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ALGOL

THE MAGAZINE ABOUT SCIENCE FICTION

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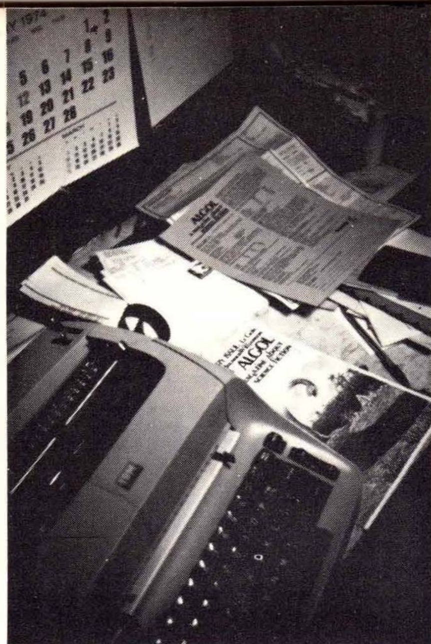

EDITORIAL

THE NEW ALGOL: We think you'll like the appearance of this issue, which has gone through a major redesign. That's in addition to the changeover in typeface announced last issue. The cover stock of this and future issues will be a Kromecote, which provides a vibrant background for four-color artwork. As Bob Tucker would say, it's "Smooooth!"

And if you like the cover, you'll be interested to know that 500 reproductions are available for only $1.00 each. These are printed on the same stock as is the cover, trimmed so that type is omitted, and blank on the reverse. Checks to ALGOL at the address on page three.

STANDING INSIDE, LOOKING OUT: One of the problems of being involved with such a vast and time-consuming project as ALGOL has become is that our perspective on the worth of the issue is often lost in the shuffle of the mechanical chores necessary to publish that next issue. Just once we'd like to be on hand at the local SF store when Joe Phann buys that first copy of ALGOL. We'd rush up to him, grab him by the tendrils, and ask those leading questions: Why did he buy a copy of ALGOL? What thoughts went through his mind when he discovered ALGOL? How long has he been looking for a magazine like this? Or was it only an impulsive purchase? If you're one of those people who just bought an issue, we'd appreciate hearing from you. Remember, if your letter is interesting and challenging, we'll publish it—and that gets you another issue, free.

Speaking of the letter column, lots of people comment about all "those great unpublished letters in the We Also Heard From section." Actually, how great can a letter be that says, "Just got the issue and thought the paper was really great!! Keep up the good work! Signed, Hugo Gernsback." There's not much that's publishable there, so of course Uncle Hugo winds up in the WAHFs. What we really like are letters that tell us what they thought of such-and-so article, and *why*. Those are the letters that it's the nicest to receive, and the easiest to publish.

INVITATION TO THE FUTURE: This issue marks another highwater mark in ALGOL's growth, we say with brash pride. Full color covers for the first time, plus a design job through the services of Ian Andrews, our Art Director, point to the continued evolution toward a fully professional appearance and presentation. And it's gratifying when other publications in the field say, "...astonished and overwhelmed by the overall excellence of ALGOL," as did R.D. Mullen of SCIENCE-FICTION STUDIES. Thank you indeed, sir.

Also effective with this issue, ALGOL and the ALGOL PRESS titles (an advertisement for which appears elsewhere in this issue) are being distributed on the retail level by F&SF Book Company; this makes the magazine even more widely available than it is now. Advertising too is at an all-time high. Every reader should support and buy from our advertisers. Rush right out and buy another two or three memberships in the SF Book Club. Without advertising, many of the improvements in recent issues of ALGOL would have been impossible. And, as STARTLING STORIES used to say, mention ALGOL when you write those advertisers.

The contents of this issue speak for themselves: there aren't many magazines in the field that can boast this issue's lineup. The future is looking just as bright. Tom Monteleone's article on Roger Zelazny, which will appear next issue, is based, incidentally, on material which was first published in ALGOL seven years ago.

Of course the growth process can't exist without feedback. Much of it comes from your letters and postcards; the best of these find their way into the letter column. But to really find out who you are and what you do, this issue features a special Reader Survey. Subscribers as well as the casual reader should fill it out and return it to us as soon as possible. If you'd rather not damage the issue, make a list of numbers with your responses and send us that list. (Readers will note that advertisements with coupons are generally cleverly placed so that cutting them out does not materially harm the issue; in the case of the inside front cover, we suggest sending a postcard inquiry to Garland Publishing, mentioning ALGOL as the source of your information.)

The questionnaire is designed to find out exactly who you are, your interests, what parts of ALGOL you find the most enjoyable, etc. We thank LOCUS, the newspaper of the SF field (15/$6.00 from Locus Publications, P.O. Box 3938, San Francisco CA 94119) for permission to use their survey in ALGOL.

The letter at the end of Random Factors from Our Fan In Brazil, Fernando Quadros Gouvea, originally had an answer when the letters went to the typesetter: we'd planned to begin running fanzine reviews this issue. However, one frenzied letter and phone call later, we haven't received the esteemed Fanzine Reviewer's column, and so it's not in the issue. Next issue we'll definitely begin a fan column which will feature reviews, news and information. The identity of our columnist can't be revealed as yet, pending their acceptance of the position. They are, however, well

Continued on page 49

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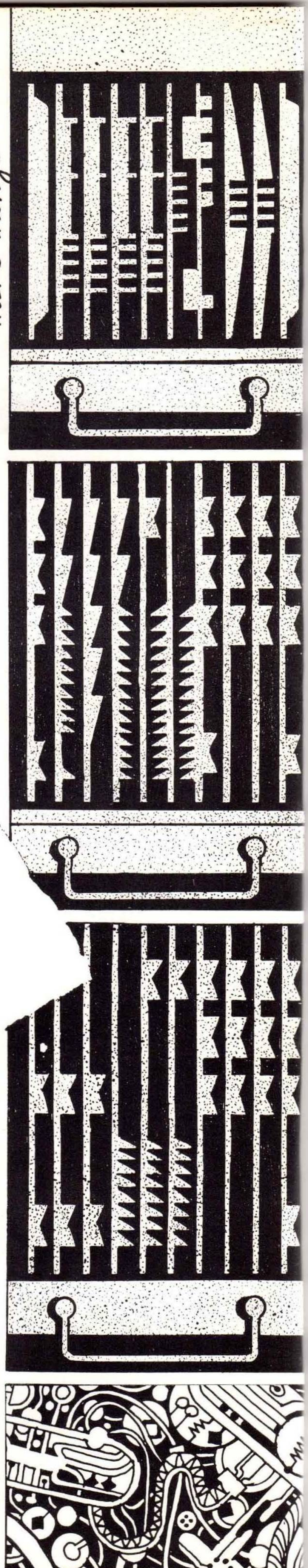
ALGOL Interview



URSULA K. LE GUIN

Interviewed by JONATHAN WARD

URSULA K. LE GUIN was born in Berkeley, California in 1929, the daughter of anthropologist A. L. Kroeber and writer Theodora Kroeber. She graduated with a B.A. from Radcliffe College, Phi Beta Kappa; earned her M.A. at Columbia University and, while in Paris on a Fulbright Scholarship married Charles Le Guin, a young historian. The year was 1951. Today Ursula K. Le Guin lives in Portland, Oregon with her husband, now a professor at Portland State University, two daughters: Elisabeth and Caroline; a son, Theodore; many cats, dogs, hamsters, goldfish and dust-pussies; and a growing number of awards for writing.

