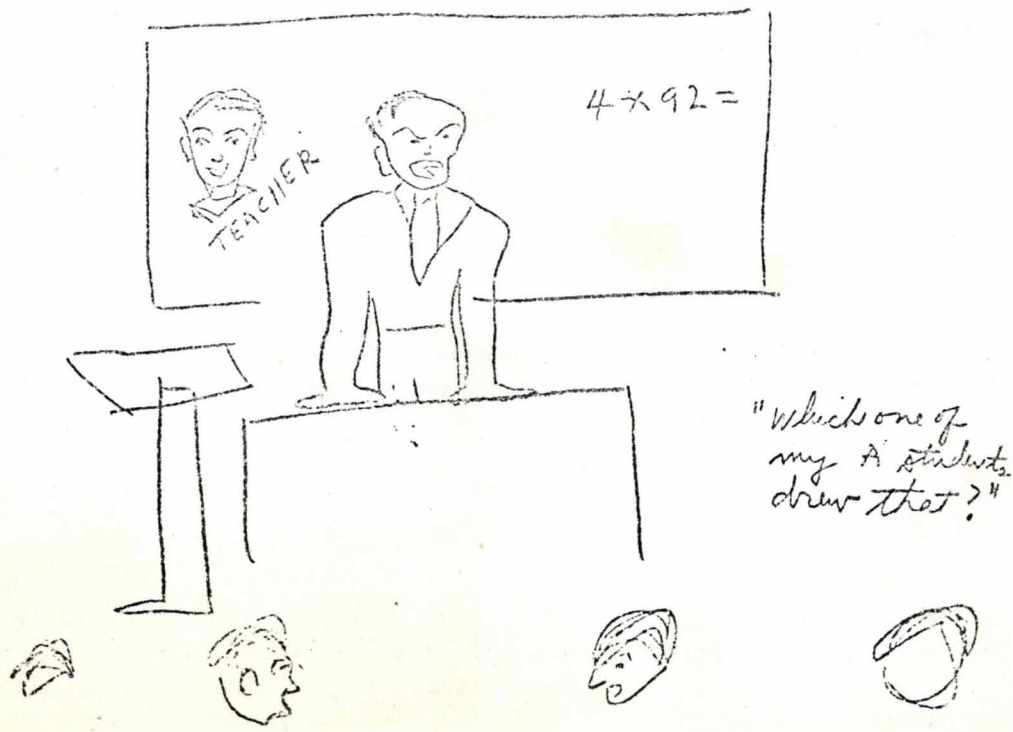


GUYING GYRE #1

WHY YOU RECEIVED THIS SPLENDID NEW PUBLICATION:

- \_\_\_\_\_ Your zine has contributed to my delinquency and I want to get even
- \_\_\_\_\_ I admire/like/love/lust after you (choose one)
- \_\_\_\_\_ You seem likely to have interest in GG's specialized content
- \_\_\_\_\_ Your name was taken in vain somewhere within
- \_\_\_\_\_ I would appreciate a mention/review of GG in your zine
- \_\_\_\_\_ You paid coin of the realm (I admire your taste in reading choices)
- Your locs and/or articles (which I admire) that appeared in various zines have encouraged me to this communication
- \_\_\_\_\_ Your  pleading letter made me do it  
 pitiful  
 scholarly and/or piquant



XXX  
 X GUYING GYRE is edited and published by X  
 X Gil Gaier, 1016 Beech Avenue, Torrance, X  
 X California 90501. GG is produced on X  
 X no particular schedule -- but I'll try X  
 X for three or four issues a year. It's X  
 X available for contribution of articles, X  
 X useful/helpful letters, and coin of the X  
 X realm (2/\$1.00). Trade is fine; if I'm X  
 X already getting your zine, extend my X  
 X subscription one for one if you will/wish. X  
 X X  
 XXX

THE NAME--GUYING GYRE

GUY (n) rope, cable or appliance used to guide and steady an object being hoisted or lowered, or to secure anything likely to shift its position.

GUYING, v.t. to guide, steady, or secure with a guy or guys.

GYRE (jīr), n. Poetic. A ring or circle.

I've read so many zines whose names numb my brain and dumb my tongue that I thought I'd at least give everyone a running start this time. GG also fits my name in an odd, comfortable way. There's more to it than the explanation shows and definition goes, but that's to be part of our involvement. MOON. May all who join this gyre become supporting guys.

DEDICATED TO ALL TEACHERS

Who love their charges and their task,  
 Who revel in the giving and what's given back,  
 Who know and care and have not tired nor gone slack,  
 Who chafe at life behind the mask.

I do most humbly dedicate this zine  
 To those who open doors to worlds unseen.

Special thanks goes to Rex Winn for typing and production aid and George Key for the kinds of support I needed to get GUYING GYRE started.

