives which we have felt compelled occasionally to use for the sake of clarity." Oh, I do like this book's *style.*) Many of the contributors are loosely associated with London's Science Fiction Foundation, with a healthy mix of international experts. Each essay is signed, and, though judgments and opinions are present, they're generally reasoned and interesting.

The *Encyclopedia* is an invaluable reference work on SF. It's also more: a history and survey of SF (in and outside the Gernsback continuum) which, because of the theme essays and extensive cross-references, really does give a balanced picture of the field. The material from outside the British/American publishing world is useful, as is that on films, comics, SF art (much of it from Jon Gustafson) and criticism. As a bonus, there are 400 well-chosen illustrations. As another bonus, the contributors and editor, bless them, know how to use the English language, and write with clarity, economy, and a surprising degree of elegance.

Nicholls writing on Nicholls comments that, when writing or publishing criticism, he has been "generally attempting to mediate between the two extremes of academic orthodoxy and fannish bonhomie." Among other accomplishments, the *Encyclopedia* gracefully accomplishes this feat. *Anyone* interested in SF will appreciate this book. For me, it's already become both an essential reference tool, and a bedside browsing book (which may say something about my habits, but says more about the book: imagine a reference work you flip through for entertainment).

Buy the hardcover. You're going to use this book, and the paperback won't stand the strain.

Remember *The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction* at Hugo-nominating time.

And look forward to Nicholls' promised companion-volume on fantasy. □

LEESE WEBSTER, by Ursula K. Le Guin, illustrated by James Brunsman. $7.95. 26 pp. 1979. Atheneum.

MALAFRENA, by Ursula K. Le Guin. $11.95. 369 pp. 1979. Putnam.

It's a pity this column is appearing in February. *Leese Webster,* a children's picture book, would make a dandy Christmas present for a child (who'll enjoy the story about a clever spider who starts spinning pictures) or for a special adult (who'll enjoy the charming fable about art and life). At first, I thought the black-and-white line drawings by James Brunsman were too crude and cartoony; but they fit the book, since after all, a spider and her web are basically a collection of lines, and a realistic spider might be scary. Does anyone not working for a public library actually buy picture books? If you do, I recommend this one.

Malafrena is a realistic novel—about the texture, actions and decisions of everyday life, described in careful shadings and nuances. It's set in a created world, the Orsinia of *Orsinian Tales* (to give the author freedom), in a real place and time, The Austro-Hungarian empire of the 1820's, the era of the stirrings of revolutionary nationalism (to give the author context). Through Itale Sorde, a young patriot from the provincial gentry, and his childhood sweetheart Piera, Le Guin continues the debate on freedom and responsibility, love and duty, she presented in *The Dispossessed* and *The Eye of the Heron.* I find it oddly theoretical, at a bit of a distance, though the world and the lives are richly-textured. It's certainly proof that *any* serious literature is a "literature of ideas"; and it should be welcomed by anyone for whom Le Guin's ideas have human importance. □

MOON IN THE GROUND, by Keith Antill. $12US. 220 pp. 1979. Norstrilia Press, P.O. Box A491, Sydney South, NSW 2000, Australia.

THE DARK BRIGHT WATER, by Patricia Wrightson. $7.95. 223 pp. 1979. Atheneum.

Australian SF people tend to resent and lament their isolation from the supportive communities of fans, fellow-writers, editors and, especially, publishers in Britain and the U.S. They've begun to coalesce, in self-preservation and self-defence, as a community of their own, and Norstrilia Press is one result. A fan-owned effort, it's produced two volumes of stories from the Australian writers' workshops, and now, expanding, a novel.

Moon in the Ground opens with an aboriginal myth of a Moon Baby that plummets to earth and destroys the power of a much-feared shaman. It's an interesting narrative hook, and could have provided an effective fable for the story, which focuses on a group of US scientists (our shamans) confronting the "moon baby," a sentient alien artifact they name "Pandora." Unfortunately, however, Antill mostly ignores the extra dimension his myth and physical setting (the desert near Alice Springs) could have provided, though he does make some use of the social tensions between Australians and Americans. The scien-

tists (identified by last names, and virtually indistinguishable) confront Pandora. Everybody confronts Big Government. Since this is 1979, the latter is far more scary. The artifact isn't what you'd expect (the ultimate weapon, or the computer playing God); the government-stuff *is* what you'd expect, a stock thriller-element, and unconvincing.

The book is interesting enough, and certainly as competent as anything currently issued by North American paperback houses; I hope one buys reprint rights, if only to encourage Antill and Norstrilia. The problem is that, much as I wanted to hail this book as a new discovery, I can't. It won the Mary Gilman award for Australian literature given by the New South Wales Trade Union movement (!) in 1970. We're told that Antill has written other novels, but this is his first to be published—in 1979. I wish that, in the intervening years, someone—his own conscience, if not his editors—had made him do extensive rewrites. The actual writing is less than competent: muddy, imprecise, and full of sentence fragments, run-on sentences and sentences that change subject in midstream. Maybe you'll be so caught up in the story that you won't be confused and irritated; for me, the writing had exactly the opposite effect. □

Patricia Wrightson, in contrast, is an able and graceful writer. *The Dark Bright Water*, a sequel to *The Ice Is Coming*, follows her aboriginal hero Wirrun as he and his friend Ularra leave the white coastal city, the world of "the ordinary things a man had to live with," for the Outback, the world of the People and the spirits. The Yunggamurra, a water-spirit, in woman's form, sings sweetly, luring him to death; and all the land is disturbed. Wrightson does make good use of the Australian background, both the physical setting and, especially, the strange and haunting myths associated with the Outback. Like Wirrun, we come to accept the reality of Yunggamurra and Mimi, as present and actual as the rocks and streams.

Wrightson's prose is flowing and evocative, her characters (both the abos and the spirits) convincing, and her emotional relationships (the friendship between Wirrun and Ularra, the attraction between Wirrun and Murra) powerful. Packaged as a "young adult" book, this is meant for everyone who enjoys good, and unusual, fantasy. □

And finally. . . . I checked with Dick Lupoff to make sure that our columns didn't overlap; and for that reason, I'm not reviewing Octavia Butler's *Kindred* (Doubleday) and Thomas M. Disch's *On Wings of Song* (St. Martin's). I admired them both, though. Butler's fantasy premise was too arbitrary, but the emotional situation it set up was fascinating and convincing. As for Disch's book, it's my choice for the best SF novel of 1979.

The following two reviews have been sitting in Andy's files since the spring of 1979, but we both decided to run them. This column is full of recommendations; here's another: remember "Options" at award-nominating time. □

JUNIPER TIME, by Kate Wilhelm. $9.95. 288 p. 1979. Harper and Row.

In *Juniper Time*, Kate Wilhelm's twelfth novel, she returns with increasing skill to the territory she has staked out for herself. Her subject frequently is the struggle of human beings to survive, psychologically as well as physically, in a devastated near-future world where "the machine society" demands conformity. Here, her protagonists are Arthur Cluny, a graduate student in astrophysics, who longs for space; and Jean Brighton, a graduate student in linguistics, who understands the "magic" and the power of words. Both are the children of dreamers, men who schemed to build the first space station. Arthur has grown up to be the tool of power-hungry men; Jean has rejected the "large machine that had no need for souls or consciences or feelings," the military-government-industrial machine which destroyed her father.

Yet neither Jean nor Arthur has a real choice, since they are both born into a "shrinking world" without hope.

"Bewilderment, humiliation and apathy, these were the masks people wore, and it was terrifying. . . . And they were helpless. Nothing could be done."