Jonathan Ward: In order to write fantasy these days you have to draw maps; you have to define languages; you have to build cultures. You did all that.
Ursula K. Le Guin: Well, you don't have to, but it's a lot of fun.
Ward: But world construction: it gets a little complicated after a while.
Le Guin: Oh. . .well, no. Not if it sort of comes natural to you.
Ward: Does it come naturally to you?
Le Guin: Yeah. And I think it does to a lot of kids around 11 or 12. A lot of kids draw maps of imaginary countries; some of us go on doing so, and some of us are schizophrenic, and others of us write books.
Ward: Were you inspired by Tolkien in writing the Earthsea stories?
Le Guin: I don't try to imitate him, God knows, but I was inspired. I admire him immensely.
Ward: Have you read *Lord of the Rings*? Are you one of the people who reads them once a year?
Le Guin: I read them before they were known; I devoured them—read all three in three days.
Ward: Three days?
Le Guin: The first time I read them; then I was living in Middle Earth for the next three weeks.
Ward: Of the three books in this series, the first one was called *A Wizard of Earthsea* which was published on the west coast by Parnassus Press.
Le Guin: Parnassus is a small, very elegant, children's book press, in Berkeley.
Ward: And then Atheneum discovered

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that book and decided to publish the other two volumes. Is that first volume still in hardbound? Still available?
Le Guin: Yes. And also in paperback, from Ace Books, and next year from Bantam.
Ward: The second book was called *The Tombs of Atuan.* Am I saying that right? There's no pronouncing guide, unlike Professor Tolkien.
Le Guin: No. So people can take their choice.
Ward: And the last book was called *The Farthest Shore.* Where do we fit these into the categories of culture in this time? Is fantasy a legitimate Dewey Decimal System classification?
Le Guin: No. It certainly isn't and I think it's only in America that you would ask that question. Because we don't do very much fantasy and we tend to feel a little uncomfortable with it. In England, where the books have also been published, they're much more at home with fantasy. They assume that both children and adults will read it and they don't categorize it as juvenile fiction or anything else. It's simply one branch of literature, one branch of novels.
Ward: Ballantine Books published a series of fantasies—
Le Guin: Yes, calling it The Adult Fantasy Series, which is interesting. This is really the first time it's been done in this country—not pretending that all fantasy is for children—but realizing that there's a lot of people hungry for it who are quite grown up.

Ward: Do you live in a little world of your own? An ivory tower, sort of?
Le Guin: Not with three children and a husband.
Ward: How do you do your writing?
Le Guin: As Virginia Woolf said, "I have a room of my own." I have mornings while the children are at school. That's all that's necessary. I write fast but then it has to be revised, so it adds up to my being a rather slow writer.
Ward: Which would you rather have, a National Book Award or a Hugo?
Le Guin: Oh, a Nobel, of course.
Ward: They don't give Nobel prize awards in fantasy.
Le Guin: Maybe I can do something for peace.
Ward: What's *The Left Hand of Darkness* about?
Le Guin: It's about a race of people who are fully human but who are androgynous, who are both sexes. Most of the month they're neuter; they don't function sexually. Then they come into heat, which is called *kemmer* in the book and they may come in as a man or as a woman. They have no choice and they don't know which. Which of course implies that eventually when they have children, you may be the mother of the child one time, the father the next time. Which makes for a slightly different culture, as you might imagine, on this world.

This was what you'd call a thought experiment like the physicists do, to set up a situation, as in a neutral laboratory. It was a learning experience for me. What would happen? How would people behave and what sort of culture would they have? I sent a normal male earthman to live with these people. How would it affect him? It was, in a sense, a kind of experiment in feminism. I wrote it about the same time Kate Millett was writing *Sexual Politics* and I had not read any of the Women's Movement literature. Then we were all trying to figure it out. My way of coming at it was through this novel.
Ward: What *The Left Hand of Darkness* tells us is that there is probably less science and more fiction in our science fiction these days. Is that fair?
Le Guin: I think it's that the science is not based on technology so much anymore. It's not based on physics and on astrophysics but there really is a lot of science in *The Left Hand of Darkness* only it's cultural anthropology; it's what they call the soft sciences.
Ward: There's something called The New Wave, out of Britain.
Le Guin: The New Wave crested; new waves always do. All that meant was that science fiction writers who had been living in a literary ghetto in America, because they were pulp writers, had come out of the pulps, were being read by intelligent and literate people and began to catch up technically with the rest of fiction. So, for a while, we were all trying experiments which elsewhere had been made in the nineteen-thirties and forties. They've been made now and I think science fiction has caught up and is being written as well as any other fiction.
Ward: Is it useful to talk of this field as science fiction anymore?
Le Guin: Not very. I wish we could not do it.

Ward: Science fiction sales continue pretty much constant, going up and down a little bit but—
Le Guin: They're quite steady and that's one reason, I think, why the publishers like to continue to call it science fiction. They know they have a steady market if it's called science fiction. If they don't call it that, then they take their chances the way they do with any novel. But I think that's playing it oversafe because I think the chances are actually much larger than they realize. You take a book like Doris Lessing's *Briefing for a Descent Into Hell.* It's the one where a man meets people off a flying saucer. But if they had called that book science fiction, I suppose they would have killed its sales

I Love To See Categories Break Down.

except for the small steady science fiction sale. So, of course, they won't.

Ward: It used to be that if a paperback sold very well somebody would come along and publish a hardcover version.

Le Guin: That's what happened with my *Left Hand.* It was in paperback first. That's part of this phenomenon of having been a magazine and pulp field. We've about come up out of that. The magazines are less important now.

Ward: Knowing how hardbound books are printed and distributed, it may not be an advantage to have come up out of that particular morass. Of course, paperback books are just as weird. They throw them away if nobody buys them.

Le Guin: They throw science fiction hardbacks away too, with incredible rapidity. Some of the publishers pulp the entire printing as soon as it's repaid its advance. Automatically. No matter how it's selling. I don't want to name names but. . .

Ward: Are you talking about Doubleday?

Le Guin: Yes.

Ward: That's what I thought. Doubleday has a little side section that publishes nothing but science fiction. They put "Doubleday Science Fiction" on books that aren't science fiction at all.

Le Guin: It's the largest hardcover line of science fiction. But it does include a lot of things that aren't remotely science fiction.

Ward: But that's the problem if we don't know what our categories are anymore.

Le Guin: I think it's good we don't know the categories. I love to see categories break down. It does make it hard for the publisher and the distributor, I admit that, and things are hard enough in publishing now, but I think these categories should break down. There's a great deal of cross-feeding now between what used to be called science fiction and what we in science fiction call mainstream fiction. And that's good, that's a healthy situation.

Ward: Arthur Clarke in quoting Ray Bradbury, said, "When we write about the future, we write about it to prevent it."

Le Guin: I wrote one book to try to exorcise one future I saw. That's *The Lathe of Heaven.* That's my only short-term science fiction book. It takes place in 2002 which isn't very far away; most of my books take place in pretty remote futures, and off earth.

Ward: Do you read a lot of science?

Le Guin: When you get into biology and physics and ethnology, the better the scientist, the better he writes. It's totally available to the layman and it's very enjoyable reading.

Ward: What areas of science are you reading now that you might turn into something eventually?

Le Guin: Well, actually I'm not reading science now. I'm off on another track because of my latest book, *The Dispossessed.* I think it is what you'd have to call a utopia; an ambiguous utopia. And it's an anarchist novel, so I've been reading the anarchists and the Marxists and so on.

Ward: Does that make you uncomfortable?

Le Guin: A few years ago it would have but I'm enjoying it immensely now. It's really appalling to read Paul Goodman's books of about twenty years ago because he was simply saying then what everybody's saying now. And it's depressing to realize this poor man has been crying in the wilderness all his life.

Ward: It looks like you're heading toward anarchy.

Le Guin: But anarchy is not anarchism. Anarchy means chaos and y'know sort of just take the lid off and let her blow; that is not what the old anarchist political movements meant at all. It simply is anti-centralized-state. It has to do with political science and with social life.

Ward: If you had to pick a future, what would you pick? Would it be one of yours or one of somebody else's? What elements would be in it?