Contents Copyright © 1974 by Gilbert E. Gaier. This issue is published FALL 1974 and is a CLASS PRESS PUBLICATION # 1.

## The Fossil Fish

The fossil fish is etched  
In shadow substance,  
A gracefully compressed  
Flurry of fans.  
This antediluvian locked  
In explicit permanence  
In a bed of rock  
Began its journey before man's.

Yet only my mind's glory-burst  
In momentary romance  
Can flesh with relevance from first  
To last the scope it spans.

## INTRODUCTION

My name is Gil Gaier (with a hard i). Since 1950 I've taught English and social studies: regular English classes, Drama, Speech, Popular Readings, SF/F, American History and World History. I love teaching. VENUS. My school is a happy one of 2400 students. The youngsters, mostly from middle-class families, don't seem to excel in any area; but they're outgoing and willing to learn. (So am I. Maybe that's why we get along.)

Last spring I sent a three page letter introducing myself to many new prospective faned friends. Some were kind enough to have sent back favorable comments. So I've revised it a bit and will use it here as an explanation of my approach to teaching SF/F, how and why I got involved in fandom, and what I'm looking for in other fanzines. (TO FANEDS who've read this before, please skip a couple of pages. To all new readers, welcome to the ground floor.)

## TALK ABOUT HAPPY

My English Department Head (harkening unto my pleas) assigned me our curriculum's newest class: Science Fiction and Fantasy. Over 100 high school juniors and seniors took it during 73-74; I'll wager almost double sign-up for next year. (I can't think of anything I wouldn't have given up when in high school -- well, maybe one thing -- to have been able to take a couple of semesters of SF/F.) For me, this past year has been a perfect blend of avocation (reading and collecting) and vocation. SATURN.

## THE APPROACH

While preparing for the class last summer, I found out through accidental contacts that a couple of other schools in the area had similar classes but that the students were being turned off SF because they were required to read certain books -- which didn't suit their SF preferences. So I resolved to have a little lecture/discussion (less than a fourth of the time during the semester) and allow the students to read the SF/F they wanted the rest of the time. To help matters I took books from my personal library and bought others. Now there's a bookcase in my room at school with about 1,500 paperbacks, books, and magazines in it. My students are slowly gnawing their way through them.

## NOW TO FANZINES

Because I really was unaware of fandom (and its fateful attractions), it became a needful area of investigation. Sure, I could discuss/lecture on the authors, themes, history, etc., of SF/F, but what was fandom and the oft heard of (but as yet unseen) "fanzine"? (Here I have no defense against fan attack. But it didn't help being locked up in that closet by my folks for all those years. Yes, another closet case.) After reading a few zines and discovering they could help me, I began subscribing. Up to now I've received and read examples of thirty different zines (from *Algol* to *Zymurgy*). Some were complete runs -- both issues. With most I purchased all available back issues. The most came from *SOTWJ*, *Luna*, and *The Riverside Quarterly*.

## THE POINT

I discovered that fanzines contained much that would help me in teaching my class. Only occasionally do prozines give author interviews or discussions of authors' works (*Vertex* and *F&SF*); even less often do their book reviews contain what I consider essential: a pithy plot summary; some analysis of the work; the reviewer's opinion of it. Because it helps when picking books for the classroom, I consider it a plus value if there is any mention as to whether the book is easy to read/understand or if it's involved. (The reading level in the first semester went from 3.5 to senior in college.) Also any special mention of particularly descriptive sex or "objectionable" language is valuable. (The kids are cool about it, but the parents aren't always.) Since I set the "tolerance" level, I try to keep me and the class out of trouble. (*Stranger In a Strange Land* and *This Perfect Day* are OK, but Silverberg's *Son of Man* and Colinsky's *Mind One* are off limits.)

At present I'm working on an *Annotated Book List* which would contain all of the books available in the room. The listings I wrote from my own reading backlog at least starts them off. Now I'm developing more from student evaluations and from reviews read.

## EXAMPLES OF MINE

### BESTER -- The Demolished Man

How does a murderer escape a mine reading detective?  
It's the kind of story that when you stop reading, you'll  
remember where you left off.  
Inventive. Famous and well regarded. Recommended.

### CLEMENT--Needle

An alien (virus) detective in pursuit of a criminal crash-  
lands on earth. Trying to find the criminal is like finding  
a needle in a haystack since he can hide in any human body.  
A good story which moved at its own pace. One foot goes down  
then another. The detection and idea are more important  
than action and character.

## BACK TO THE POINT

Any fanzine, then, that has good book reviews, interviews of authors  
or articles about them are particularly valuable. Sercon articles on what  
is SF, what is its purpose and value, what are its current financial problems,  
prozines vs. paperbacks, place of fanzines, etc. are grist for the mill. Con  
activities and interesting locs come next. Least valuable *for my purpose*  
are fiction, lists of books the fanzine editor has recently added to his  
collection, lists of books that are to be published soon, non-related SF  
book reviews, humor articles, egoboo pieces, etc.