The actual drought devastating the world is a powerful metaphor for this lack of hope. Wilhelm presents these bleak scenes with impressive skill. Her understated style effectively suggests the people's despair, and the horror of the "newtowns"—refugee camps in which civilized people become either apathetic or violent, like the gang which rapes and brutally beats Jean.

Yet Wilhelm insists on the *necessity* of choice. We can choose, not to live—this is a tough-minded book, and Wilhelm makes no promises—but to try to live. We must choose to hope. Jean's search for her own "real place," in the Oregon desert with an Indian tribe relearning survival skills, and within herself as she comes to terms with her past, counterpoints Cluny's loss of his dreams. Wilhelm's skill at character development and center-of-consciousness narration is clearly evident in *Juniper Time.*

I could have wished for even more psychological exploration, and fewer plot mechanics—the discovery of an "alien" message encoded on gold, kidnappings, murder, political machinations, international intrigues. The framework of *Juniper Time* is spectacular, a science-fiction thriller. Yet its heart is quiet, an exploration of what it means to be human, an individual, whole. The book can be read as entertainment, or as a disaster novel with ecological overtones. It can also haunt your mind, asking hard questions about human nature.

That's Wilhelm's territory. She explores it well. □

UNIVERSE 9, edited by Terry Carr. $7.95. 182 pp. 1979. Doubleday.

People have accused me of writing nothing but positive reviews. Well, yes. Unless I find a really "important" bad book, I simply can't be bothered finishing anything crummy-to-mediocre, much less write about it just to see the blood flow. Marking term papers gives me all the lousy prose I need.

I always finish Terry Carr's *Universe* anthologies. For some reason, I seem to prefer the odd-numbered ones; and #9 kept me away from a stack of technical-writing exams for an enjoyable evening.

The anthology contains 9 original stories, from Carr's usual blend of established pros (Bob Shaw, Greg Benford), newer luminaries (John Varley—is he an "established pro" now, with his Nebula? can't keep these categories straight—Marta Randall, John Shirley, Greg Bear) and *good* new writers (Paul David Novitski, Mary C. Pangborn and Juleen Brantingham, the latter two with their first published SF stories.)

Carr says of Varley's novelette "Options" that it "may well be the best story he's yet written." Yes. It's stunning. It's the story we've been waiting for him to write, about the beginnings of that future society in the Eight Worlds, when the easy sex-changes are first introduced. Cleo is a happily-married mother of three on Luna who decides (after much soul-searching) to find out what it's like being Leo. Husband Jules is quite happy as a man, quite unhappy with Cleo's decision. Are "man" and "woman" just social roles, limitations put on the minds and hearts of male humans, female humans, human humans? Cleo says: "It's the option I want. . . . I want to know how much of me is hormones, how much is genetics, how much is upbringing" (p.171). So do I. This story will produce a lot of discussion and thought.

Paul Novitski's "Nuclear Fission" also focuses on the problems people will have, even if we achieve an almost-utopia of sane power use (zeppelins and home computers), back-to-the-land living, an end to rigid sex roles, and so on. His future is both possible and plausible; his people are convincing. Juleen Brantingham's "Chicken of the Tree" is a short parody of the search for rural bliss in a polluted world ("Pickles . . . gave back my Euell Gibbons autograph. I ate it for breakfast with honey and yogurt"—p.130.) It's the sort of thing I never have the nerve to actually submit.

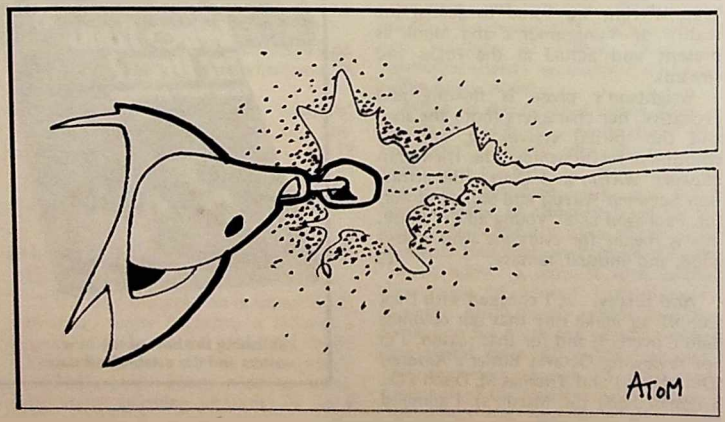
Marta Randall's "The Captain and the Kid" is a delight. Randall handles first-person, present-tense narrative extremely well, convincingly showing the Kid's exasperation with, and love for, the Captain, cranky about being stuck on a colony planet.

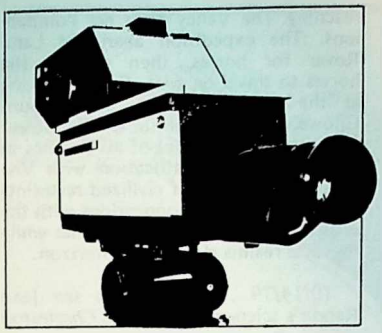
Bob Shaw's novella "Frost Animals" is a murder mystery with a difference, as Dennis Hobart, returning from space, recalls events which happened 13 subjective months and 18 Earth years before. I found it emphasized ideas, and rather arbitrary plotting, at the expense of character.

Greg Benford's "Time Shards" involves a Smithsonian scientist of 2000 AD attempting to recapture a voice from 1000 AD—and asks what we're leaving as "history" for 3000 AD. It's an entertaining short story with well-handled dialogue. Like it, Greg Bear's "White Horse Child" is a fine variation on a familiar theme: a fantasy in which an imaginative child learns to tell stories despite a repressive, Billy-Graham-reading community dedicated to concentrating "on things that are real" like the hardships of life. Mary Pangborn's "The Back Road" is a pleasant Simak-style tale of strange happenings in rural New England. John Shirley's "Will the Chill," very different in tone, is an adventure story and psychological study.

Universe 9 is an interesting collection, then, with an outstanding Varley story. It's a worthy addition to the series. And now I've got to get back to marking those papers . . . □■

—Susan Wood





FILMEDIA
ROBERT STEWART
FILM DIARY

Actually, I don't keep a film-going diary. But the format appeals to me . . .

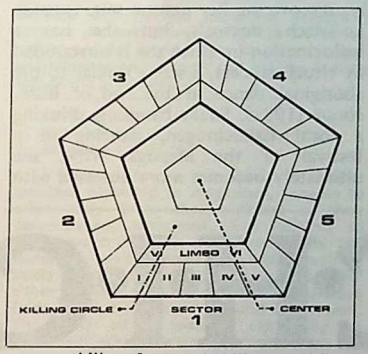
2/79 . . . Like *Alphaville* and *THX 1138*, Robert Altman's end-of-the-world SF, *Quintet*, was filmed in existing locations. When Altman arrived in Montreal to scout locations for a contemporary gangster movie, he was shown the still standing Expo '67 buildings; his screenplay was rewritten into SF so the frozen Expo could serve as a futuristic city for civilization's straggling survivors. Since the story revolves around a game (with death for the losers), Altman found it necessary to create the game first. When the film's obscurant, humorless and bleak atmosphere kept it from attracting a large audience, no games manufacturer stepped forward even though the game board seen on screen is quite handsome. To my surprise, strategydom (if that's what it's called) not only shunned *Quintet*, some knowledgeable gamesters have never even heard of *Quintet*, the movie or the game. Here, then, are the little-seen (outside of some theater lobbies) rules for Quintet:

QUINTET: A game for six players, the object of which is to be the last player left alive by killing everyone else. During the course of the game, a player may make *Alliances* as they become convenient, but, ultimately, everyone will become your enemy unless they are killed before they have the chance.