Le Guin: When I make up futures I am playing games. I play them with all my heart and soul and put myself into it totally and yet I am not really trying to make a future that I believe in. I am content to take it as it comes. My social activism is separate from my writing. Except, perhaps, for this last book, *The Dispossessed,* in which being utopian, I am trying to state something which I think desirable—which is a world with a lot less government, and a decentralized world, and a world without authoritarianism. Where people are allowed to act spontaneously instead of always being part of a hierarchy directed from above. If more of that direction could come from below, that's what I'd like to see.

The trouble with the whole anarchist thing is, how do we get there? Everybody thinks it's a lovely idea when they read some anarchism. They think this is a beautiful world but how do we do away with the state? What if we have a revolution, which is what the nineteenth century anarchists proposed, you destroy everything and then what happens? Well, what usually happens in a revolution is you get back the way you were only worse. More authoritarian. A power group takes over and runs things. Also, what about the people who are hungry? How do you distribute goods? Well, if you assume a high technology and a rather small population (which I could do because I

When I Make Up Futures, I'm Playing With All My Heart And Soul.

was not using the earth, I was using another planet) then things like getting people fed and so on are pretty easy. Then you can play with the ideas of how a world without centralized government would run, a world, as Engels said, "Where the government of people is replaced by the administration of things." But people are not governed. They do what they please. And if they want to drop out, they do drop out.

Ward: Then you have a manager of highways to keep the roads going?

Le Guin: You have a group that's interested in running the highways. Well, they run the highways and they do it the way they see fit.

Ward: Whenever they feel like working? The railroads run on time in..?

Le Guin: Yes. And it would be a world with a great deal less comfort and less convenience for the wealthy, I think, than our world. Nobody would be as well off, as well looked after, as the average middle class American is now, but nobody would be as badly off as our poor, or the poor in other countries. It would be a levelling. In the economic sense it would be a complete levelling.

Ward: It's a nice thing if you believe that people, once their basic needs are taken care of, will find all sorts of things to do.

Le Guin: That's the act of faith you have to make. If people have what they really need then they won't be quite as driven and as grabby. That's the act of faith that all leftists make: that human nature has capacity for being relatively good.

Ward: You make that leap of faith for the purposes of this novel?

Le Guin: Yes. And I do make it; I can't help but make it. I'm obviously a true believer in the sense that give us a chance and we won't be quite as bad as we are.

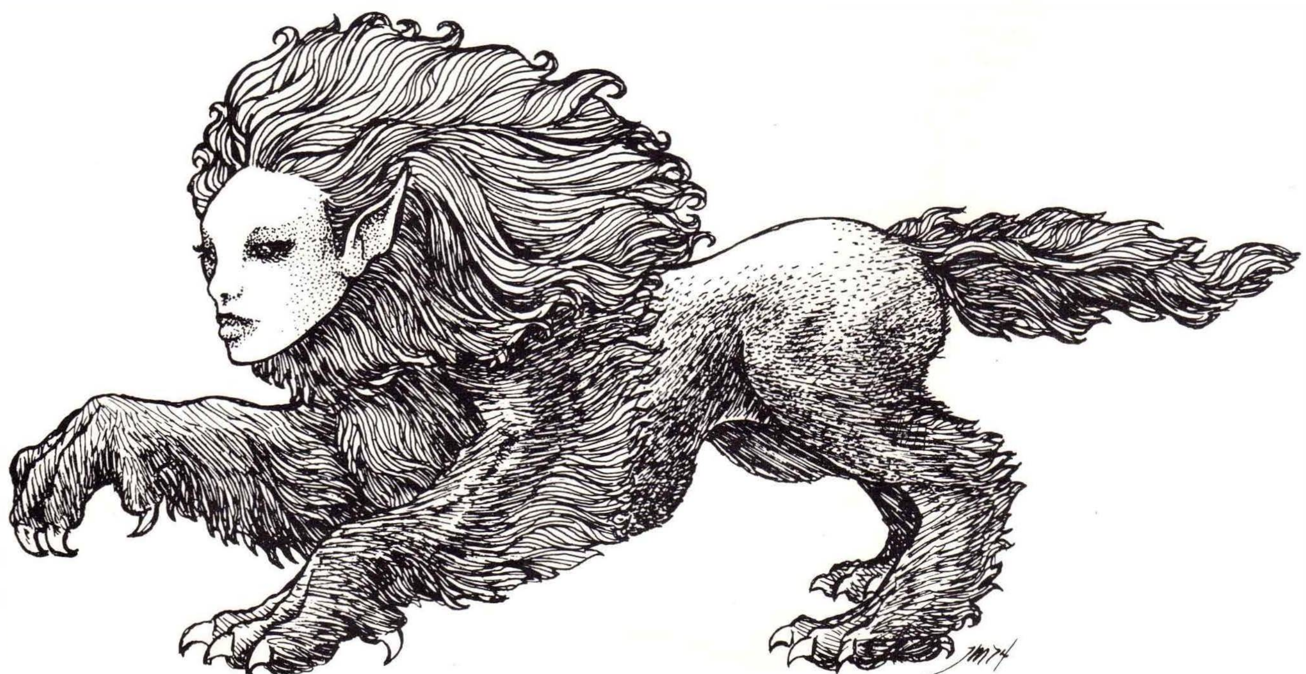
Ward: Writers work that way. So, it's fairly easy for them to believe in it. But for a person who has a nine-to-five job on an assembly line, who lives to get off work and who knows what hours they work and what hours they do not work it's a little more difficult.

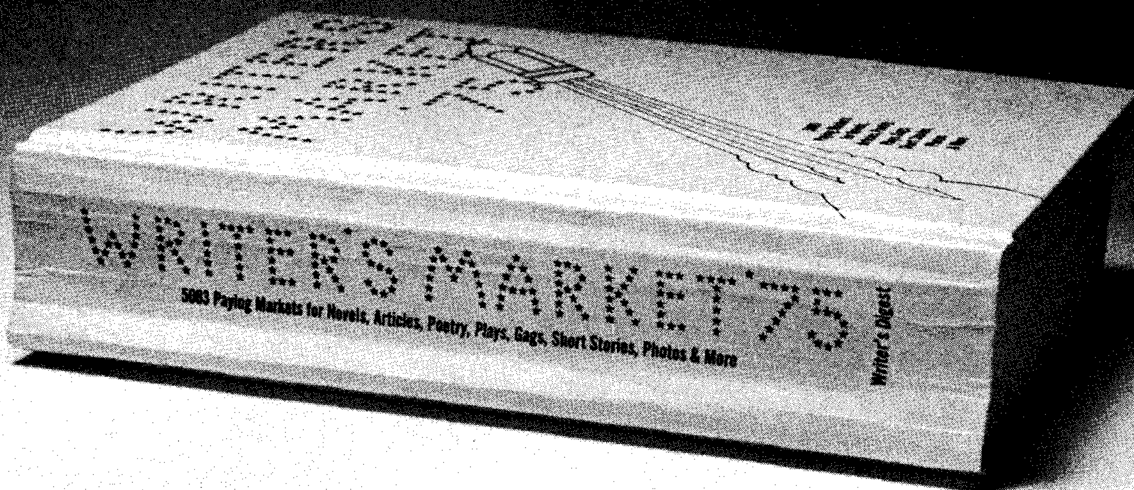
Le Guin: That's what shouldn't be. This whole thing about the puritan work ethic: everybody's down on the puritan work ethic. So we keep saying work is bad. Well, of course, work is not bad. Work is the greatest joy there is if it's the work you want to do. Nothing is more satisfying but most people never get a chance to do it at all. We've put people into this horrible box where they have to work in order to respect themselves and yet the work, and its products, aren't worth their respect—or their time.

Work Is The Greatest Joy There Is.

Ward: That's something to deal with on a fictional level, but it's also something that we really have to grapple with now. Machines are getting smarter and could do a lot for us.