I came in expecting every fanzine to be heavily SF oriented. It's taken  
awhile to accept the fact that this is not so and enjoy those zines that aren't  
for what they are: healthy outlets for personality and interest expression.  
They are good for the ego (generally) and encourage communication. A perfect  
arrangement. EARTH.

## THE FEARFUL CONCLUSION

Well, whom have I managed to alienate: those who hate teachers  
*per se* (to hell with them); those who don't agree with my approach to  
teaching SF (I'm open to suggestions); real closet cases both straight  
and gay (I hope not -- since we all lie on that continuum); all the  
faneds whose names and zines didn't get specifically mentioned; book  
reviewers who have found the one and only true path; sex fiends who  
believe that any teacher restriction inhibits Id Lib; those who haven't  
heard that Silverberg wrote a book called *Son of Man* and resent my  
flaunting my erudition; those who felt my book listing examples were  
unfair to the book/too short/too easy, etc. (remember how and by whom  
they're to be used and that my space is limited); and finally those who  
missed the underlining of the words *for my purpose* when I discussed the  
*value* of a fanzine (for when I read for enjoyment and without purpose, I  
enjoy the humor and egoboo, too). I didn't really have to say that last,  
did I.

## STUDENTS SF/F READING PRIOR TO ENTERING CLASS

The students entering class fell into certain SF/F reading groups:

- 20% said they had never read an SF/F book before. (There must be an ethnic expression to say what I feel. Even the planets can't touch this one.)
- 52% said they'd read 1-2-3-4 SF/F books before. (The majority are in the one and two socket, however.)
- 12% said they'd read 5-6-7 SF/F books before. (Better)
- 16% said they'd read 8 or more. EARTH.

## I'VE HEARD OF WELLS AND VERNE, BUT WHO'S SILVERBERG?

As long as we're still in the pre-entry stage to class, it might be worthwhile discovering who the neo/uninitiated youth of today are reading.

- 10--Wells--The Time Machine
- 9--Tolkien--The Hobbit
- 8--Bradbury--Fahrenheit 451
- 7--Clarke--2001: A Space Odyssey
- 7--Orwell--1984
- 6--Wells--War of the Worlds
- 6--Blatty--The Exorcist
- 6--Crichton--Andromeda Strain
- 6--Blish--One of the Star Trek series
- 6--Tolkien--Lord of the Rings
- 5--Bradbury--Martian Chronicles
- 4--Verne--20,000 Leagues Under the Sea
- 3--Tryon--The Other
- 3--Serling--One of the Twilight Zone series

12 more books were each read twice.

52 more had each been read once.

Students listed 166 SF/F novels they had read before entering class. A few read some "they couldn't remember". One said he'd read many, many. This averaged to a book and a half per student when he came into class. He left the class having read an average of eleven plus books. SATURN.

## Isabella's Jewels (for NASA-1969)

My queen, we are no better off  
For having sent the mariner afar.  
He has returned with meager yield.  
The money your jewels brought  
Could have fed Saville's poor for a year.  
Instead we have a piece of distant dirt  
Whose value from all evidence is small.

My queen, when next Columbus comes for funds,  
Tell him they will be used at home--  
To do some good for Spain.

"THE OFFICE PUT ME IN HERE"

Of the several questions asked of the students at the end of each semester, you might find the answer to this one enlightening: "What was your *real* reason for signing into this course (SF/F)."

THE SUN GIFTS

23--I like SF. (Here's the 20% that I thought would be 80%. So it goes.)

TOURISTS

22--I like reading. (We know how to eat. Got anything good?)

20--To fulfill my English requirement/needed an English course. (We have already eaten and are full.)

18--Curiosity/to find out more about SF. (Welcome, Kids; have I got a meal for you.)

MUNDANES

6--The class fit into my schedule. PLUTO.

6--Heard it was an easy class. (True. But I've found that the only hard classes are those you don't like.)

4--Thought it would improve my reading speed. (What color a Ripple do ya drink with fish?)

3--I had the instructor before and like the way he teaches. (Seconds, please.) SATURN.

2--I know I wouldn't get hassled there. (Okay.)

2--There's not much homework. (True. Reading a book one enjoys is one of life's great pleasures--never a drudgery-type task called homework.)

1--I followed my boyfriend into this class. (I'm going to hide all the Lovecraft books.)

1--No opinion. (Help!)

1--The office put me in here. ASTEROIDS.

The number of responses will vary from the 104 responses taken because some put down two answers. But don't let exact numbers bother you; at various times when various questions were asked, various numbers of students were enrolled or in attendance. As I recall we started out the year with 104 and ended up with 97. So we averaged about 100 students in the three semesters. (One class was held in the first semester and two in the second.)

