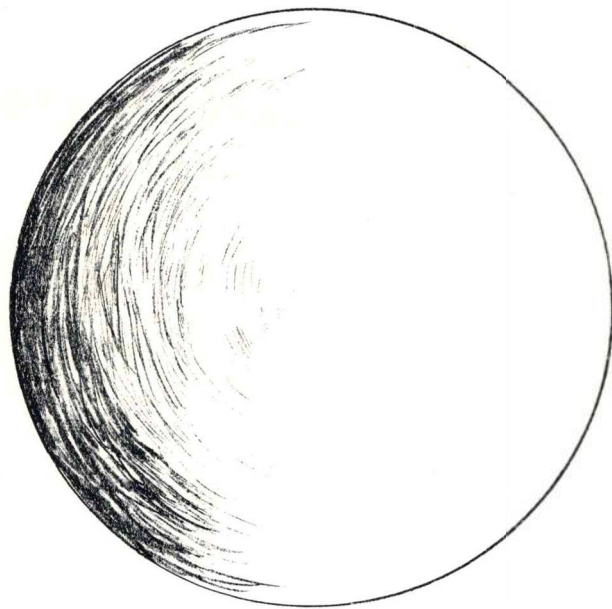


# Sphere



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THE CREATURES AND IT

By Alice Von Derland

The Biltmore was an oldish place,  
It had a staid and pompous face,  
A smell of lavender and lace,  
It never had been young.

And then It let (to It's disgrace)  
The Creatures in (from outer space)  
They atomized It's dragging pace,  
For which they should be hung.

And now they're gone (a mighty sigh)  
The Biltmore never rose so high,  
Nor was It ever troubled by,  
Such odd remembering.

The Creatures were an awesome sight,  
(They never needed sleep at night)  
Their energies so great and bright,  
Vast towerings of joy and light,  
The Biltmore soared to wondrous height,  
And learned that It can sing!



# Thoughts While Thinking

- BY -

FORRY ACKERMAN

\* \* \* \* \*

Methuselah lived 900 years.

And Heinlein talked to us of Methuselah's children.

You've read "Universe"? You remember how the star-bound passengers aboard The Ship, after generations in the interstellar void, no longer remembered much of Earth, their origin?

\* \* \*

It was the 14th World Science Fiction Convention, and I stood on the sidelines, as a spectator, watching the polychromatic parade of spacemen, mutants, beauteous female aliens, monsters, mad Mad-Scientists, et al, circle-swirl about the ballroom hall. It was the Masquerade Ball. And the most successfully disguised of all was myself. No one recognized me in plain clothes. Or, rather, no one remembered.... remembered 17 years ago.....the First Convention.....the small hall..... in all, one-sixth the floating population of this Convention....and amidst the Nycon of 1939, a 22-year-old fan who had come the farthest distance of anyone, 3,000 miles from the Pacific coast. A fan who, because he lived, breathed and dreamed the future, appeared not at the Masquerade Ball----for there was none---but, in the public meeting, in a full-fledged "Futuristicostume".

\* \* \*

Milton A. Rotman---"MAR"---a top actifan of the time, said to me---"le"---then known as "4sj", with the cognomen sewn across my shirt in green outlined by yellow: "Forry, I wouldn't have the nerve."

It didn't seem bold to me at the time, instead, it seemed great fun, walking about the sidewalks of New York in a THINGS TO COME-inspired silken sheening flowing green-ing cloak with ballooning brown "Paulian"\* pants, with the cop on the horse smiling at me, as little children in the streets shouted "It's Buck Rogers"! "It's Flash Gordon"! And striding thru the mundane populace at the World's Fair, up the platform on International Day, talking Esperanto, "The Tongue of Tomorrow".

The fans decided that they liked the costume idea. At the next year's Con, the Chicon of '40, the Masquerade was born. I wore a jazzed-up version of the Futuristicostume, declaimed some somewhat altered dialog from THINGS TO COME (Ackerman improving on Wells!), and won a prize: The poster painted by Krupa that stood in the lobby of the hotel, welcoming the Conventioneers. For years afterward the prized possession was on the door to my den, greeting fans that entered.