EQUIPMENT: A pentagonal board divided into five *Sectors*, a *Killing Circle* and the *Center*. Each *Sector* is divided into five *Rooms* and one *Limbo*. Each of the six players has three *Gamepieces* usually fashioned to his or her own personality. A pair of *Dice* is used.

SIXTH MAN: The most powerful position in the game. The *Sixth Man* is the player rolling the highest number in the first round. Sitting out the first half of *Quintet*, called the *Frontgame*, the *Sixth Man* determines the *Killing Order* for the other five players. Moving around the table during the *Frontgame*, the *Sixth Man* advises the players, points out mistakes and creates diversions, keeping in mind that he will face the winner in the second half of *Quintet*, the duel called *Endgame*. It is the goal of the *Sixth Man* to promote the survival of the weakest player in the *Frontgame*, so that he may have an easy kill in the *Endgame*.

KILLING ORDER: Determined by the *Sixth Man*, each player is given a victim, the only player he



may kill. After each kill, the *Killing Order* is changed. The order is represented in a circle composed of one of each of the five players' *Gamepieces* arranged by the *Sixth Man* in the *Killing Circle*. The order is read clockwise.

PLAY: The game commences with the first player, the one who rolled the second highest number on the initial round. The player rolls the *Dice* and moves in either direction the correct number of *Rooms* according to the two numbers rolled. Player may move one *Piece* the total of both *Dice* or may split the throw and move one *Piece* according to one *Die* and the other according to the other *Die*. The player's third *Gamepiece* stays in the *Killing Circle* representing its place in the *Killing Order*. Play passes clockwise until all five players have rolled on.

KILLING: If a correct move enables a player to enter a *Room* occupied by his victim, the victim's *Piece* is removed from the board. If the victim still has another *Piece* in play, he is still alive and may continue playing. If there is no other *Piece* left, the player is killed, and the appropriate *Piece* is removed from the *Killing Circle* leaving a new *Killing Order*.

ALLIANCE: Two players who, by the arrangement of the *Killing Order*, are not victims to one another, may occupy the same *Room* forming an *Alliance*. This coupling protects each while they are in the same *Room* from their respective killers. However, an *Alliance* may suddenly turn into a *Killing* if the play creates a new *Killing Order*.

LIMBO: The only safe place on the board. When a player rolls a six, not in total but on one or both of the *Die*, he may move one *Piece* to *Limbo*. Player must leave *Limbo* on his first move.

"QUINTET": The survivor, facing the *Sixth Man* in the *Endgame*, rolls double fives and achieves the perfect kill. He says "Quintet." This can only occur in the *Endgame* and can only be rolled by the survivor of the *Frontgame*. All other five-five rolls are handled in the normal way.

The instruction "if there is no other piece left, the player is killed . . ." indicates how the game provides a basis for much of the plot construction. Like chess and *The Seventh Seal*. (Perhaps not so coincidentally, Bibi Andersson of the Bergman film also turns up in the cast of *Quintet*.) Or the various devices of Monopoly (designed by its creator after the streets of Atlantic City) expanded into the dramatic situations

of *The King of Marvin Gardens* (1972), set in Atlantic City. And, as I recall (since I'm sure not leaving this apartment to research this item!), the legalized killings known as The Big Hunt in Elio Petri's *The Tenth Victim* (1965), based on Robert Sheckley's "The Seventh Victim," inspired Big Hunt games on a number of campuses, with students opening medicine chests and books to find notes that read "You're dead!" *Quintet*'s storyline is somewhat reminiscent of *The Tenth Victim*, but, instead of offering suspense, it's SF through a Samuel Beckett filter darkly. Given a choice, I'd much rather sit through, again, any of Robert Altman's earlier fantasies—*Brewster McCloud, Images* and *3 Women*.

5/30/79 ... *Alien* shares with *Quintet* an effort to depart from hackneyed SF costuming and décor, and both succeed at this. *Alien* looks like what I have thought, for the past 30 years, an SF film *should* look like. The visual style of director Ridley Scott's lambent *The Duellists* (winner of the 1977 Special Jury Prize at Cannes) gives way to a corrosive doomfear environ of computer flickers and skitterings down smoky claustro-corridors in the first feature film directly influenced by *Heavy Metal*. The stunning art direction concepts are the result of Scott's Royal College of Arts schooling, his BBC set design training and his experience in adding meticulous touches to tv commercials, a background which prompted him to cast science fiction and fantasy production illustrators the way other directors cast actors, each typecast by specialty—clunky, chunky functional Earth ship interiors (Ron Cobb), steamy-helmeted spacesuits (Moebius) and biomechanoid alien technology (Hans Rudy Giger). And then protecting their creations by preventing them from being radically altered in construction. This represents a reunion of the *Dune* gang. Both Giger and Moebius worked on the pre-production of Alexandro Jodorowsky's *Dune*, planned in 1976 to star Jodorowsky's teenage son, Brontis, with Orson Welles and Salvador Dali set for other roles; Cobb might well have joined the 1976 *Dune* team had the film not collapsed after spending, according to one rumor, $2,000,000 in pre-production.

7/27/79 ... *The Valley* (aka *The Valley Obscured by Clouds*). Finally released in the U.S. after seven years (partially on the basis of an extremely brief Pink Floyd score and the increasing popularity of the talented Bulle Ogier), this quest for a mystical valley of Paradise, a New Guinea version of Shangri-La, is captured in some beautifully seductive cinematography by Nestor Almendros (*Days of Heaven*). It was directed by Barbet Schroeder (see photo in last issue's "Filmedia") and filmed with a cast and crew of 15 over a six-onth period at locations in Papua. Searching for Bird of Paradise feathers for sale in Paris boutiques, Viviane (Ogier), wife of the French Consul in Melbourne, reluctantly joins a group of hippie adventurers traveling to bush country, and, step by step, undergoes a transformation, inwardly and outwardly, discovering her natural self. Outside a witch doctor's hut she has a hallucination in which she is surrounded by ritual dancers, a scene similar to the aboriginal dance at the end of *Walkabout* (1971). Snake handling, drinking a local hallucinogen, dancing in a festival of the Mapuga Tribe, she ultimately becomes more obsessed with reaching The Valley than her companions. The expedition abandons Land Rover for horses, then scatters the horses to travel on foot, finally arriving at the Gates of Eden, atop Mount Gilowe, in the final shot. The power (and it's considerable) of all this lies in the audience's identification with Viviane's gradual loss of civilized restraints as the last possible connections with the outside world crumble behind her while mystical realms glow on the horizon.

10/14/79 ... I went to see Jean Renoir's science fiction film, *Charleston* (1926), mainly since I had never known that Renoir had ventured into SF. As described by Francois Truffaut, "Glaciers have descended on Europe and thrown it into disorder. A black scholar, who has come to explore the continent, discovers a savage white woman who introduces him to the barbaric dances of the day, notably the Charleston ... Because its humor was strictly burlesque, *Charleston* had no success at all, but what remains of its original 1200 meters is zany, spontaneous and very amusing." I found it awfully spontaneous and only slightly amusing. Clad in a dance outfit is Catherine Hessling (Renoir's wife) who is playing with a monkey when a silver globe descends from the sky. Out steps Johnny Huggins, well-known tapdancer at La Revue Negre on the Champs-Elysees. She demonstrates the Charleston for him, and, after some difficulty, he finally gets the rhythm, does a few steps and then shuffles off to his UFO and splits. End of movie. End of 25 minutes. Supposedly set in 2028, it looks like 1926, and the glaciers Truffaut mentions are nowhere to be seen. ■

—Bhob Stewart

RANDOM FACTORS: LETTERS

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I found your discussion of the plateau in SF publishing most interesting. I guessed something of this sort last year, and sold my next two unwritten novels then. Might turn out to have been smart. Although I then got much more for a completed novel, so maybe not.