These responses/figures made it difficult to go on believing that there was a large basis of real interest in SF/F in our student body. BUT...maybe this first year's large group of tourists/mundanes was an accident. Maybe next year will be different.

One consolation is that most *left* the class with an affirmative/enthusiastic attitude towards SF/F. But more about that later.

## IN CLASS

One of our class "rules" is that "you never have to read a book you're not enjoying; just give it a fair chance". There's not an awful lot of switching, but some. A few find out they can't stand aliens, others distant worlds, others a non-realistic approach. But, really, there's something in SF/F for everyone. The detective fan can start with Bester's *Demolished Man*, the psychology buff with Hubbard's *Fear*. It's almost a game. What would you suggest to the student in class who particularly enjoys an historical romance, a sea story, a western, a prison story, the ecological warning, the puzzle/problem story. Yes, we've got them all--and more.

Some enjoy getting my suggestions; others want to be left alone to pick their own. Okay. Except that a few of the latter keep picking books they wouldn't and don't like. Work around that dilemma! My solution was to have certain plots mentioned in class that I thought they would like. Often they took the bait. MOON.

Our classroom discussion centered on themes which usually came out of the students' current reading. Some of their favorites last year were first contact, man's adaptation to an alien environment, today's problems extrapolated and the ways different authors handled the same problems (many read Aldiss' *Starship* and Heinlein's *Orphans in the Sky*-- and away we'd go).

## MORE SPECIFICS ABOUT THE CLASS

There is no assigned reading list.

There are no book reports required (other than a single page fill-in sheet--which I'll include in GG #2 if there are any requests).

There are no tests given. The grade comes from fulfilling Reading and Non-Reading Projects--neither of which will be discussed this time around.

During one of the first days of class the students are given the Nelson-Denny Silent Reading Test. That plus The Reading Inventory Chart--another of my useful forms (which will be discussed in a later issue)--aid me in giving the kind of help a student needs in picking a book: level of reading ability, level of reading interests, special problems, subject areas most enjoyed, etc. Some students are so ready, I just point to the Annotated Book List and say "seek and ye shall find".

While the class is reading quietly (one of our few rules), I have individual conferences with those who have just finished their books. This averaged about four or five per period. Some of the most rewarding moments of my day occur while sharing my students' newfound wonder and enchantment. It is in this way that I continuously rediscover my own. JUPITER.



\*\*\*\*\*

A PROGRESS REPORT

One of my great disappointments this fall semester is that the SF/F enrollment didn't double as I'd hoped. The newly released figures show instead of three semester classes that we'll have four--a 33% increase. I've got the scapegoat, though. A new class added to the English curriculum for next year got all the play/action: Sports in Literature. MARS.

FOR FACT FANS: Of the 104 students who took SF/F last school year (plus the sixty plus I know who are taking it the first semester of this one) 72% are boys and 28% girls. How does that stack up against the figures for current SF/F readers/fans in general?

FOR TEACHERS OF SF/F

You might be interested in our school's COURSE OFFERINGS come-on which appeared in the students' registration booklet:

SCIENCE FICTION AND FANTASY

Enjoy exploring unknown worlds?

Time travel into the past and future; discover the seeds of destruction we are planting in Today; meet aliens at our galaxies' edge and robots waiting in Tomorrow.

The SCIENCE FICTION AND FANTASY class is your guided tour. It's basically an independent reading program--short stories and novels from current paperbacks, books, and magazines. There will also be time for discussing the authors, themes, and great stories of science fiction and fantasy.

A special project may be created for independent study by anyone with a special interest in topics which relate to the course. A ONE OR TWO SEMESTER COURSE  
GRADE LEVEL: 10 12 (EARTH)

*Course description*

HERE ARE A FEW ALL-IN-FUN FANDOM FANED THANK YHOS TO

Richard Geis (TAC) for taking his hands out of his pockets just often enough to get off one of the most readable zines around.

The Coulsons (YANDRO) for not publishing any of the White/Harrison correspondence.

Chris Sherman (ANTITHESES) for keeping me out of APA-50.

Tom Claeson (EXTRAPOLATION) for ignoring my suggestion that EX be published in an English translation.

THE CHART

Before I describe the kind and quality of the success the class achieved (not me, now, the members of the class), you need to see one of our classroom forms.

PERSONAL PREFERENCE EVALUATION CHART

- 95--one of the best books I've ever read
- 85--excellent/superior
- 75--good/enjoyable/recommendable
- 65--above average
- 55--average/satisfactory/readable
- 45--below average
- 35--poor/weak
- 25--bad/terrible
- 15--I couldn't finish reading it!