(\* After Guest of Honor, artist Frank R. Paul, satorial style-setter of the garb of Tomorrow in the STField of Yesterday.)

In 1941, at the Denvention in Colorado I participated in the Masquerade as the HunchbAckerman of Notre Dame. For the firsttime movies were taken (none exist, to my knowledge, from either of the first two Cons)----and in color to boot----and we have monstrous me and preposterously slim and youthful Damon Knight and tremendous EEEvans (as the elaborate and prize-winning Birdman from Rhea) and Guest of Honor, Robert A. Heinlein, as "Adam Stink, World's Most Life-Like Robot." - (a take-off on Eando Binder's Adam Link, popular automaton of that time).

World War II was to intervene and 5 years pass 'till the next Convention, the Pacificon of 1949, the 4th one, the one in my own backyard, for a change and---- the first one I missed. At least mostly. I was on my feet for the opening 6 hours, collapsed from a combination of physical debilitation and nervous exhaustion brought on from concentrating so hard on building the Con and was flat on my back in bed for (unbelievably, heartbreakingly) not only the duration of the 4-day Pacificon, but for a couple of weeks or more after

I never returned to wearing costumes. I am always to be found at the World Cons, and am an interested spectator at the Masquerades, but somewhere along the line I lost my nerve or my verve or something. Anyway, I, who started it all, haven't felt for 10 years like participating again. It never came to pass that, as the first to costume, a tradition was created of my being one of the judges, so .....

\* \* \* \* \*

1956, and I am standing admiring the flow of Fantasticocostumes at the New-yorkon Masquerade. And, a flow of thots goes thru my mind. There goes Dear Ruth Landis breath-takingly lovely as the Blue-Green Girl from some faraway sphere(\*Plug-plug). It makes me a little blue to contemplate that she was only a preteen when I wore that first futuristicocostume. And there's Jean Bogert, that Old Faithful of Philadelfannes, whom I think I've seen in costume at every Con since our own Pacificoast affair of '46. And all these people of rainbow hue passing by, is there one among them catching my eye who mentally registers: "Hey! It was Forry who started all this"? I doubted it very much.

\* \* \* \* \*

There's a striking couple. Gad! That gal with her educated umbilicus! You ever seen anything so scrumptious? Just ogling that bee-yootiful belly-button is an education in itself! Like Nelson Bond once had a character of his say, 'She's flat where it flatters, and curved where it matters'. This Lovely turns out to be Tam Otteson, I learn later, the gal whose voice has been treating us phonographically thruout the Convention, with her rendition of "The Little Green Men"; but, at the time, that moment there at the Ball, I don't even think she's a fan. Nor the guy with her: Mercury? Neptune? Apollo? Some bronzed God of another world, yet, surely much too healthy and normal-looking to be a fan. In fact I hear someone suggest that possibly this pair is a couple enroutte to some Beaux Arts Ball in the Village, who have barged in.

Then----suddenly----do they deceive me?----What did my ears just register? As the Bronzed God passes by me I catch a fragment of his conversation with his beautiful companion (she with the equator with the dimple none greater): ".....was Ackerman that started these costume balls, you know, back in 19..!" Then he has passed out of earshot.



CAN SUCH THINGS BE? (Copyright, Ambrose Bierce) W H O is that guy? He can't be an Outsider, he must be very much of an Insider, inside the Sphere (( Plug-Plug,Eds.)) in fact, to remember inside dope like that and all after seventeen years. So I seek him out. It is Joe Christoff, and if he pulls any manly modesty and censors any of the complimentary remarks about himself, I'll never write for his Fanmag again.((And of course that is exactly what he would do, if he were Editor-in-Chief. Nevertheless, we are sure he will appreciate the sincere compliments-EDS)) How does it happen that Joe knows so much about obscure details, and remembers so well? Well, it all figured. 17 years ago, when I arrived in Futuristicostume at the Nyconvention hall, a young , unknown fan, about 15 years old asked me to step out on a fire escape and pose. It might well have been the last one ever taken of me, for just after the shutter was snapped, a concerned official came running to the window and shouted, "Get in offa that ledge! That thing's unsafe!----it's been condemned!"