Jeff Hecht brings up an important point about applying science to SF. There are scads of goshwow ideas floating around in the sciences, sure. The crucial point is to make them important to human beings, to knit them into a web of events which illuminates something more than the fact that the author has kept up with *Laser Focus* and *Scientific American*. SF doesn't need more tricks and apparatus; it needs imagination and clear thinking.

That's why I despair, seeing Jennifer Bankler saying "SF has, in fact, devoted a great deal of attention to the ethical responsibilities of science, and did so long before the present debate developed among scientists ..." Generalizations like that wouldn't get through a freshman essay. The issue of responsibility has many facets for both writers and scientists, but ham-fisted analysis (such as confusing "stereotypes" with "flat" vs. "round" characters, a la Forster) and appeals to "responsibility" which really mean having the politically correct attitude, are not the answer.

Poul Anderson is of course one of our masters at envisioning very different aliens and ecologies. I share his suspicion (hope?) that our contact with aliens will be benign—for one of the species. I doubt it will be so for both. Few human societies have collided without one sustaining damage. I suspect the wrenching changes in worldview which would come from a truly strange encounter would disrupt and deform at least one of the principals.

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I always like to see Guest of Honor speeches reprinted in magazines, because so often they show their authors at their best—relaxed, humorous, and inspired to throw out an ingenious wild guess or two. The flavor is always different from articles written solely for the printed page, which are usually either much more serious or (if they emanate from Minnesota) bozoid beyond description. The lively air of speeches can easily be explained: science-fiction audiences have no compunctions about walking out on boring speeches, and so the speakers are *forced* to be interesting, if only from desperation.

Some speeches, when reprinted in magazines, work well as disguised articles; some do not. Fred Pohl's is nothing but a speech, and you were right to indicate so at the bottom of its first page. On the other hand, Poul Anderson's speech looks like an article once it's on paper—but *must* you have printed that first paragraph? Saying hello and expressing regret that one's spouse is not present are absurdly out of place at the beginning of an article, however much they were needed to begin a speech.

Anderson talks about science fiction as prediction, and looking backward on past predictions; in that light, it's very interesting to read Bob Silverberg's "Papers." He wrote about his feelings on retiring from his fiction-writing career back in ALGOL #25, and here he covers both the period in between *Shadrach in the Furnace* and *Lord Valentine's Castle*, and *why* he wrote the latter. Having read Silverberg's comments on *Valentine*, and being half-way through its serialized installments (and faunching for more), I finally feel that I understand why the book exists. I shall enjoy it all the more. Thank you, Robert Silverberg.

(Incidentally, do you suppose Silverberg could be convinced to give a Guest of Honor speech in Snorsk?)

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I'm pretty sure I dropped out of FAPA before Bob Silverberg's mailing comments appeared; strange the way one's sloppy writing comes back to one, a good argument for making every word golden!

I still feel like a young writer, but after a few more years riding herd on various Clarions, I've had new thoughts on writing. The first being that none of us seems to really know what we're talking about; there are days when I think criticism is just pushing off our insecurities on others. Everyone has to find their own path: many times I have heard a writer run screaming through the halls with the Answer to all writing, only it turns out to be a statement said in a personal code that means nothing to the rest of us. "What is character? The past of a person and perhaps their future aspiration." I came up with that a few weeks ago, but it probably means something only to me.

On the other hand, everything seems to work for everybody, and if you keep writing long enough you'll imitate, innovate, and procrastinate. I learned a lot from a commissioned pastiche of a Captain Future story, but I wouldn't want to earn my living

at it. I've spent a lot of time trying long blind corridors, but learned from them too. I've seen people become very successful in a short time by learning to imitate Bob Silverberg and then a few years later burn out because they had nothing to say. I've chosen my own road and I seem to be getting somewhere with it, wherever the hell that is or will be.

I wrote my original FAPA mailing comment at the time because I was annoyed at a person who had given me the advice to learn by imitation. I looked at fanzines as "written down conversation" and dashed them off, confident that they would be read and forgotten, trusting to the fact that they were done in fading ditto and crumbling twiltone, but of course they will return to haunt me forever.

Looking back, I agree that saying "pick your own style" is a contradiction if ever there were one, at least I didn't mean the one possible non-contradictory meaning, which would have been to think about the idea of Style, and decide to drop in 24% adjectives, 13% prepositional phrases, and to use at least two of the five senses in every scene.

Like most apa mailing comment conversations, we wrote to fill the pages with thoughts, and would "argue" even though we seemed to agree with each other. I agree with Bob, a writer should just sit down and write, as clearly as he or she can, and to hell with frills. But that just puts us in one camp out of the many schools of writing. There are other writers who revel in the frills, who delight in the poetic joy of the words themselves, and who go for the symbols and shapes that move beneath the words, and they have a validity also.

I quibble with the idea that a person's style reflects their essence. Who knows, really, what a writer is, inside? Many writers are good listeners, and write the stories of those around them (or does this truly mean that they are mirrors and not true persons at all? Do some of us lose our selves in the re-creation of others?). Some writers measure up to our expectations when we meet them, others do not. Writers grow or wither, their works remain the same, once printed.

Jack Woodford was more often right than wrong, but I wonder, if at the moment one realizes that one tends to write in a certain way, one ought to move on to new things, readers' expectations to the contrary. I can still hear Jack yelling, "Don't steal from the movies! "

Well, I guess I'll go follow Bob's advice, and worry my style along. I don't want to imitate a Silverberg, I can't imitate a Delany, and Harlan would rip out my lungs if I tried to imitate him!

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I enjoyed Sandra Miesel's piece on Zenna Henderson, and was moved to some speculation based on occasional comments from [my wife] Sharon. Although it's obvious that women writers are not unique in their handling of ESP-related powers, it is true that a lot of them do write stories with ESP as central. Sharon has suggested, and I think there's something in the suggestion, that this may have to do with the fact that ESP is not tied to weight, brawn, etc. In other words women and men are equal, in terms of their *power*, in the handling of ESP. At the same time, some ESP tends to include empathy and telepathy, both of which lead to understanding of others, to communication, both of which are important faculties in womens' vision; more often so than for men, who tend to want power, to conquer the world/universe, etc. I haven't done a survey, but it's true that (for me) once the suggestion has been made, it seems to fit a lot of ESP-oriented fiction, and it might explain the recent popularity of women SF writers and their concerns as they find form in SF tropes. Anyway, I was moved once again to ponder the problem while reading Sandra's article.

The interview with the Ballantines was just plain inspirational, and I'm glad you ran it. Vincent DIFate, on the other hand, continued to make me feel glad I wasn't an artist, though I admire his pluck and the pluck he demands of others in the field. Fred Pohl was fun (despite the dire-warning asides [maybe they explain why Dick Lupoff was depressed by *Jem*, though]) and Poul Anderson was interesting, though I felt that some of his piece definitely would have sounded better being listened to than read.

I do want to thank you for corralling Robert Stewart to talk on film. Too many SF film writers don't really understand the medium, and though their opinions are often as much fun to read as anyone else's, I always feel the opinions aren't based on comprehension of film as film. Stewart obviously knows the cinema, and it's really great to see him talking about a film outside the usual run of SF things. Oh yes, he made me want to see as much as I can of Jacques Rivette's work (and lucky me, I'll be able to begin with *Celine & Julie* etc. next term at our film society here).