FINE TUNING: Let's use 75 (good/enjoyable/recommendable) as an example. You may substitute for the second number (5) a 6, 7, 8, if you wish to suggest the story was *extremely* good, *particularly* enjoyable, or *highly* recommended. Go downward from 5 (4 or 3 or 2) if the story was *pretty* good, *rather* enjoyable or *mildly* recommendable. (Avoid using 0, 1, or 9 as a second number.)

(I knew it was a success when I heard one of the boys describe his date of the previous night this way: "She was a 9 chick.")

```

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
X                                                                 X
X           Outward Bound                                       X
X                                                                 X
X   There are worlds waiting to be found                       X
X   And all the mysteries of space to roam.                   X
X   Why should I circle 'round the earth                      X
X   When I can call the constellations home.                  X
X                                                                 X
X   New world's will I conquer as I please                    X
X   And hunt the Bear, the Dragon, and the Lion.              X
X   Be brother to the sisters Pleiades                        X
X   And companion to the warrior called Orion.                X
X                                                                 X
X   Outward bound! My world lies in the stars.                X
X   I can look up and there my future see.                    X
X   It is my destiny that lies afar--                          X
X   Somewhere between Orion's Belt and me.                    X
X                                                                 X
XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

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## USING THE CHART

In the "Final Student Evaluation" of the class, question #4 was this: "On a scale of 1 to 9, circle the number that best describes how well you liked *the majority* of the books you read in class. Use the PERSONAL PREFERENCE EVALUATION CHART numbers." (The students had their evaluation numbers on the books they'd read on their Reading Records ((not yet discussed)) to remind them.) Here are the responses to that question. It's one which brings me pleasure whenever I realize the amount of enjoyable reading it represents.

95--6  
85--42  
75--39  
65--8  
55--3  
45--0  
35--2  
25--1  
15--0

OBSERVATIONS: The thrust of the class activity failed to achieve its aim with fourteen students (see 25,35,55,65). Thirty-nine (on #75) were pretty well pleased with their reading. And 48 (8 and 9) were extremely satisfied. JUPITER.

A cross check (thought of only in time to be included in the second semesters' questionnaire ((ASTEROIDS))) was this: "In the future SF/F will probably

A--Be something I read little of----- 9  
B--Be one of my kinds of reading-----28  
C--Be my favorite kind of reading-----29

The first semester was a beaut: five or six students either didn't like to read or didn't like SF/F while the majority did. I'd project the figures to about these:

A--15  
B--37  
C--51

The last question to be considered in this section sought to discover the overall success of the class and the approach taken: "Knowing, as you do now, what the class entails, I would

A certainly have registered for the course----- 59  
B probably have registered----- 31  
C probably have skipped the class----- 6  
D absolutely not taken the class----- 1  
E I am undecided----- 4

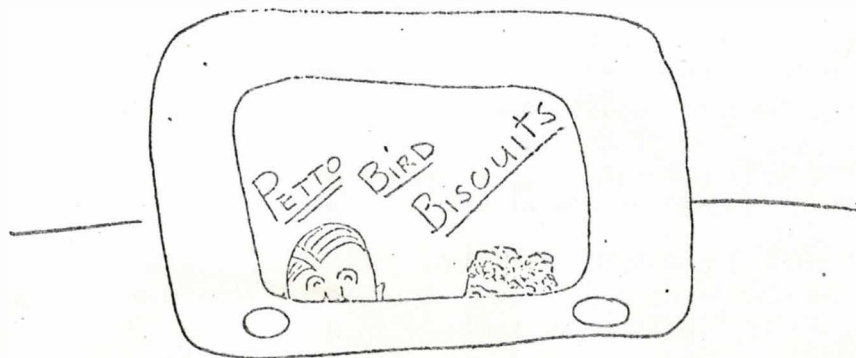
By the way, some of the questions and information solicited from the kids which is used came from a pre-class questionnaire and some from a post-class one. Their final effort was unsigned.

I'm not too happy with the way some of the questions are worded and plan on revising them for the coming semester. Any suggestions would be appreciated.

## PROGRESS REPORT ON THE STUDENTS' FAVORITE NOVELS

The reading list will begin to firm up in a year or two. But at present these are the students' favorite novels. All those extensively read were given evaluation numbers you see on the left--which are averages. Of course, if a book does not appear, it may mean that no copy was available (I'm working on that) or that a year's not long enough to give all the books enough readings for evaluation. The A) group was read by ten plus students, the B) by five plus, and the C) by three or four.