I hopped back into the Convention hall.

Young fan and photographer, Christoff just behind me.

Come to think of it, I guess that proves he wasn't fleet-footed, in fact wing-footed Mercury after all, otherwise he would have been in ahead of me. And I Apollo-gize if I have embarrassed him by calling him Mercury,etc. He had a very striking costume and one which obviously required considerable time to design and construct. I believe that he and his gorgeous companion were winners of one of the prizes that were awarded that night.

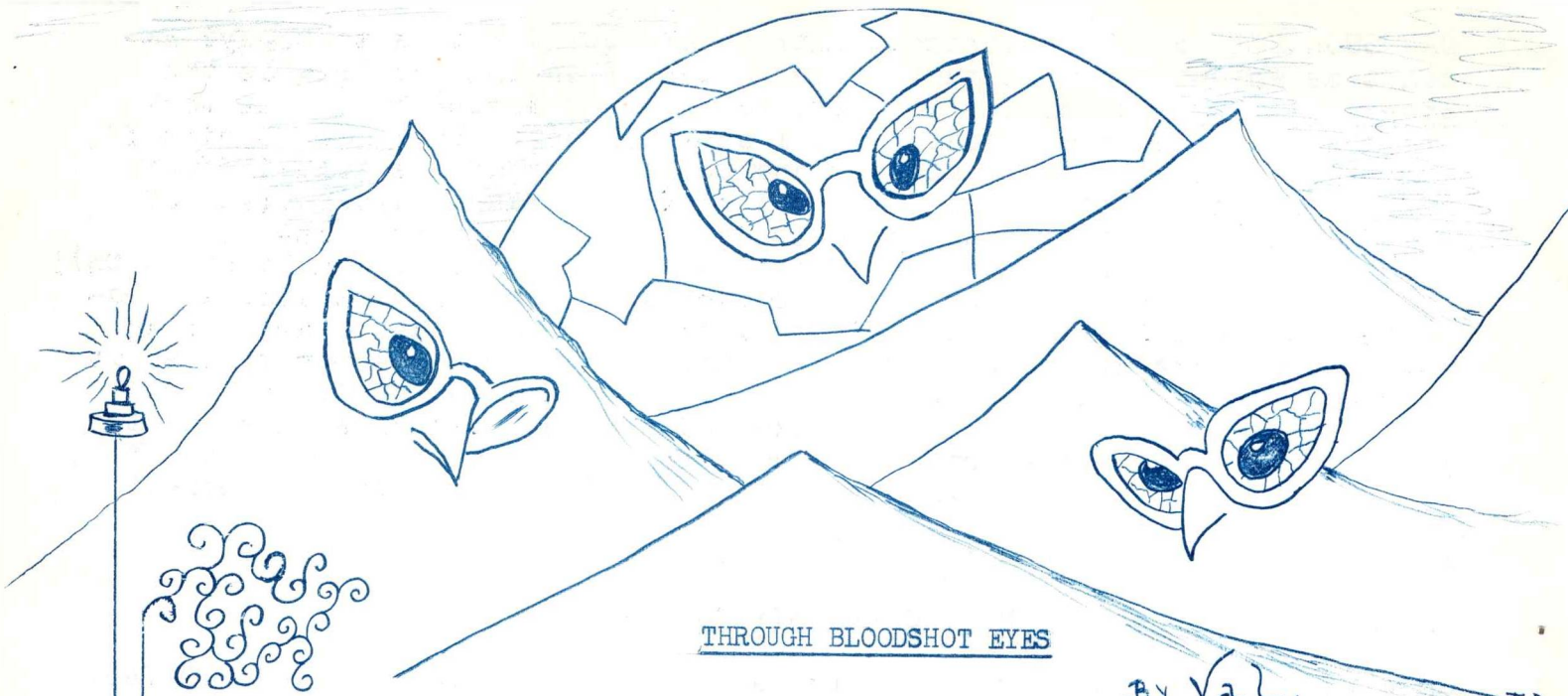
From now on, after the Newyorkon Masquerade, I will always remember Joe as my long unknown friend. Someone remembered----he remembered----and I didn't feel so pathetically forgotten after all.