Le Guin: They could; they do. So long as we don't work for them. But whether we do it or have machines do it for us, isn't the real question this, Is the work worth doing? Am I, a human being, working for what I really need and want—or for what the State or the advertisers tell me I want? Do I choose? I think that's what anarchism comes down to. Do I let my choices be made for me, and so go along with the power game, or do I choose, and accept the responsibility for my choice? In other words, am I going to be a machine-part, or a human being? ■





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MY COLUMN

TED WHITE

"Regarding Ted White's column, if you are evolving toward a trade magazine aimed at the general SF reader, then it would be more appropriate that Ted continue to go the way he is going; as there are few, if any other columns that I know of devoted to the 'mechanics' of the pro's field written by a pro. The only guideline I'd like to see adhered to would be that there are no guidelines!"

—Ronald Salmon

"A column is not a democracy, Mr. White, and if you do not know what to say, turn the space over to someone who does."

—Ronald Andrukitis

There are obviously two schools of thought represented in the above quotes, and I hope I'll be forgiven if I align myself with the first. Andrukitis seems to have misunderstood the point of my last Column—which I must confess, here and now, was not intended to be a Column in its own right. (As written, last issue's brief Column was a preface to the Column which appeared one issue earlier. Editor Porter cut it from its proper place for reasons of space and when I missed my deadline for last issue he resurrected it to fill the gap.) In any case, it's hardly a question of having nothing to say—my confusion was over the direction this Column should follow as ALGOL itself found both new directions and a new audience. I have many things to say in this space, but my choice is determined by whom I am speaking to.

I like Salmon's point—although it boils down to a suggestion that I write anything I want to write—but I think it functions best when it makes use of reader feedback. I, after all, live with the 'mechanics' of the professional field on a regular basis. It's commonplace stuff to me. Obviously this is not true for many of you—and the remaining question is simply, what are you curious about? What do you want to know? Once I know that, it's not hard to supply the answers.

I want to underline something I've said before: taken as a whole, science fiction fans are probably the non-professionals best informed on the professional world of publishing. This is inevitable. SF fans have always been curious about the realities of publishing, and they have a unique opportunity to satisfy their curiosity: the interblend between the professional world and fandom. Many pros are fans or former fans and it's not hard to befriend such a person, given the nature of fandom, with its conventions and fanzines. There is a natural filtering-down process by which information is continually spreading outwards through fandom, by both the written word and word-of-mouth. This Column is simply one aspect of that process, and it is hardly unique, at least historically. It was through fanzines and convention socializing that I learned much of what I know about the professional world, and it supplied invaluable contacts for me when I 'went pro' myself.

So to a large extent this Column now finds itself in a position to repay old debts by passing on the favor to those of you who are still new to fanzines and fandom.

Thus: for the time being (until I feel it's time for a change), this Column will be, in effect, "Ted White Answers Your Questions." Questions should go to ALGOL and not to me directly; they'll be extracted and forwarded to me by the editor, as was done this time.

Jeff Hecht says, "First a request—keep up your column in ALGOL the way you've been writing it. I'm another of those would-be SF writers who keep your slushpile growing, and the mechanics of SF publishing interest me. Maybe I'll even learn something. I don't know how many other ALGOL readers want or try to write, but I'd guess there would be a large number.

"Next a question—what range of material do you see in your slushpile? I assume there's some utter drivel, a lot of mediocrity and a few things that be reasonable fiction but simply don't turn you on. But how common are these types, and what other types show up?"

We run between fifty and a hundred submissions a week. Of these, the vast majority are unsuitable for publication, for one reason or another. The manuscripts break down into several categories, exclusive of the type of fiction being written. In the first category are the gems. These come few and far between and are an utter joy to discover. They jump out at you. They're enjoyable to read, to begin with: the prose is fluid and involving, the characters are 'real' and the idea works. These are the work of someone who has a fully developed writing style—someone like Heinlein, say, whose first story ("Lifeline") sold immediately to John Campbell. When I first read a Thomas Burnett Swann story in *F&SF*'s slushpile more than ten years ago, it hit me like a fist between the eyes: it was so good. The first time I read a James Tiptree story (I'd missed his already published stories, of which there were then only half a dozen or so) it hit me the same way.

Ranked below the gems are the adequate stories. These stories look pretty good after you've read a lot of slush, but comparison with a gem shows up their deficiencies. The most common one is that although nothing is really wrong with any aspect of the story, it never quite comes alive in the way a gem does. Most often the prose is somewhat wooden. The words are all arranged properly, in an academic sense, but they lack the rhythm and flow of good readable prose. Nevertheless, an editor buys some of these stories. He may buy one because the idea is freshly handled or intriguing, or because the story is of a type he wants and gets too little of. Or he may see within the story, although it is not perfect, a talent which he wants to encourage. I'll give you an example:

In 1969 a young fan on the west coast sent me a story. It was over 10,000 words long and not especially original. But the fan seemed to be developing both the ability to put words together well and to tell an interesting story. I bought the story (his first sale), with the proviso that I'd be doing some editing on the story (to which he agreed). Then he sent me a second story. It was a quantum leap over the first. It was a gem. It was "Dear Aunt Annie" by Gordon Eklund. It might not have been written and it probably would not have come to me had I not encouraged him by buying the earlier story.

Every editor buys a certain number of 'adequate' stories—from both unknowns and from established authors—for a variety of reasons. But he rejects far more of them, simply because (to him, at least) they just don't come alive—they didn't turn him on, as Hecht puts it.

Lower still are those stories which are superficially adequate—but only superficially. These are written in perhaps competent prose, but are badly conceived as fiction. They are stories in which the scenes don't add up logically, in which elements are missing or gratuitously added. Most beginning writers who have almost reached their first sale—or occasionally have already sold one or two stories—write this kind of story. They put words together adequately, but they haven't yet learned

how to structure a story, to put *ideas* together adequately. These stories are not—should not be—saleable. They have fatal flaws. Slushpile readers tend to curse them a lot because they're teasers: they start out well and may fool the reader into thinking them better than they turn out to be. Still, anyone who has gotten that far along as a writer can probably learn how to become a professional.

A notch below, and more doubtful on that score, are the stories of would-be's who have yet to learn how to handle prose. These people know how to construct grammatically correct sentences, but they often choose the wrong words. Their prose is 'clumsy'; they use the wrong synonyms, are sometimes unintentionally funny in their word choices. Their prose is more than wooden—it is inadequate. They tend to write highly compressed stories—synopses at best—and they avoid dialogue because they know they can't write it convincingly. Quite often these people think that a story is simply an idea, and they think that putting that idea down on paper constitutes writing a story. Their stories are rarely more than a few thousand words in length, and often much shorter. A lot run only two or three pages, typed. A typical one might conclude—

"—and that's how Bruce Blank found out the Secret of the Universe!"

Or—

"The face filled the sky. It was the FACE OF GOD!!!!"

Etc.

These latter types range from only minimally bad to totally worthless. And although the vast majority are pretty short, a few are written by real gluttons for punishment and run 30,000 to 60,000 words—whole novels.

At the very bottom of the heap are the 'stories' which aren't stories at all: they are tracts written by people whose vision of reality is twisted in some respect and who are driven to communicate The Truth to the world at large. They disguise their material as fiction in most cases, but they are the ones who write back bitter notes about how they're being persecuted, just like, say, Galileo, when they get back a rejection slip. They are the ones who believe the science fiction they read is True—"I knew you had to make it look like it was just a story, so They wouldn't catch on to you. . ."—and authors like Wilson (Bob) Tucker have files full of letters from them.

I once received a letter from a woman whose 'stories' I'd consistently rejected (they were totally incoherent). In it she said that I'd better wise up and start buying her stuff before it was 'too late.' She was being magnanimous and sending me another story, to give me one last chance. "If you don't buy this story," she said (and I remember the line well—it broke me up), "I'm not going to send you any more!" She was true to her word on that point at least—to my relief.