Meanwhile I am sorry to see Richard Lupoff standing down from his post even if I'll be glad to read Susan Wood on books. As usual, Dick's in good form, and I read with interest throughout. Although I enjoyed *The Malacia Tapestry* more than he did, I was still really happy he found so much to praise in *Gloriana*. I agree with him that it's possibly Moorcock's best book (yet); though I thoroughly enjoyed the *Dancers at the End of Time* trilogy and the Jerry Cornelius tetralogy (once again proving that I just don't agree with Darrell Schweitzer about *New Worlds* at all, at all).

Finally, thanks for Bob Silverberg's delightful noodlings. I am looking forward to

Lord Valentine's Castle. But then I've enjoyed almost everything Silverberg has written since 1967 anyway. More of these notes will be more fun to read.

Jerry Pournelle
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I don't normally reply to reviews; and I should have written a note regarding Dr. Elliot's interviews with myself and Larry, because they were excellent. Jeff Elliot is the best-prepared reviewer I have encountered in my checquered career. He had read everything I've written (including some fairly obscure non-fiction) and he had a sheet of previously prepared original questions.

So I should have written last time, rather than be stimulated into writing this letter. Ah, well.

Normally there's no point in commenting on bad reviews. Some people don't like my stuff, and that's that. But I do wonder about Mr. Lupoff: is he some kind of masochist? Why does he keep on reading Larry Niven and Jerry Pournelle, either in collaboration or as separates? He's hated everything we ever did. He trashed *Mote In God's Eye.* He trashed Larry's *Magic Goes Away,* and several of his other books. By now isn't it obvious to him that he's never going to like anything we do?

But perhaps he has a civic duty to warn people away from a bad book? Well, I doubt that the public needs warning away from *Janissaries.* When I wrote it, I had an understanding with the publisher. "This is an adventure novel," I said. "It's a lot of fun for those who like that sort of thing, but I want anyone who buys it to know what he's getting."

"No problem," replied Jim Baen; and certainly there was none. The cover shows modern-era troops, women in armor, cavalry with lances, a castle, a planet obviously not Earth, and a flying saucer; and across the top in banner headlines it says "Adventure Novel."

When Beam Piper died, he left a gap in the field. Beam was one of my favorite writers. His stories were well-researched page turners with a pretty strong point of view. I intended *Janissaries* to be something Beam would have liked, and I hope I succeeded. Apparently I did something right: the book has been three months now on the Science Fiction best-seller list in the trade paper class, and it's a damned expensive book. I've had a number of poeple tell me they liked it a lot; but then they like that sort of book. Lupoff never has, and that's his privilege.

As for his summary showing the plot is silly, have you read the one about the kid whose uncle did in his father, and who mopes around for years wondering what to do about it, until finally he kills his girl friend's father; her brother and his uncle decide to do the indecisive chap in and stab him with a poisoned sword; the lad then swaps swords with the brother and stabs both brother and uncle; meanwhile his mother accidentally drinks poison and they all die in a heap . . .

Any story can be made to sound silly.

And my complaint is not that Lupoff doesn't like my book. I doubt he'd like anything I write—or even the kind of thing I write. Given his previous treatments of Larry Niven, I wonder if he'd like anything I like. So why does he bother? There must be books he does like. Let him review them and leave me alone.

I suppose I'm getting carried away. Look: I keep reading about UFO's. There's a disturbing amount of evidence for something behind the reports. I haven't the foggiest notion of what. A few years ago, Isaac Asimov did an essay on why he doesn't believe UFO's are extra-terrestrial visitors. His major reason was that there's no rational explanation of their behavior; no way they could be (1) secretive, (2) all that advanced, and (3) yet be seen sometimes. I toyed with that notion for a couple of years and finally thought out a theory that covers the facts. Then I wrote a novel incorporating my theory.

I also question the assumption that extra-terrestrials, being highly advanced (else they wouldn't be able to get here) must also behave like saints; that their culture would be a kind of idealization of our philosopher's dreams; that they'd have no conflicting motives or dissident elements in their society; In a word, that they'd be mushily benevolent. My misgivings about the sugary aliens in *Close Encounters* are also incorporated into *Janissaries.* To that extent there are serious ideas in the book; but then there are serious ideas (I hope) in all my books. Having a few serious thoughts does not mean one must write a treatise, though, and I generally stay within the limits of the adventure story. I try not to have my characters preach at each other. I don't as author step out of the wings and invite the reader to admire what I'm doing. In a word, I tell stories. I intend to keep on doing that. And I'd like to make a pact with Mr. Lupoff: I won't read his books, and he won't read mine.

Meanwhile, if you'd like an adventure story that's got battles and murders and sudden death and flying saucers and captive princesses, and incidentally presents a theory on why UFO's act the way they're reported to. . . .

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I can't blame Dick Lupoff for "retiring," but I sure will miss his reviews. For my taste he's the best, and the best-tempered, reviewer in SF. Goodbye *sob* au revoir? ?

Robert Bloch
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Frederik Pohl really surpasses himself—no mean feat—in his GoH speech. It's refreshing and reassuring to find someone of Pohl's stature who has still retained his sense of humor and his conviction that SF should be a medium of entertainment. No one is quite as deft at puncturing pretension; we're fortunate to have him represented in a 'zine' as elegant and influential as your own.

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Fred Pohl's speech almost makes me regret missing NASFIC. I found Anderson's speech just as interesting on a second viewing, although I suspect his libertarian view of history as cyclic is just as doctrinaire and represents just as strained and simplified a view of history as the Marxist view; it's very difficult to see history without imposing one's personal interpretation. For instance, Poul seems to ignore the western Roman Empire's lasting almost six centuries instead of four, as well as glossing over the crossing effects of Christianity (which I don't think was as dominant as he briefly suggests; didn't Mithraism remain strong in certain strata of Empire society?) and lead in the plumbing. (Incidentally, the speech was given at the 1979 Balticon. I should know; I ran the videotape camera that hour.)

Lupoff's review of *The Alteration* is mostly perceptive but he misses a few important factors which I'm a bit more familiar with through having gone on an Amis binge recently. First, Amis has published two other novels which are loosely classifiable as SF: *The Green Man*, a rather nasty ghost story, and *The Anti-Death League*, about the testing of a rifle that fires bullet-sized atomic bombs. (In both cases these are more about people than about the gimmick which qualifies the story—but then, *The Alteration* itself qualifies only through stretching most of the traditional definitions of SF; alternate worlds stories now are called SF even if they don't involve travel between alternities.)

Second, I think Lupoff has missed the point of the ending (although not to worry; *Time* missed the point of the book entirely, calling Father Lyall's murder the only marring of the pastoral atmosphere). The book is a downer from beginning to end; the society is shown as grossly stratified and manipulated by its masters and even Hubert only momentarily questions the assumptions about classes that everyone else takes for granted. Amis deliberately cues this by including in his CW titles "*Galliard*, by Keith Roberts"; since a galliard is a fast dance commonly paired with the slow pavanne, the inference is that this world, although its churchly technology is in some ways beyond even ours, is worse off altogether than that described by Roberts—which was pretty grim. *The Alteration* is in fact a tragedy, rather like Amis' earlier *Ending Up* (in which all six retirees in a country cottage die on the same day through assorted accidents). The defeat of both Hubert and Father Lyall, with the final ignorant benediction pronounced by the two old castrati is the end toward which the entire story is pointed; Entropy (here personified by the Church) wins again. There aren't many tragedies in SF, probably because few authors are willing to give Fate such a large hand in the plot; the closest I've seen in recent years (and not coincidentally what I think is his best book ever) is Anderson's *A Knight of Ghosts and Shadows*, and even there the hero gets in a final thrust.