\* \* \* \* \*

End of tearjerker.

-----  
Ushers will now pass among you  
with a large handkerchief assortment.  
The Bob Bloch rumor that Ackerman collects  
10% on the hanky concession, is quite correct.

\*END\*



THROUGH BLOODSHOT EYES

By Val.

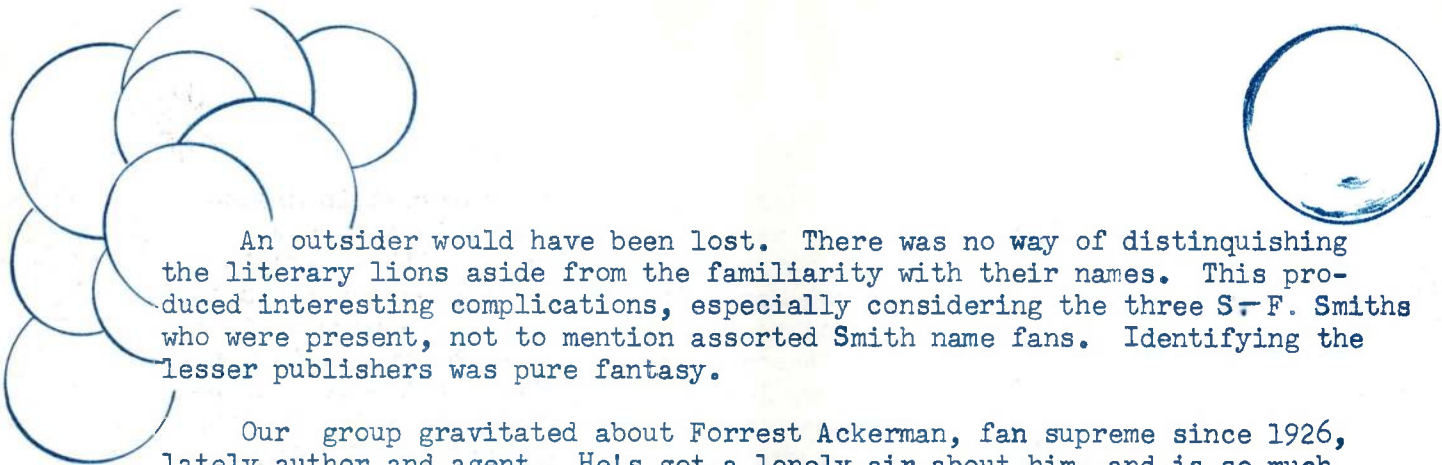
"Dear Wreck", was how we convention goers were addressed in a letter to the 14th World Science Fiction Convention from Robert Bloch - "Maybe that isn't your name now, but that's what you'll be after four days at a Science Fiction Convention" he goes on to say. He was so right - bless his funny bone - hence the title. All told, that weekend I had about six hours of sleep, and I begrudged every minute I took to rest my weary brain. It's a peculiar feeling - this running in all directions at once - but that seemed necessary to keep up with things; there was so much going on. Either you have been to one, and know what I'm talking about - or you have a fascinating episode in your future to look forward to.

A Science Fiction Convention is comparable to no other special interest group. Humanity attending is as varied as the Sci-Fi and Fantasy they find interest in - yet there is a bond of mutual interest and overwhelming friendliness. It is a great pleasure to be able to talk with those who read and appreciate what you do - especially after becoming accustomed to being looked upon as slightly peculiar because of your interest in imaginative writing.

Most of the daylight was taken up by the more serious business of sessions if you could tear yourself away from the bar where all the non-scheduled interesting talk was going on. That's another thing, you may as well throw away your programs before you start. Interest is where you find it, not to mention last minute changes in the program. You'll find yourself wishing you were two or more people so that you wouldn't miss anything.