As to the frequency with which stories in each category show up, I'd estimate it like this: gems account for only 1 or 2% of submissions. Adequate stories run 5-10%. Superficially adequate stories range from 20% to 40%. Inadequate stories run 50-60%. And the absolute stinkers and oddballs crop up among 3 to 5%. It's a modified bell-curve, in effect, with the peak occurring well below the median of acceptability but still somewhat above the purely abysmal.

Jeff Hecht continues: "Finally, a comment leading into another question—I see different people in SF going in different directions. For example, I enjoy *Amazing* and *F&SF*, but find *Analog* almost unreadable; other people feel the opposite way. It's not just the old difference between fantasy and science fiction, or the old wave/new wave thing; rather, I think, the field has become large enough that people can pick and choose. (Perhaps I should say they *have* to—I can't see how anyone could keep up with the whole field unless they speed-read 24 hours a day.) Also, I see a greater variety of writers doing a greater variety of things—giving us more to choose from. And so my question—do you see this going on, and, if you do, what do you think it means?"

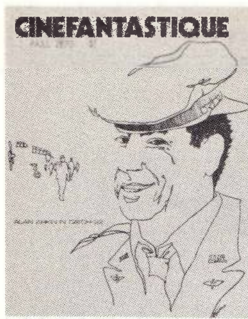
Well, we have two factors at work here: one is diversity and the other is size. It is undeniable that the field has swollen in size in terms of the number of people writing science fiction. The SFWA has somewhere around four or five hundred members now; I'm sure they couldn't have found more than half that number twenty years ago. And the number of books coming out today has grown vastly.

But the number of magazines has shrunk. Twenty years ago you would have found twice as many SF magazines on the stands, and they represented a much larger number of editorial viewpoints and policies. The spectrum of available SF has always run from the hopelessly juvenile to the intellectually sophisticated. At one time *Analog* (or *Astounding*, as it was then) represented the high end of the spectrum; in the early fifties with the growing emphasis on 'soft' science and character development the spectrum split at the high end to include *Galaxy* (largely in its first five years) and *F&SF*. For many years *Amazing* represented the low end (although it shared this honor in the late fifties with the digest-sized *Super Science*), giving that magazine a reputation it's taken fifteen years to shed. These days the magazines (especially after *If*'s demise) are grouped much closer in terms of sophistication of writing and concepts; the differences you notice are those of editorial bias (and, to a lesser extent, magazine policy). I think these differences are healthy and desirable. I wish there were more magazines and more editors—and yet more diversity. The book field certainly offers this, but with much less continuity—publishers start up SF programs and then close them down again with little predictability while their editors play an ongoing game of musical chairs. Roger Elwood made the anthology market as voracious for stories as are the magazines—but edited them from his own set of biases, and may have hurt the field as a whole through massive overkill—his anthologies are already glutting the marketplace.

As for what I think "it means," I doubt it means anything more or less than the obvious: Each and every creator of SF brings to it his own talents and attitudes and in each case the combination is unique. Certainly this diversity can only be good for SF readers—it gives them more to read and more to choose among. Since there are also more readers of SF, it also assures the growing number of writers an audience.

Joseph Ferman died recently. I cannot say I knew Joe well, but I worked for him at *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction* for five years, during which time I never lost my respect for him as one of the few gentlemen among publishers—especially in the SF field. His concern for maintaining *F&SF*'s high standards of quality was obvious, even in the face of flagging sales—a situation which might easily have driven other publishers to abrupt reversals of policy. As a person I found him friendly but dignified (another rarity among publishers): *gentleman* is again the word which comes to mind; his dignity was honestly come by.

Although he had not been active as the publisher of *F&SF* in recent years (he passed that honor on to his son, Ed) and I had lost contact with him, I regret Joe Ferman's death a great deal. He set high standards. He will surely be missed.



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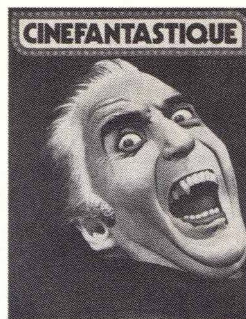

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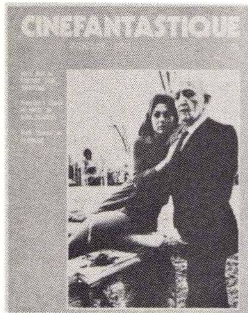

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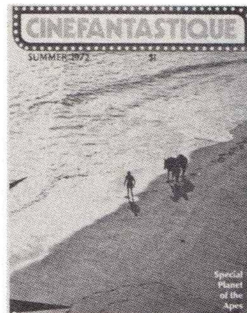

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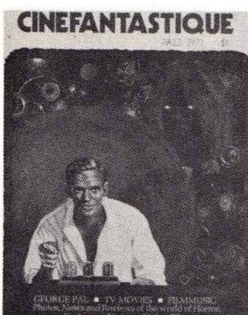

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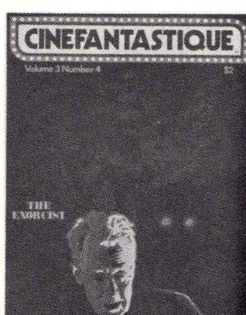

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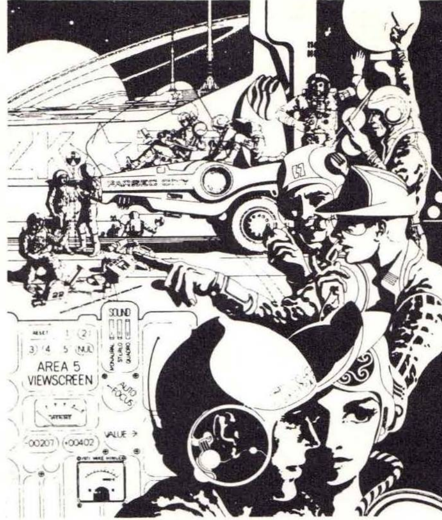

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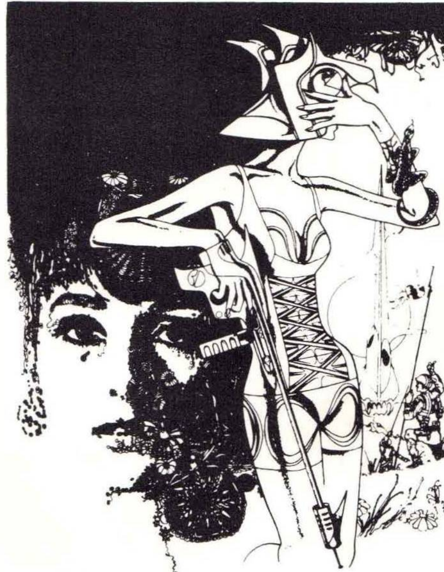