Now, here's the problem I mention above; I, being a militant agnostic, see *The Alteration* as strongly anti-Church (although not as specifically anti-Catholic as *Once a Catholic*, the prizewinning British play which recently flopped in New York because its prejudices—it was also anti-Irish—were so crudely put). But under any circumstances I feel it's an outstanding book which certainly deserved the prize it won (Jupiter? Campbell? one of the biggies specifically given for SF).

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DiFate's column was highly informative, once again. I spoke with him for a few minutes at NorthAmericon. One of the artists featured in his short history slide lecture was one of my illustration teachers at the Art School of the Society of Arts & Crafts, Detroit (now called, more simply, in their giant new building, The Center for Creative Studies) in the early '60's before he, Gene Szafran, and his wife and former student, Ardath Agla, left the Detroit ad and teaching scene for the more lucrative (and creative) towers of NYC. He did covers for Elektra-Nonesuch, besides pb work (notably for Ballantine): he was very much interested in mixed-media, collage techniques. Vincent classed him among the surrealist-influenced illustrators. The sad part, which I wasn't aware of, is that Gene had to stop working in the early '70's because of multiple sclerosis. What a horrible trick for Nature to play on an artist (almost as bad as blindness). I lost touch with him when he went to NYC. Vincent thought he was in his early 30s. However, he was at least five years older than I am, which would now put him in his early 40's.

What a terrible business situation free-lance illustrators of SF and fantasy find themselves in. I suppose that's why I never entered the field: too economically risky. I

have an agent for advertising work here in Detroit, and he sure as hell doesn't take 35% off my commissions; but, yes, I often have had to do things I found boring or stupid. Then, again, most of what I do is anonymous and unremarkable. I have my own standard form contract—one copy to the client, one to my agent, and one to me. Each job is contracted separately. I don't always retain the original artwork (most of the time I don't want it; but illustration is a lot different from the page layouts I do from start to finish—promotional and merchandising material from rough to camera-ready). But, at least the clients pay in thirty days; or else they must pay a percentage (just like wholesale-retail merchandise contracts). I had to go to small claims court in Oakland County to collect a $300 debt one year but that has only happened once in about eight years of free-lancing. Obviously the publishing industry is a lot more dishonest than the manufacturing clients that I mostly deal with; also it does help having personal contact with even a reliable rep. Since mine is someone I know as far back as my high school days there is something more than a business relationship involved. Most of the ad work around here is boring, but, at least a viable economic proposition. Note: I always thought Dean Ellis made more from industrial illustrations for ads than SF pb covers.

I always felt that Silverberg's *Dying Inside* was autobiographical (as much as the genre allows for that kind of introspection). Economically, I suppose I would quit art as an income producing activity if it began to interfere with the rest of my life. I get *F&SF*, but don't want to read *Lord Valentine's Castle* until I have all the parts. I didn't think *Shadrach* was very good; it seemed like he had to push himself through that one; however, I thought "Among the Dead" and *Dying Inside* to be his best work. Still, I believe he has burnt himself out as a serious SF writer. Perhaps, mainstream may be a future direction, if he feels like it; he certainly has the maturity of vision and understanding of personalities for it.

I'll be looking for a book of film criticism from Robert "Bhob" Stewart in the future: he certainly has enough style and insight for such a collection.

To Darrell Schweitzer: To develop insight into character (personal psychology) you have to mature as a human being. As they grew older I doubt whether some writers for *Astounding* developed beyond an adolescent understanding of human motivations. The emphasis on explaining a technology or promoting a socio-economic philosophy in the short story to novella format almost necessarily precludes a higher emphasis on non-stereotypical characterizations. Those novels in SF which concentrate on character (Wilhelm's, Miller's *Canticle for Leibowitz*, *Dying Inside*, and a few others) have little strong emphasis on hard-technology. Perhaps in-depth knowledge of the two doesn't occur in the same person, though Fred Pohl seems to be getting better and better at it: his latest Nebulas and Hugos were justly deserved for this reason.

There were "avant-garde" literary magazines in Lovecraft's day. Why didn't he submit and/or publish in them? (Those mundane apas don't count.) I think Lovecraft's work is more related to the style of the French Symbolists and Marcel Proust than American SF or fantasy, which is probably why the French critics were so interested in his writing. Interesting: as Poe influenced Baudelaire, the Symbolist attitude seems to have influenced HPL.

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One afterthought which occurs upon seeing my letter in print is that the reason John Campbell's *Astounding* was so overwhelmingly influential in the 1940's is that, particularly in the middle of the decade, it was totally without competition. *Thrilling Wonder* and *Startling* were juvenile. *Amazing* and *Fantastic Adventures* were descending to new depths of idiocy. The war had killed off most everything else. As a consequence, anyone who wanted to write adult science fiction had to sell it to Campbell or go unpublished. Chances are this situation will never recur (and if it did we'd call it a Dark Age) so no one editor will be that important again. It's just fortunate that Campbell was as good as he was when he held that monopoly. Had, say, T. O'Connor Sloane been in that pivotal position, well, STARSHIP might not be with us today, because the entire genre might have died along with other types of pulp fiction in the early 50's.

If any one editor was the leader during the New Wave era, I'd say it was Fred Pohl, who tended to quietly provide what the others noisily promised. See *The Way The Future Was*, p. 198, where Harlan Ellison is quoted as saying the sort of daring material he wanted for *Dangerous Visions* was like what Pohl had been printing all along in *Galaxy*.

Silverberg sums the matter of style up nicely with the Woodford quote, but I wonder if he may not be overlooking a stage in a writer's development that comes before he has any ability to choose a style. It's sort of a proto-paleolithic period in which the would-be writer can only write imitations of whoever his idol may be, or else write nothing at all. It seems to happen more in fantasy than in SF, perhaps because some of the Masters use more exaggerated styles. But we have Lovecraft imitating Poe and Dunsany slavishly, and only later possessing a range of styles from which to choose for various occasions. And we have Ramsey Campbell imitating Lovecraft, and, typically, as he developed and matured, swearing off the whole business and writing something quite different when he was able to.

In these cases the progression may be seen to have gone like this: imitation merely to produce a story at all, followed by the ability to produce a readable story which is not an imitation, followed by sufficient mastery of technique to be able to pick and choose from other writers in the manner Silverberg describes. I don't know if it's a good thing for the writer to start selling in that first stage, but it happens (I did), and it may be possible for the writer to learn something about story structure and technique in the process. Let's assume for the sake of argument that Terry Brooks develops from an exploitable commercial commodity into a real writer someday. He will of course look back on *The Sword of Shannara* with a mixture of laughter and horror, but he may have learned something about the structure of epic novels from the experience, and he might even reach the third stage where he can borrow from Tolkien selectively. I don't have much hope for him though, since he has surely been wrecked by the overwhelming success of his crude first effort. Anybody who fails to get beyond the first step spends the rest of his days writing Lurching Barbarian Tales, First Person Delirious horrors, or, in science fiction, maybe pseudo-Silverberg or Heinlein or Zelazny.

James Wade has something there in his comments on the LoTR film. Bakshi managed to reproduce a large number of incidents in the trilogy, but without capturing any of the feeling. He would have done better to use less incidents and more of the atmosphere. I went to the movie with someone who had not read Tolkien. She found most of the film incomprehensible, the rest dull, and asked "Does it really consist of nothing but battles? " I doubt she'll ever read the original as a result.

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I would like to correct one error which Bhob Stewart inadvertently passes on in his letter from John Semper. Talking about *Apocalypse Now*, Semper writes, "Prior to this [May 11] the film has been shown without its dissolves. This is ridiculous. No wonder people complained that it was too long. There are some scenes where three images are double exposed [sic] on top of one another. To see it without the opticals would mean these three shots were shown right after the other; this, in effect, tripled the length of the actual scene."