The authors were wonderful. Quite shocking to discover that those creative mind, with the peculiar bent necessary to produce S. F., were housed in perfectly normal bodies. In spite of their accomplishments and frequently eminent backgrounds, I think they were as anxious and curious to meet the kinds of people who read their work as we were to see who produced it. There was talk, and more discussions with authors, would be authors, and toppers in the fan world. There was much difficulty with Semantics; words such as "basic" "important - "happiness", had to be individually defined so we all knew what the individual meant when using them. Then we reached common ground and it was pure mental exhilaration.






An outsider would have been lost. There was no way of distinguishing the literary lions aside from the familiarity with their names. This produced interesting complications, especially considering the three S-F. Smiths who were present, not to mention assorted Smith name fans. Identifying the lesser publishers was pure fantasy.

Our group gravitated about Forrest Ackerman, fan supreme since 1926, lately author and agent. He's got a lonely air about him, and is so much the tactful gentlemen - it was hard to tell whether he really found us congenial or was just being polite. The convention committee arranged a boat tour around Manhattan so we out of town people could see the sights. The night hours were filled with doings - as much as in the daytime - and considering that 4 a.m. to 9 a.m. was sleep-snatching time - it took real stamina to make the 9:30 sailing. There we were - and there was Forrest Ackerman.

We monopolized him, I'm afraid, and as a result, oblivious to the skyline, rain-squalls, and blaring commentary on the sights we spent three spellbound hours hanging on Forrests' every word. The was about the most sparkling raconteur who ever entertained avid listeners - breathless and hysterical by turns. Pity is that we won't ever see those stories in print because they were true, having to do with S. F. personalities and their experiences. Fiction is less strange than that.

The banquet was worth the small fortune it cost to attend in order to hear every word on and off our table. There were ten per table. We had an illustrious group which included Willey and Olga Ley and Forrest Ackerman, among others. That made even the routine eating part delightful - though I will admit great expectations in the way of words of great wisdom from Willey Ley. He had an abstracted look which I connected with rocket ruminations and such - so it struck me humorously to hear him wax loquacious on the subject of food - foreign and domestic. We followed his lead, appropriately enough, considering it was a banquet. Robert Bloch would be a perfect M. C. at anytime, at the New York Convention he was unmatched. When you have met in person, and added to the list of speakers Issac Asimov, Robert Garrett, Al Capp, Anthony Bocher and guest of honor Arthur Clarke - you'll see why I felt the banquet was the high point of the convention.

Greatest dissappointment was the discovery that I had missed out on testing J. W. Campbell's psionics machine. Learned too late it had been available at the bar for anyone who cared to try it - for almost two days yet! His elaboration, at the Sunday session, of his psionics theory, and machine, was a masterpiece of persuasive reasoning. He's a dynamic individual with an absorbing premise. From the consensus it became obvious that I had been missing something by neglecting "Astounding S.F.". Of course, it is almost impossible to keep up with all the pro mags, but from here on in, my .35¢ per issue is his. Aside from Issac Asimov's new serial, psionics is the brightest nova on my horizon.