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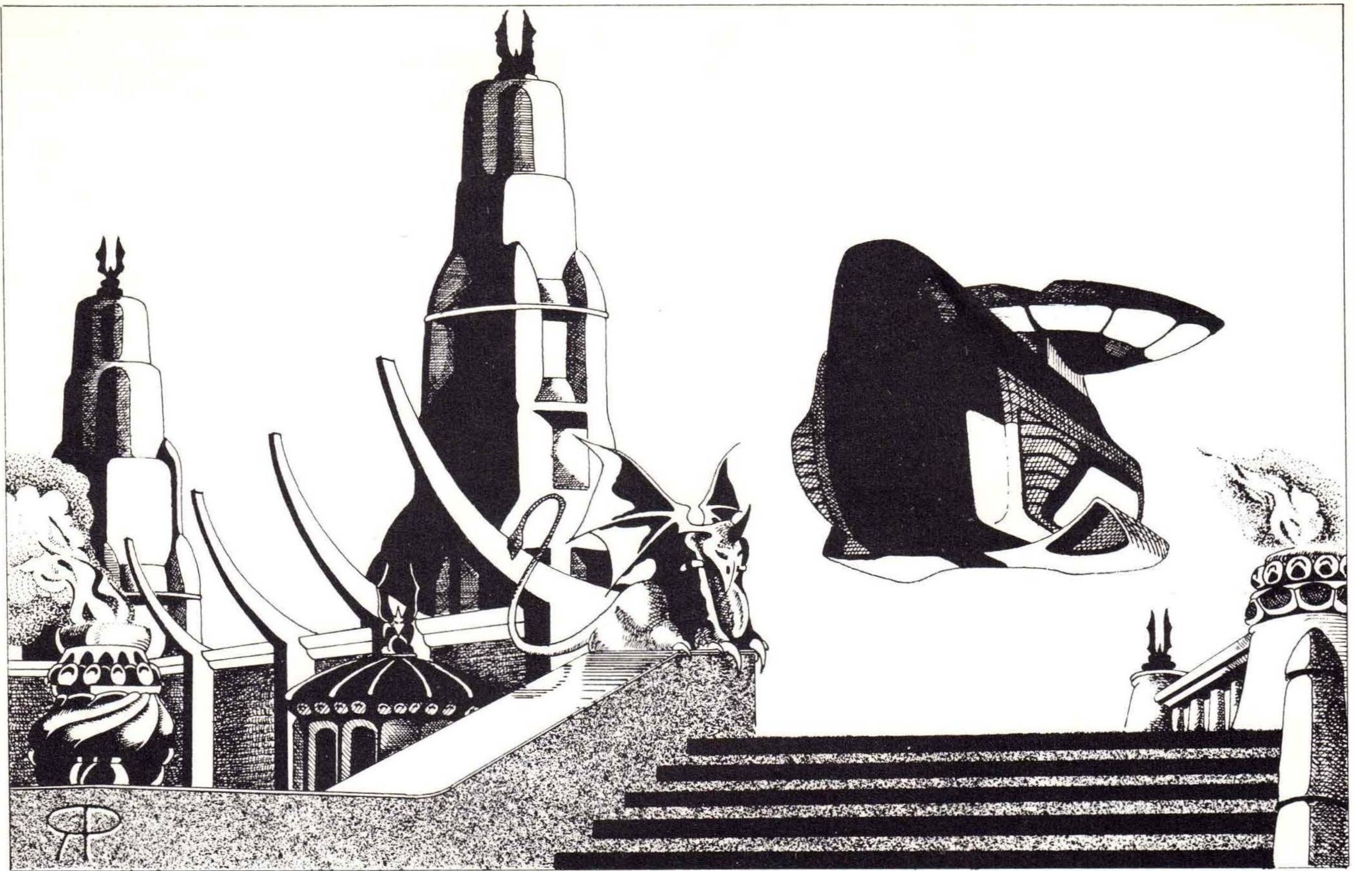


THE CAMPBELL ERA

JACK WILLIAMSON

Science fiction has held a central place in my mental world ever since I discovered it during the first year of Gernsback's *Amazing Stories,* back when he was still calling it "scientifiction." Living in far New Mexico, I have seen other people in the field only now and then, but I've always felt that we belonged to a very important special world.

That sense that we were a group apart used to be stronger, in fact, than it is now. In those days when the new term "science fiction" was still a sort of password, puzzling to outsiders, there weren't so many of us. We were not yet buried under today's avalanche of books and paperbacks and TV shows. I can remember when each new issue of the old *Astounding,* or even *Wonder* or *Amazing,* was an event eagerly awaited. With time to read all the science fiction there was, we knew one another better, and one another's work.

I think we had more respect for science fiction then than most of us do now. Though of course we were writing it for all sorts of reasons, even desperately for money, I think most of us took it pretty seriously as a way of testing alternatives. As fellow pioneers in a new country, we needed one another.

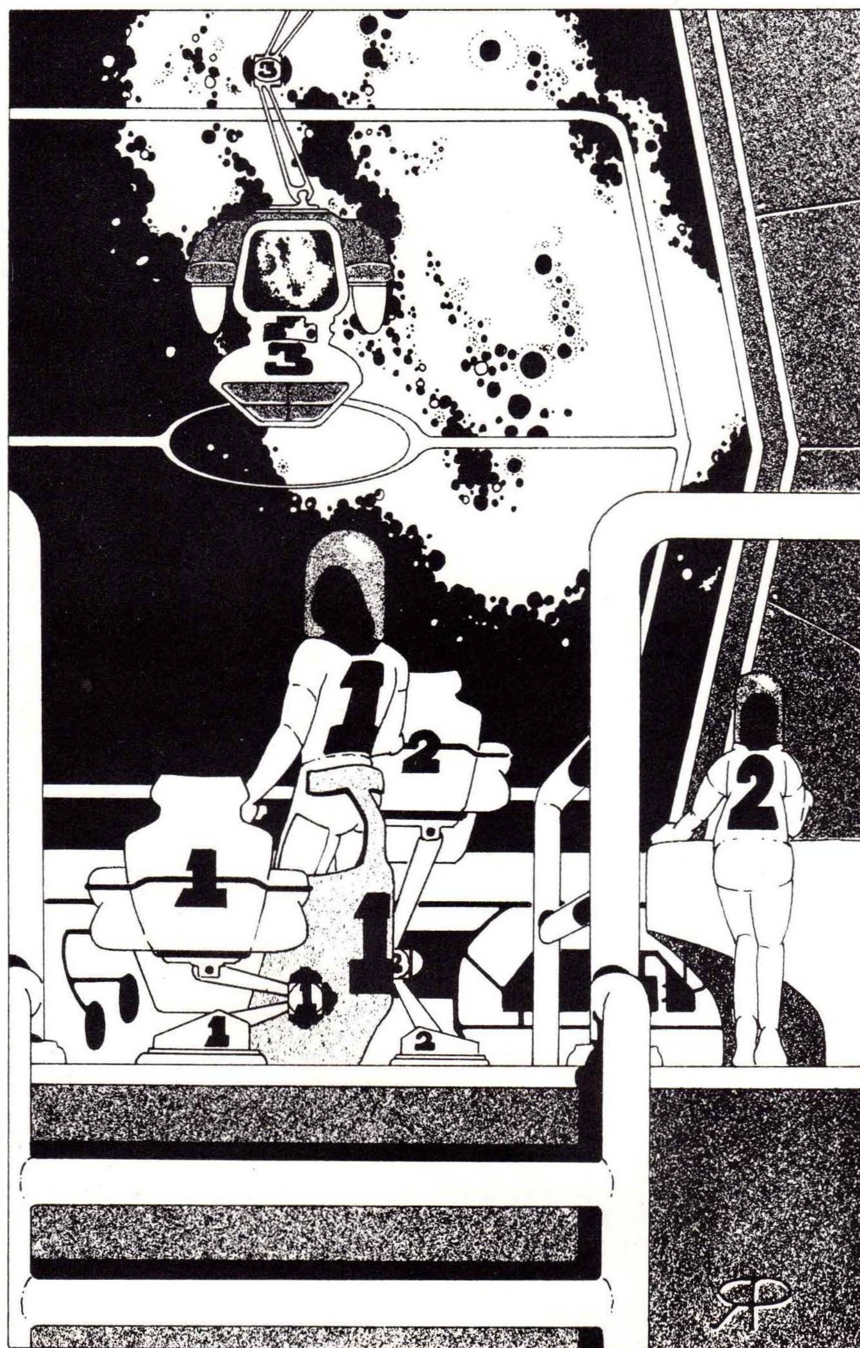
Even in the 'twenties, I knew such people as Miles J. Breuer and Ed Hamilton. Breuer and I wrote a couple of stories together. Ed and I became good friends; we made a boat trip down the Mississippi and spent a winter together in Key West. Once in New York we called on A. Merritt at the old Hearst *American Weekly.* We were both

the sincerest sort of Merritt fans—our first published stories had been modelled after the same story of his—and we were properly moved by the cordial reception he gave us. Through Ed, I met Farnsworth Wright, the great editor of *Weird Tales*, and a few of the writers around him in Chicago: E. Hoffman Price, Otis Kline, and others.