A	82	Koontz	Hell's Gate	
	80	Bester	The Demolished Man	
	79	Heinlein	Tunnel in the Sky	
	79	Koontz	Anti-Man	
	79	Levin	This Perfect Day	
	79	Asimov	The Naked Sun	
	78	Keyes	Flowers for Algernon ✓	
B	87	Herbert	Dune ✓	
	83	Brown	What Mad Universe	
	81	Harrison	Technicolor Time Machine	
	81	Zelazny	Damnation Alley	
	80	Koontz	Starblood	
	80	Pohl/Kornbluth	The Space Merchants	
	79	Harrison	Soylent Green	
	79	Bester	Stars My Destination	
C	92	Zelazny	Jack of Shadows	
	91	Farmer	To Your Scattered Bodies Go	
	88	White	Phoenix Prime	
	88	Maine	Isotope Man	
	85	Clement	Needle	
	85	Silverberg	A Time of Changes	
	83	Farmer	The Fabulous Riverboat	
	80	Simak	City	SATURN



*"And once again we wish to thank  
our guest ..."*

## SOME PRELIMINARY OBSERVATIONS

The facts, approaches, and comments made here are done in the hope of stimulating comments and observations from others with either a direct or peripheral interest in teaching SF/F.

Two things first about my way of teaching: 1) this is only my first year at it, but I think I've got hold of the handle; 2) this is *my* way and is not to be construed as anything more than an attempt to show what's going down in one place with one group with one teacher. If I seem happy or pleased with the classes' achievements, it's probably because I am.

There are three keys that make my approach to SF/F possible: 1) a course description which makes the reading nature of the class clear; 2) the variety of available books which I contributed, or bought, or got my English department head to purchase; 3) my attitude towards self-discovery of SF/F through reading--remember the 80% TOURISTS/MUNDANES.

So. From a group of approximately 100 students I'd say 50% went away enthusiasts (as compared to 20% who came in); approximately 35% seemed to enjoy their reading and would make SF/F a part of their future reading; and approximately 15% did not enjoy the class and would not continue to read SF/F. (I suspect this last group also contains most of those who do not enjoy reading or have trouble reading. The first course description did not make the reading aspect of the class clear.)

I consider that I'm teaching a Discovery Course for enjoying SF/F through reading. MERCURY.

FFF: The students averaged reading about 2,200 pages per student per semester. That matches up with the 11 plus books per semester that their Reading Records says they averaged reading, if you figure about 200 pages per book.

### DUAL BOOK CLUB SELECTIONS I'D LIKE TO SEE

Cage a Man -- The Atrocity Exhibition  
Half Past Human -- The Early Asimov  
Downward to the Earth -- A Mission of Gravity  
Neutron Star -- An Alien Heat  
Tarzan Alive -- Greybeard  
Space Skinner -- Occam's Razor  
A Choice of Gods -- I Am Legend

AN OPEN LETTER TO...

ROY TACKETT who said in DYNATRON #59 (12-13):

"Most of the secondary school classes in science fiction are snap courses designed to give a credit in English to those students who are too lazy or too dumb to take on the intricacies of a regular English course. Nobody flunks SF. As long as the student shows up in class and reads, or pretends to, he gets a grade."

Roy, you got the Truth Fairy by the balls!?  
MARS. Thank you for qualifying your indictment with "most".

Many of my students may be lazy. But some are curious and others willing to try a new class. None were dumb--to my way of thinking. They were bright enough to get into a good class. And nowhere do you take into account those who took the class because they enjoy SF/F.

On one count I'm guilty as charged: in three classes the only ones who've flunked dropped out for some reason prematurely. Everyone else who participated in projects/oral participation and reading (according to his ability and time) passed.

It's your last statement that floored me, though. I was really under the impression that the open-reading approach I was making was the exception rather than the rule. (I'd like to hear from others about this.)

Of course, Roy, you came roaring back like a champion in your last paragraph:

"Am I advocating that we take science fiction out of the schools and put it 'back in the gutter where it belongs'? Of course not! Keep it in the schools. Let's have more science fiction classes. If we can take one student out of a hundred and turn on his sense of wonder, get him interested in science, cause him to ask "What if?", then we are way ahead of the game."

I don't know how many of my students are becoming interested in science, but the other two areas are faring well. The class is succeeding in bringing 50% of the TOURISTS/MUNDANES over to SF/F's side. Roy, that's better than one out of a hundred, huh? JUPITER.

RICHARD LUPOFF who said in ALGOL #22 (34):

"What I suppose this means ((the 13 summaries and analyses of SF novels in SF--AN INTRODUCTION by D. Allen from CLIFF NOTES)) is that science fiction courses burgeoning across the campuses of the nation are going to start looking more and more alike, with dull and lazy professors assigning the same thirteen novels and saying the same things about them, and dull or lazy students regurgitating the same predigested pap in their assigned papers and exams."

Richard, I hope the black picture you've painted is a poor likeness. I know very little of college SF/F courses. Maybe some who've taken classes or taught them will enlighten me as to the current state of affairs.

As you say elsewhere in your book review "For what it is, it's good." I agree. The articles/reviews of the various books are a bit dry, but the information is generally thorough and tends to provoke a reconsideration of established attitudes and ideas about the story.

Besides, any book which lists in its "Selected Bibliography of Science Fiction" one each of the novels of John Jakes and B. N. Ball can't really be all bad.

\*\*\*\*\*

#### NOTES FOR A BOOK REPORT

#### SILVERBERG -- Downward to the Earth 73

After eight years Edmund Gundersen returns to a planet to seek redemption for a crime he committed against one of its two intelligent species. His adventurous quest involves him in the mystery of the aliens' life cycle.

Disappointing. I expected more because Silverberg wrote (somewhere) that DOWNWARD TO EARTH was one of his own favorites.

The background was more interesting than the foreground. Also what was happening *now* was too much a reflection of the past.

The aliens were interesting but rather distant. The final explanation of their uniqueness was too bizarre to be accepted comfortably. The ending was indigestible.

The most vivid scene was the depiction of the plight of the couple whose bodies were being used by the fungus. PLUTO.

The love interest was without love and without interest. The body-show seemed to be pure mechanical reflex.

The only major character was uninvolved. In fact, I didn't like anyone particularly. I kept putting off judgment on the hero 'til the last page. By then it was too late.

No villain here, though the off-world tourists weren't treated too kindly.

The many coincidences were rather annoying, particularly since they seemed created to add mood or excitement--and didn't.

At least Silverberg attempted worthy themes: guilt, redemption, salvation, and the need for insight/perception. But his vehicle wasn't sturdy enough for the load.

A 73 evaluation number is good, but I enjoyed A TIME OF CHANGES much better.

## THE HOUSE ORGAN

This department will be the place where other voices are heard. Since there are no locs, I thought you might find some of these comments from fans and pros provocative reading. They appear here because they interest me -- and I hope they'll interest you, too. They follow two general themes; they present a divergence of opinion; they were written by people whom I admire and/or respect. ASTEROIDS/MERCURY/MOON/EARTH.

P. SCHUYLER MILLER said in THE REFERENCE LIBRARY (A S-F apx. 1954)

"A Good deal of science fiction -- perhaps the greater part -- is written and published purely as entertainment."

CY CHAUVIN said in VECTOR #66 (38):

"...emotion is, after all, the basis of all good fiction."

ALGIS BUDRYS said in one of his "Galaxy Book Shelf" columns:

"Reading is an experience of the spinal column, which knows only pleasure or pain and cares nothing for the writer."

ROBERT SILVERBERG said in "S-F and Escape Literature" from AMAZING STORIES

"Too much of s-f is mere plotting-spinning, but when it succeeds as art, it succeeds not in spite of but because of its escapist nature.