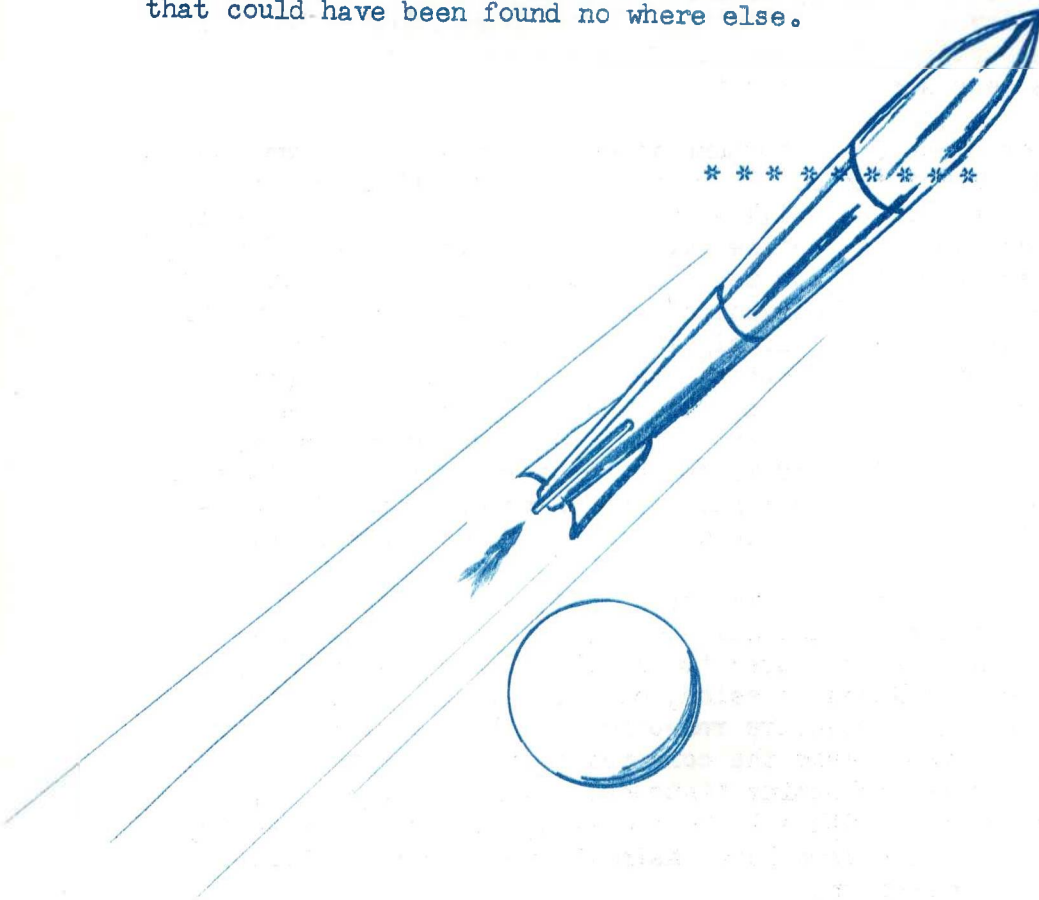


The Costume Ball was almost indescribably fantastic. Interest in dressing for the occasion has been growing each year and just goes to show how lupid our imagination can get! New personalities were donned with an amazing (True sense of Wonder!) array of costumes. It was like an outer-space Invasion. It was noteworthy that Fantasy seemed to lend itself to costuming more so than did Science-Fiction. Most of the authors, out-of-towners with transportation difficulties, and several timid souls, left the weird get-up to the more uninhibited. It was tremendous fun! The line-up, the eliminations, which Creature would be chosen and pulled out next, why this One got it, that One didn't, the Final Grand March. Was it Televised? Filmed? It was planned to be.

Surely the Biltmore heaved a sigh of relief, then must have rumbled to the foundations, and went back to the dull routine of living after the Spaceteers left.....and so did we. It takes time to recover from an experience like this - - and in some ways you never do. It was a delight to find that all the interesting people weren't between bookcovers.

I would not exchange that wonderful week-end for all the dollars in Monaco, and if relating some of what went (only a fraction) will induce the reader to take advantage of the next convention (in London '57), it's plenty likely you'll come away with new appreciation for S. F. It was an inspiration that could have been found no where else.

\* \* \* \* \*



THE SCIENCE FICTION ALPHABET

OF 1933 AND 1956

by

ALLEN GLASSER

-- FOREWORD --

Back in 1933, Charley Hornig's "Fantasy Fan" published Glasser's first S.F. Alphabet. Now in 1956, nearly a quarter of a century later, at the Newyorkon, appears the second Alphabet. While some 1933 allusions appear pointless today, they serve to show what changes have occurred. And should be of interest to old and new fans alike.