On later trips east, I came to know several of the people around Leo Margulies and Mort Weisinger, of *Thrilling Wonder* and *Startling Stories.* We used to gather for beer and talk at a bar called Stuben's Tavern. I remember Manley Wade Wellman there, Oscar Friend, and the Binder brothers from Chicago. (Otto had begun writing with another brother, Earl, and he still by-lined his stories "Eando." Jack was an artist.)

About 1939, I met most of the "Futurians"—a group that included Fred Pohl, Doc Lowndes, Cyril Kornbluth, and Isaac Asimov. Though rival fans were attacking them as dangerous radicals, I found them bright young men with a burning interest in science fiction. Several of them became my friends.

These groups were loose, of course, and overlapping. Most of us were selling, or trying to sell, to several different markets. Yet each circle reflected the personality of an editor. John Campbell has been, by common consent, the greatest of our editors. With the writers he gathered, he made the decade after 1938 a true golden age. I'm happy to have been at least a corresponding member of the circle.



I was reading Campbell's own work in the early 'thirties, when he was still competing with Doc Smith in producing ever-wilder space operas and debating ever-wilder theories of super-science in the letter columns of the magazines. By the time he became editor of *Astounding* in 1938, I knew him fairly well, and I soon met Ted Sturgeon and Sprague de Camp and a few of his other disciples.

I still have vivid recollections of his office in the old Street & Smith building at 79 Seventh Avenue in New York. The entrance was through a gloomy, barn-like space piled high with enormous rolls of pulp paper. The office itself, somewhere beyond or above the grinding presses, was a clutter of magazines and manuscripts and illustrations, always open to his writers.

Campbell was a big, barrel-chested man, as I recall him, pale-skinned, sharp-nosed, a little clumsy in motion. I remember him nearly always sitting, cigarette in hand, listening with his big head cocked alertly, frowning in quick reaction, talking as if each idea were a move in some absorbing mental game, always talking.

His topic was scientific progress, with science fiction for a metaphor. Though he was too much himself to be classified, I think of him as a voice for what Snow calls the culture of science. He was absorbed with the drama of technology transforming the world. A canny optimist—with traits of the Scots engineers of legend and fact—he understood the process better than most of us did, and he regarded it with wonder and with hope more often than with fear.

As a science fiction editor, he had no peer. Writers were his friends. We were welcome at the office, at lunch, at his home in New Jersey, so long as we could listen. He wrote us endless letters, pouring out criticism and new ideas. He had a sharp sense of story values, and he was immensely creative.

For one example of his help, when I came in with an idea for a series of stories about the planetary engineers who would terraform new worlds for human use, he suggested that one of their problems might be asteroids of antimatter—then called contraterrene, or "CT." I wrote two novels about "seetee."

Again, when I sent him "With Folded Hands," a novelette about the

too-perfect robots I called humanoids, he suggested that men denied the use of their hands might develop the parapsychological abilities Rhine was trying to demonstrate at Duke University. The outcome was my best-known novel, *The Humanoids.* (The mechanical ants in a newer novel of mine, *The Moon Children,* began as another invention of his, one that I failed to develop in a way that pleased him.)

He did offend people. He was opinionated. Sometimes, especially in the later years, he was dogmatic. But often, I think, he advanced an idea simply to test it to develop its implications for story use. He never tried to force his own story ideas on me, never asked for revisions, never objected to the pessimistic themes in some of my stories.

As a champion of progress, he liked to challenge scientific orthodoxy. He gave space to a good many propositions that I felt were unfortunate. He let L. Ron Hubbard use *Astounding* to launch dianetics—the first version of scientology. He was, I think, too easily convinced by Rhine's claims for parapsychology. Later, he was too seriously interested in an unlikely device called the Dean drive.

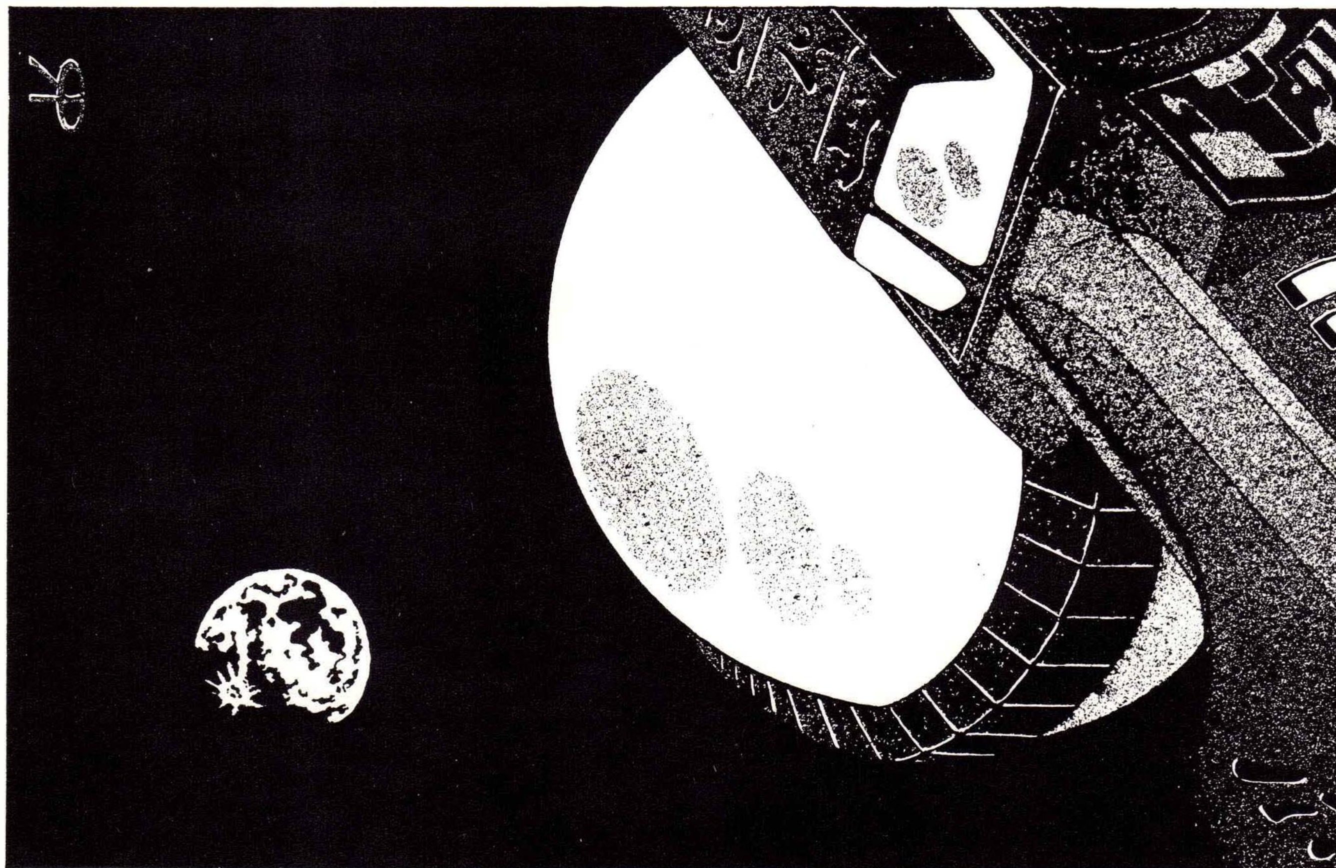
He has been called a racist, but I never felt that he was a bigot. I know he was proud of his Scots blood. It's true that he liked Anglo-Saxon heroes, and liked stories in which earthmen proved their superiority to other galactic races. Yet I don't recall any racist slurs, and I don't think his attitudes seemed so evil in the 'thirties as they may today. To a great extent, his prejudices were those of his readers and his time.