"Where the critics go astray is in attacking us for our escapism -- a straw villain -- and not for our literary faults. At its best, s-f is magnificently escapist, and should glory in it."

ROY TACKETT said in DYNATRON #59 (12-13):

"There are some of us who have been around this field for many years who have never really given a damn about the literary merit of science fiction. What was (and is) important are the ideas in the story, not how well the story is written. Oh, certainly, a well-written story makes for better reading but some of the best science fiction I've ever read would never make the grade on literary standards."

ROY TACKETT said in THE ALIEN CRITIC #4:

"Heinlein, Asimov, and Clarke are generally considered, by people outside the field, to be the giants of Science Fiction. They are first-rate *Science Fiction* writers. Which is comparable, say, to being judged the best baseball player in the Texas League--no matter what the accolade, it is still a bush league. And that, essentially, is what SF is in the field of literature--a bush league."



BRUCE GILLESPIE said in VECTOR #60:

"Everything else in VECTOR is interesting. Pamela Bulmer's 'SF Criticism in Theory and Practice' is of course well worth printing, but I can't help feeling that she's missed the point of criticism, for all the very sensible and helpful remarks she makes about it. I don't think that she says anywhere in the article that most of the problems of criticism in the sf field exist because most sf is lousy by any standards (and especially by the standards that sf readers raise when they talk in abstract terms about the field) and that most fans and sf readers prefer one of the varieties of the lousy sf to any of the few brands of the good stuff. Therefore, in John Foyster's archetypal example, the sf critic often *does* have to explain to his fanzine readers (or prozine readers; it makes little difference) just why van Vogt is *not* a better writer than Tolstoy."

MIKE GLICKSOHN said in PREHENSILE #12 in reviewing ECCE:

"ECCE itself is an 'idea' fanzine, concentrating on reviews and serious articles. Roger [Sween] begins an article dissecting the robot stories of Isaac Asimov, pointing out the flaws in logic and weakness in the 'epistemology of the positronic brain'. Intellectually I can appreciate what Roger is doing and the arguments he puts forth sound valid. Emotionally, I don't give a damn. I enjoyed those stories: I was entertained by them. I really don't mind if they can't stand up to intensive scrutiny in terms of coherent underlying philosophies of robot education. I'm a plebian where my fiction is concerned. If you are more demanding, you'll enjoy what Roger is doing."

PAUL WALKER said in PREHENSILE #6 (requoted in SOTWJ 82/24):

"The trouble with most of the reviews in SF today is that they lack enthusiasm, if not affection, for the *genre*. They demand it to be something it is not, and express contempt for what it is."

PETER ROBERTS said in VECTOR #66 (22):

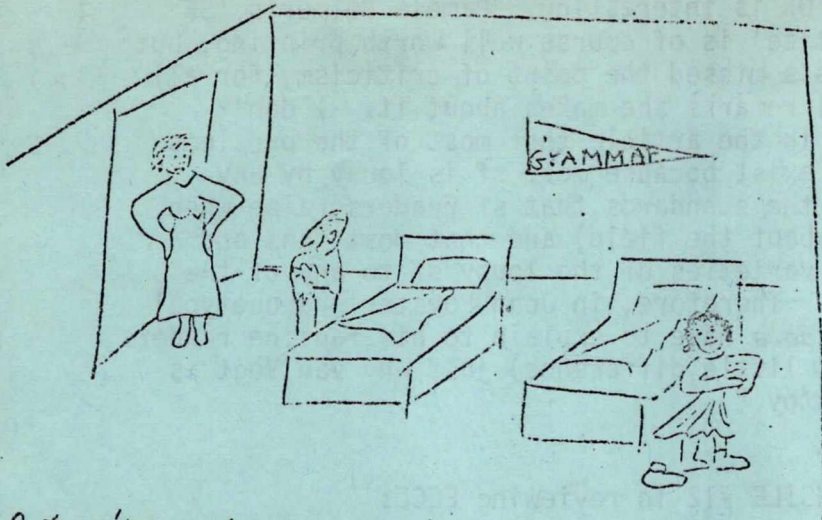
"...very little sf is fit to withstand an academic glance, let alone a microscopic study..."

LLOYD BIGGLE said in RIVERSIDE QUARTERLY #22 (104):

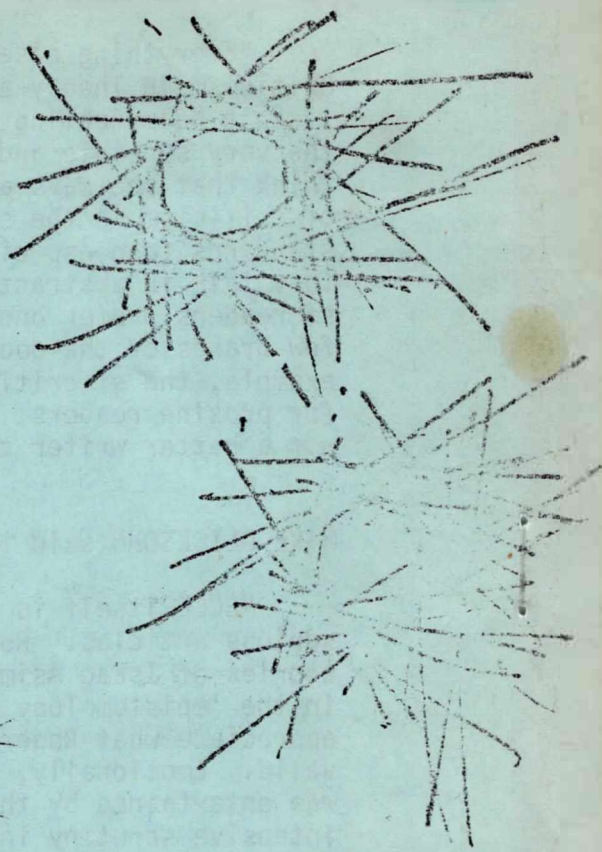
"It is just possible that they [scholars] are taking us [sf writers] too seriously. It has not happened often in the history of the arts that there has been a scholarly interest in a contemporary art....I wonder how many science fiction authors...really want the whole critical apparatus of modern scholarship brought fully to bear on their work.

"Obviously we are caught between the crushes of being taken too seriously and not being taken seriously enough. If there is a reasonable compromise to this problem, we can accept with absolute confidence that the professors are not going to help us find it..."

"Whatever the motive for what the academic community is doing, how well it is doing it is a matter of our legitimate concern."



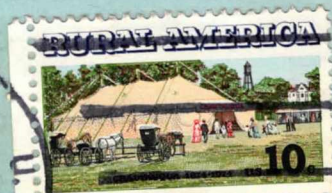
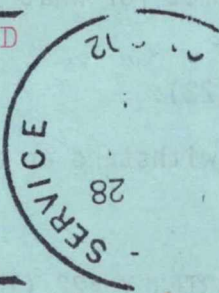
*"But can't you find any little boyfriends  
who could spend the night?"*



I wrote and drew everything in this issue.  
Maybe you'll help next time.

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