Quite simply, this is *not* correct. When a film is screened in work print form (without dissolves or other opticals) each of the shots in an optical is divided or cut down to *preserve the overall length.* In Semper's triple-exposure example, 1/3 of each of the three shots might be shown in succession. Thus the actual scene would remain its proper length. But, and this is something Orson Welles knew very well, often an overedited scene seems much longer than a single shot. The beauty of *Apocalypse Now* came partially from its flowing style. To chop it up would interrupt that flow and make it seem longer.

[Norm Hollyn, when not letterhacking fanzines and Starship, *has been known to be a professional film editor.]*

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25, Barnes Place
Colombo 7, Sri Lanka

I've just seen the summer STARSHIP and the statement (p.67) that I'm adapting *Dolphin Island* with Robert Radnitz. In fact, I've not heard from Bob for years and wish him luck with whatever he's doing on the project.

I've made it clear many times that there are no circumstances in which I'd work on a screenplay . . . though I'm perfectly willing to spend a few hours (no more) going through one and making my comments—as indeed I recently did with Phil DeGure's excellent adaptation of *Childhood's End*. (I thought he'd made a couple of improvements!)

Incidentally, the option on *Rendezvous*

with Rama has just been renewed, but that's all I know.

Stanley Kubrick is still anxious to do a *good* science fiction movie, and is prepared, so he has rashly announced, to pay a generous bounty to anyone who can find him a suitable story. I recently gave him a reading list and left him muttering, "Stan Kubrick and Stan Lem—interesting combination . . ."

It sure would be.

Martin Morse Wooster
Beloit College, Box 1691
Beloit, WI 53511

The most interesting item in STARSHIP was David Samuelson's letter, which is shot through with pomposity and exaggeration. Samuelson sees himself, in his critical mode, as a telescope, through which common readers can observe the heights and depths of Fred Pohl and other authors more clearly. The critic, for Samuelson, is also "telescopic" in his ability to be the sole tool for the reader to discover new SFnal stars.

This is far from the case. Most readers are drawn to new authors, not by Samuelson's curator-critics, but instead by the enthusiasm of others—the hot flame of adulation drawing more sparks than the cool critical eye. It is only *after* a reader has discovered an author that critics are referred to, not as telescopes, but as looking-glasses, mirrors of the inclinations and prejudices that the reader carries, like warts, to an author's works. It is not that a critic determines for the reader what is worthwhile or trash; the reader can only do that for him/herself.

I doubt, then, that Fred Pohl's reputation will be hurt or helped by anything Samuelson writes about him. Most of Pohl's work has remained in print, not because of "hype machines" reviewing for the *New York Times Book Review*, but instead for the consistent pleasure which Pohl's work has given readers for the past thirty years. Yes, best-seller authors come and go (I believe that *Valley of the Dolls* is out of print) but they disappear not because the wind-machines turn off after a while, but because popular enthusiasm is lacking. It may be true that Pohl's status is due purely to his ability to use those "commercial considerations" so detested by Samuelson in such a way as to advance his art; but this is a possibility Samuelson disowns.

It is not possible for critics of contemporary science fiction to be museum curators, if only because their subjects are not dead, and can therefore not be entombed according to the procedures of the Modern Language Association. Living authors have unfortunate tendencies to talk back to academics when academics find deep inner meanings in an author's work that the author does not see. It is only when a critic becomes, if not fawning, at least not deprecating his/her subject that the author becomes complaisant; witness Sandra Miesel's attempts to pronounce the Revised Standard Word on Anderson and Dickson.

This is not to say that Samuelson's work will have no value; Samuelson is a far better writer than most of the lead-footed Marxists dribbling away in *Science-Fiction Studies*. (*Science-Fiction Studies* is one of the few journals where the French summaries make more sense than the English originals.) It is to say that Samuelson can not be as timeless as he would like to be: I suspect scholars in 2030 will read him, not as a forerunner, but as an interesting artifact.

Pascal J. Thomas
ENS
45 rue d'Ulm
75005 Paris, France

I was taking a kind of touristic/nostalgic trip to the Boston area (where I was living last year). As I still hold a banking account in Cambridge—and a Visa credit card, anyway—I didn't think it useful to take inordinate amounts of cash with me (that is, I just took along whatever petty cash I had left at the end of my previous stay). Alas, the immigration officers at Logan airport failed to be of the same mind. My accounts might well have insufficient balance, they said. Prove they don't, or we don't let you in.

That took me quite by surprise, and sent me searching through my luggage for anything that possibly could convince the guy who was questioning me. All I could produce was the notebook on which I keep a record of the checks I'm writing—but that document, having no official character whatsoever, obviously could not suffice—or so I thought. Anyway, I *was* desperate (it was after banking hours, I couldn't phone anywhere, etc), I produced it, and it was submitted to close scrutiny. And then, lo and behold! the immigration officer said with a faint smile "Somebody who subscribes to STARSHIP can't be all bad"—and let me through, after a stern lecture on how I had to be able to prove I was able to support myself, etc, etc. (How to be a respectable alien, if I may say.)

I suppose you're not going to believe it, but I swear by the greenest of the green gods that it's true, word for word. I even have a witness, a fellow traveler.

WE ALSO HEARD FROM: Ed Krieg, Paul Major, Pat Cadigan, Denny Daley, Alan Hunter, James Wilson, Cyril Simsa, Joe Vizvary, Dave Samuelson, Eddy Bertin, Harry Andruschak, John Charles McCormack, and Derek Parks-Carter.

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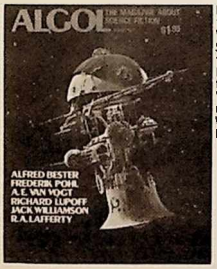
No. 26. Cover by DiFate. Tom Montaleone on Zelazny. Frederik Pohl; Interview: Samuel R. Delany. Columns by Susan Wood, Lupoff

No. 27. Cover by Jones. James Gunn, L. Sprague de Camp; Interview: Isaac Asimov. Columns by DiFate, Wood, Lupoff



No. 28. Cover by Dickinson. Jack Williamson, Carl Sagan, R. A. Lafferty, Alfred Bester; Interview: A. E. Van Vogt. Columns by Pohl, Wood, DiFate, Lupoff

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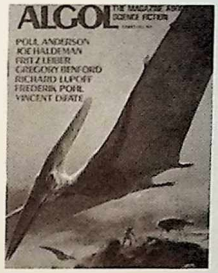

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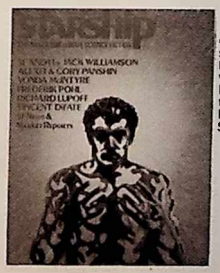

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CONLOG

Mar. 7-9. HALCON 3. St. Mary's University, Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada. GoH: A.E. Van Vogt. Toastmasters: Spider & Jeanne Robinson. Registration: $5, $10, $19 to 2/1 (Reason for different rates not stated). Write: The Halcon SF Society, P.O. Box 3174 South, Halifax NS B3J 3H5, Canada.

Mar. 7-9. WISCON 4. Wisconsin Center & Madison Inn, Madison WI. GoH: Octavia Butler & Joan Vinge. Fan GoH: Bev DeWeese. Registration: $8 to 2/29, then $10 at the door. Write: SF3, Box 1624, Madison WI 53701.

Mar. 19-22. FIRST INT'L CONFERENCE ON THE FANTASTIC. Florida Atlantic University, Boca Raton, FL. GoH: Isaac Bashevis Singer. Registration: $20. Write: R.A. Collins, Coordinator, Conference on the Fantastic, College of Humanities, Florida Atlantic University, Boca Raton, FL 33431.