\* \* \* \* \*



The SF Alphabet of 1933 - by Allen Glasser ... from The Fantasy Fan

A's for Amazing, the first of its kind;  
It keeps going strong while the rest drop behind.

B is for Burroughs, the great Edgar Rice;  
No mag gets his yarns if they don't meet his price.

C is for Cummings, whose stuff is okay,  
Though some of his plots have grown rather gray.

D's for Dimension -- the Fourth one we mean;  
It's mighty well known, though it's never been seen.

E is for Earthmen who wander through space,  
Calmly subduing each troublesome race.

F is for Forrest, most famous of fans;  
The letters he's written would fill sev'ral vans.

G is for Gilmore; the first name is Tony.  
His writing's okay, but that moniker's phony.

H is for Hamilton, who has written a lot;  
He sure makes good use of his favorite plot.

I's for Invaders who seek Earth to hold,  
Until they are slain by our hero so bold.

J is for Jupiter and each Jovian moon;  
To fantasy writers they sure are a boon.

K is for Keller, who lives in Penn State;  
He can't get a cover though his stories are great.

L is for Luna, our own satellite --  
It's appeared in more yarns than I'm able to cite.

M is for Mars, 'way up in the sky;  
Without it, we fear, science fiction would die.

N is for Newton, the Gravity King;  
Whose laws, in our mags, just don't mean a thing.

O's for Ourselves, who read science fiction;  
We know what we like, and there's no dereliction.

P's for the Princess that 's always on hand  
To wed the brave Earthman who visits her land.

The Science Fiction Alphabet - by Allen Glasser

Q is for Quinn, the weird-story writer;  
If he'd do science fiction his fame might be brighter.

R is for Robot, of whom much is said;  
For many an author his antics have fed.

S is for Starzl, Schachner, and Sloane;  
And let's not forget Doc Smith and Miss Stone.

T is for Time, a favorite theme  
Which never grows stale -- or so it would seem.

U is the Unknown, which writers employ  
Whenever they need some death-dealing toy.

V is for Venus, which belonged once to Kline,  
Until Mr Burroughs took over that line.

W's Wonder, a changeable book --  
You never can tell how it's going to look.

X means "okay" when written "All X" --  
A term which has brought Doctor Smith many checks.

Y's for the Yarn which will suit everyone;  
We hardly believe it can ever be done.

Z is for Zagat -- who else could it be?  
It's lucky for us his name starts with Z!

\* \* \* \* \*

The Science Fiction Alphabet of 1956 - by Allen Glasser

A is for Asimov, who wrote out the rules  
That robots must follow as Man's trusty tools.

B is for Boucher, whose mag is the rage  
With stars of the screen, television and stage.

C is for Clarke -- the stories he tells  
Are the best out of Britain since the wonders of Wells.

D's for the Distance Devouring Drive,  
Making nebulae neighbors in one homey hive.

E is for Espers, who can read any mind;  
Some far future day we'll all be that kind.

F is for Fans, a strange sort of breed,  
Who love to lambaste the stories they read.

The Science Fiction Alphabet of 1956 - by Allen Glasser (Cont'd)

G is for Gold and Galaxy, too --  
They gave science fiction a flavor quite new.

H honors our Hero, known widely as Hugo,  
With a place in Fame's Hall where only a few go.

I represents a wholly new trinity --  
Imagination ... If ... and Infinity.

J is for Jommy, that wonderful Slan --  
He married a gal who's been dead for a span.

K is for Kuttner, whose eeriest gadget  
Is often surpassed by a fellow named Padgett.

L is for Leinster, who is still going strong;  
His tales are as good as his record is long.

M is for Monsters who yet, as of yore,  
Embellish some mags with menace galore.

N is for Nova, which flares up so bright,  
Like many a mag, then fades out of sight.

O is for Oafs who don't dig Future stuff --  
They think that the Present is pleasant enough.

P is for Palmer, with brow full of furrows  
From seeking a second Edgar Rice Burroughs.

Q still stands for Quinn, but time makes a "diff" --  
For this one's James L., who's editing IF.