Mar. 27-30. AGGIECON XI. Texas A&M University, College Station TX. GoH: Poul Anderson. Write: Aggiecon XI, P.O. Box 5718, College Sta. TX 77844.

Mar. 28-30. NORWESCON 3. Seattle Airport Hyatt House, Seattle, WA. GoH: Alfred Bester. Fan GoH: Freddy Pohl. Toastmaster: Theodore Sturgeon. Registration: $9, $10 at the door, $7 single day. Write: Norwescon 3, P.O. Box 24207, Seattle, WA 98124.

Mar. 29-31. SCIENCE FICTION WEEKEND 2. Travelodge International Hotel, LA Intl. Airport, CA. GoH: Ray Bradbury. Registration: $10 to 3/15, then $15. Write: SF & Fantasy Guild c/o FPCI, 1855 W. Main Street, Alhambra, CA 91801.

Apr. 4-6. ALBACON (1980 British National SF Convention). Albany Hotel, Glasgow, Scotland. GoH: Colin Kapp. Write: Bob Shaw, 2/L 244 W. Princes St., Kelvinbridge, Glasgow G4 9DP, Scotland, UK.

Apr. 25-27. TORQUE. Roehampton Place Hotel, Toronto, Ontario, Canada. GoH: Wilson Tucker, Phyllis Gotlieb, Chandler Davis. Registration: $7, $8 at the door. Write: Torque, 1600A Bloor Street West, Toronto, Ont., Canada.

May 1-4. EUROCON 5. Palazzo Del Congressi, Stresa, ITALY. Write: Jan Howard Finder, Box 428, Latham, NY 12110; or Eurocon 5, c/o Editrice Nord, Via Rubens 25, I-20148 Milan, ITALY.

May 2-4. MARCON XV. Holiday Inn-on-the-lane, Columbus OH. GoH: L. Sprague de Camp. Fan GoH: Brian Earl Brown. Registration: $8 to 4/1, then $10. Write: Marcon, P.O. Box 2583, Columbus OH 43215.

May 2-4. LEPRECON VI. Hyatt Regency Hotel, Phoenix AZ. Write: 3112 N. 26th Pl., Phoenix AZ 85016.

May 2-4. KUBLA KHANATE. Quality Inn, Nashville TN. GoH: Stephen King. MC: Andrew Offutt. Registration: $7.50, $10 at the door. Write: Ken Moore, 647 Devon Drive, Nashville TN 37220.

May 23-25. V-CON 8. Delta River Inn, Vancouver, BC, Canada. GoH: Roger Zelazny. Fan GoH: George Metzger. Registration: $8 to 4/1, then $10. Write: V-Con 8, P.O. Box 48701 Bentall Sta., Vancouver, BC, Canada V7X 1A6.

Jun. 7-10. 1980 AMERICAN BOOKSELLERS CONVENTION & TRADE EXHIBIT. Downtown Chicago Hotels and McCormick Place Convention Center, Chicago, IL. Write: American Booksellers Assoc., 122 East 42nd Street, New York, NY 10017.

Jun. 18-22. SFRA 1980 CONFERENCE. Wagner College, Staten Island, NY. Write: SFRA, Wagner College Planetarium, 631 Howard Ave., Staten Island, NY 10301.

Jul. 4-6. WESTERCON 33. Hyatt Hotel, Los Angeles CA. GoH: Roger Zelazny. Fan GoH: Bob Vardeman. Registration: $15 to 5/31, then $20. Write: Westercon 33, Box 2009, Van Nuys CA 91404.

Jul. 19-21. OKON '80. Mayo Hotel, Tulsa OK. GoH: Alan Dean Foster. Fan GoH: Shelby Bush III/Mary Kay Jackson. Registration: $7.50 to 7/1, then $9. Write: Okon, P.O. Box 4229, Tulsa OK 74104.

Jul. 25-27. FANTASY FAIRE TEN. Travelodge International Hotel, LA Intl. Airport, CA. GoH: Katherine Kurtz. Registration: $10 to 7/15, then $15, $6.50 single day. Write: SF&F Guild c/o FPCI, 1855 W. Main Street, Alhambra, CA 91801.

Jul. 25-27. AUTOCLAVE 4, REPRISE. Radisson-Cadillac Hotel, Detroit, MI. GoH: Jeanne Gomoll & Dan Steffan. Toastmaster: Ted White. Registration: $6, $10 at the door. Write: Diane Drutowski, 2412 Galpin, Royal Oak, MI 48068.

Aug. 1-3. SON OF PARACON. Sheraton Penn State Inn, State College PA. GoH: Charles L. Grant. Artist GoH: Kelly Freas. Fan GoH: Richard Frank. Registration: $6 to 6/30, then $8. Write: Bob Castro, 425 Waupelani Drive #24, State College PA 16801.

Aug. 15-17. BAERCON '80, GERMAN NATIONAL CONVENTION. Schultheiss in der Hasenheide, West Berlin, WEST GERMANY. Write: INCOS e.V., Goltzstr. 35, D-1000 Berlin 30, WEST GERMANY.

Aug. 29-Sept. 1. NOREASCON 2. 38th World SF Convention. Sheraton-Boston Hotel & Hynes Civic Auditorium, Boston MA. GoH: Damon Knight, Kate Wilhelm. Fan GoH: Bruce Pelz. Registration: $8 supporting at all times; $30 attending to 7/1/80. Write: Noreascon 2, P.O. Box 46, MIT Branch P.O., Cambridge MA 02139.

Feb. 12-15, 1981. AQUACON. Disneyland Hotel, Anaheim CA. GoH: Philip Jose Farmer. Fan GoH: Janice Bogstad/Jeanne Gomoll. Registration: $10 to 3/31, then higher. (Formerly Disneycon). Write: Aquacon, P.O. Box 815, Brea CA 92621.

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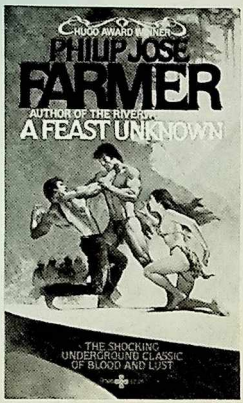

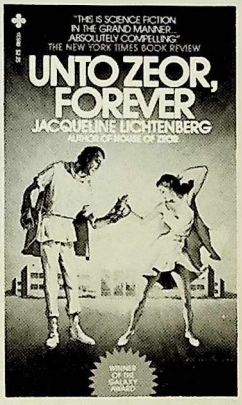

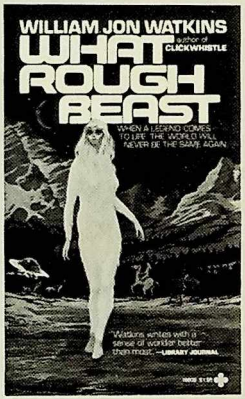

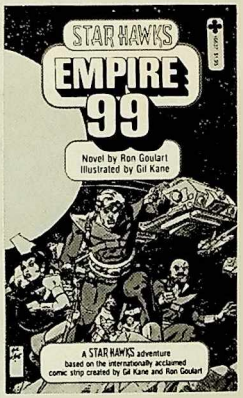

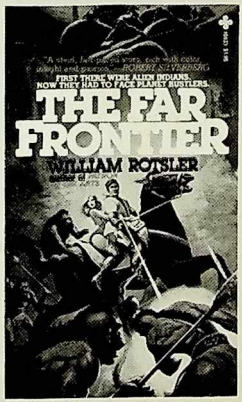

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