R is for Robert -- Bloch, Heinlein, and Madle --  
Who helped science fiction grow up from its cradle.

S is for Space, that beckons us all --  
Through SF we follow its far-reaching call.

T is for Terra, the world of our birth . . .  
Though our visions roam wide, we must come back to Earth.

U's for Utopia, which our writers believe  
Some time in the future we'll surely achieve.

V's for Van Vogt and his "Vault of the Beast" --  
Our favorite fare from the fantasy feast.

W stands -- in memory green --  
For Weird Tales and Wonder, now gone from the scene.

X represents an Xtra dimension,  
Where anything goes without comprehension.

Y's for the Years that lie far ahead,  
When things will be done as our stories once said.

Z is for Bradbury's famed "Zero Hour" --  
A tale that is packed with soul-chilling power.



# FIRST

-BY Alice Von Derland

How shall I start? I came, saw, was conquered? It's true, but too small and too much of the surface; and it's not of the surface things that I'm writing. This was to have been a first-person account, in sequence; recording: from the anticipation of Friday to the farewells of Monday, all that happens to a neo-fandroid at her first Science-Fiction Convention.

But I can't write a chronological account, nor can I write of events as such. Only of impressions, reactions and people. Wonderful, Wonder-Full People.

People who have been called oddballs, weirdies, escapists, and more kindly, eggheads; but, who are really, "THE OTHERS".

My People.

Night People.

Friday's anticipation was a hope and a hurt. A wish that they would be as they are, and a fear that they would not, and that I'd continue lonely.

They knew my wish and my fear. Sure, before they found The Others, they too were alone; and they gathered me in, and shared their wonder with me; and, when the time came, they made the farewells quick, because like me, their eyes and throats were full.

There were The Guardians. The Man of Bronze, The Raconteur, and The Close One.

The First, who saw that I was gullible and kept me from buying Grand Central Station; and the Second, the diffident one turned raconteur, who saw that I was naive and who talked for hours, keeping me spellbound, so that I neither heard nor saw The Noxious Ones, or knew of them, until I was told by The Close One; who, knew my thoughts before I spoke them, who anticipated my questions and answered them gently, and who is more my sister because she was not born so.

Comic relief..... . The Biltmore.

The Bewildered (Bewitched?) Biltmore. It soared off it's foundations for three days, and now it's settled; but not quite as heavily as before.

The elevator operators have probably stopped saying "Blast Off" (Meaning: 'Going up?') but they are still thinking it---we left our mark. The Very Important Patrons may have realized by now that the paper boxes contained our books and mags----not our weekend clothes. And the cashiers, bellhops, and clerks,(even the one at the reservation desk who called me 'Modom') who may or may not have worn high-heeled shoes through three days and three sleepless nights, have probably forgiven us for defiling the lobby with our bedroom slippers. The grapevine has surely informed the Maitre d'hotel of Anthony Boucher's impassioned banquet speech; and he may possibly be harboring leprous thoughts like "neckties in summer---silly custom".

The maid who made up our rollaway beds and who admired Olga Ley's prize-winning costume and exclaimed over "Captain Hero's" rocket had the look of wonder. She may have always had it or we may have infected her, but now, she's a potential Other.

I mentioned The Guardians, whose benevolence surrounded me. They were Special Ones. But the whole convention had a pulse. It moved beneath my feet and throbbed around me; and every minute that passed brought a new joy and a new hurt, and I didn't understand it until I met a small radiant person who spoke my feelings.

She threw out emotion, words and ideas in such abundance that she attracted and exhausted everyone around her; and she said, in effect, that the greatest pain is not physical. That there can be joy too great to be borne.

And so it was and is with me.

I said at first that I was not writing of surface things, but I was wrong. Like an iceberg, I am showing only a fraction of the Wonder-Full thing I've become.

The greater wonder, and joy, and pain are most of me-----to keep-----  
----and hold close-----and to make my pseudo-identity, Day Person, more bearable.

\*END\*

#### A C K N O W L E D G M E N T S

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