Isaac Asimov was his star pupil and a close friend, even though he says he invented the humans-only galaxy of the "Foundation" series to get around Campbell's attitude toward space aliens. I first met Isaac when he came to my room at the Sloane House—the New York YMCA, where I used to stay because it was clean and cheap. A serious lean young man, not yet twenty, he was excited because Campbell had just bought his story "Trends." Later I saw him often at fan gatherings, where he was not quite so grave. His fine intelligence was obvious. Already he was beginning to develop the ingenious ploy of seeming to kid himself for his own egotism that has become a sort of trademark.

But Isaac turned to other fields. The most important science fiction writer of Campbell's circle is no doubt Robert A. Heinlein. I first met him in 1940, when we were both living in Los Angeles and he had just begun to write. In the small informal group that we called the Mañana Literary Society, I spent a good many evenings at his home in the Hollywood hills. He was a genial host, always neatly groomed, always courteous, but always a little reserved. An Annapolis graduate but retired from the Navy, he had the manner of a military aristocrat. He brought to science fiction a fine original mind, a sound background in science, and a competent prose style. His talk was vastly stimulating. I remember thinking that he was the most highly civilized person I had ever met.

Tony Boucher and Cleve Cartmill were the two other members of the Mañana group that I came to know best. Tony's real name was William Anthony Parker White. As H. H. Holmes, he wrote and reviewed mystery novels—his *Rocket to the Morgue* is a *roman a clef,* filled with science fiction people. A practising Catholic, a Baker Street Irregular, a victim of strange allergies, an expert on Gregorian chant, he was a complex and fascinating person. His major place in the history of science fiction was earned years later, by his able editorship of the *Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction.*

A polio cripple, Cleve Cartmill had a kind of fierce emotional independence, disguised with a sardonic sense of humor. He is best remembered for his story "Deadline," published by



Campbell in March 1944, in which he described the inside of a nuclear fission bomb so accurately that he set military intelligence to looking for a leak from the still-secret Manhattan Project. The technical information seems to have come from Campbell, who was using published information. Cartmill himself knew a good deal about politics and the underworld, I suppose from his newspaper experience, but little about science.

My own most vivid memory of Cartmill involves a visit we made to a meeting of a Los Angeles love cult with a rocket engineer named John Parsons. I had met Parsons at a fan club meeting, and he seemed to regard me as a kindred spirit because of the witchcraft in my novel *Darker Than You Think.* (Parsons wrote me later that he was testing multicellular solid-fuel rockets suggested by those in a story of mine, "The Crucible of Power." Still later, unfortunately, he was killed—or so I heard—by a rocket explosion.)

Ray Bradbury used to ride with me now and then up to Heinlein's place. He was still selling newspapers at the corner of Hollywood and Vine and eagerly courting success. Once I saw him vastly elated because he had just walked around the block with Bob Hope. His writing skills were developing fast, but what he wrote was never Campbell's dish.

An Air Forces weather man during World War II, I was pretty much away from science fiction, but in the fall of 1944, before I went overseas, I did manage a furlough to visit old friends. I saw Campbell and others in New York and found a little science fiction colony in Philadelphia. Sprague de Camp took me on a tour of the Navy Yard, where he was a lieutenant commander. Heinlein showed me his research project there. At Heinlein's home, I had the only meeting I recall with L. Ron Hubbard.

Hubbard fascinated me. I remember reddish hair and the pale, bright eyes that Western folklore associates with successful gunmen. That was before dianetics and scientology. Hubbard was talking vaguely about half-secret improbable adventures on a destroyer in the Pacific, and I got the impression that he had been left with some sort of injury or illness. He kept puzzling me with hints of more than I saw on the surface.

After the war, there was an abrupt expansion of science fiction. I'm not certain about the reasons, but possible factors can be suggested. The first generation of young fans had grown up; they had more sophistication and more money to spend for books. The shocks of war, of the nuclear bomb especially, had begun to shatter the old faith in technology. Before the war, there had been no book market for science fiction. Now such fan firms as Fantasy Press and Gnome Press showed the major publishers that science fiction books would sell, and paperback books were soon competing with the magazines.

Such changes brought the Campbell era to a rather sudden end. The only rivals to his *Astounding* had been such formula-ridden pulps as *Planet Stories, Thrilling Wonder,* and Ray Palmer's *Amazing.* Two new challengers appeared in 1950, manned by two great editors. Horace Gold was more liberal than Campbell, with less concern for gadgets and more for man's future psychological and cultural evolution. Gold's *Galaxy* became as exciting as *Astounding* had ever been. Under Tony Boucher—and, for a time, J. Francis McComas—*The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction* led the field in wit, style, and sheer literary quality.

In the boomlet of the early 1950's, dozens of other titles appeared. Most of them soon died, but science fiction was spreading far beyond *Astounding* into the gathering avalanche of paperback books, into comic strips and radio and TV, into the awareness of the world. Most of Campbell's old writers drifted away into more congenial or better-paying markets, but he kept developing others to replace them. Renamed *Analog,* his magazine lived on, projecting its generally optimistic vision of man's future. Under Ben Bova, it is still the most widely read science fiction magazine.

Though I had stopped writing for Campbell, we never fell out. I enjoyed a long talk with him at Heidelberg in 1970, the last time we met. The news of his death (July 11, 1971) overtook me in Australia. It brought a painful sense of loss. He held a place in science fiction, and in my own world, that nobody else can fill. If Wells created the genre and Gernsback named it, Campbell is surely the third great name in its history. He remade it and inspired a whole generation of its ablest craftsmen. I'm glad to have known so many of them.

The true golden age of science fiction is when you were thirteen, as someone has said. I was a good deal older during the Campbell years, but they live in my memory as a very special time. The future seemed a little brighter then, and we felt that we were privileged to see it a few steps ahead of anybody else. ■

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The Social Role Of S.F

BRIAN M. STABLEFORD

In recent years, the SF community has become extremely self-conscious. Like a pubescent teenager with skin trouble it contemplates its image and worries. How can the image be explained? What's wrong with it and why isn't it more wholesome and beautiful?

If we're prepared to accept that SF does need an explanation—some kind of analytical account to justify its existence and its characteristics—what kind of an explanation should be sought? Most students of SF see it as an aspect of modern literature, amenable to the tools of analysis used by literary critics to evaluate other 'species' of literature. Some describe it as a kind of 'modern mythology,' but in so doing they use the concept of *myth* in the perverted sense that the literary critic uses it, and make no attempt to rationalise SF in terms of the social functions of myth as defined by anthropologists. But is this the only point of view with which to look at SF? Might it not be at least interesting, and perhaps valuable in attempting to understand, if one were to study SF as a social phenomenon—to look at its properties as a medium of communication?

Literary critics deal almost entirely with texts. Sometimes they study the text in total isolation, sometimes they regard it as a product of a writer's mind. What they do not, for the most part, concern themselves with is the audience. They don't ask who reads a book and why, they merely concern themselves with what's in the book to be read. The sociologist, on the other hand, is not only interested in what a writer puts into a book, and why, but in what a reader gets out of it, and how. He is not primarily interested in the creation of ideas, but in their *circulation*.

It is indisputable that the greater part of what most people read is not what literary critics consider to be 'good.' The only possible explanation of this fact is that the expectations of the literary critics have little or nothing to do with the reasons people have for reading books. The reaction of the literary critics to this has been to assume themselves a kind of aristocracy of the mind—a spiritual elite—and they have turned their backs on the question of what kinds of need are being satisfied by the kinds of literature people do tend to read.

But why do people who like SF find SF to be the kind of thing that they like? What function does it perform inside their heads? What do

they *use* it for?

I'd like to set aside, for the moment, all the aesthetic arguments about SF—whether individual examples of it are good, bad, or indifferent and what makes them so—and consider instead the hypothesis that SF as a collective phenomenon might be able to function as a tool in social adaptation.

We each have two distinct modes of experience. It might almost be said that we live in two different worlds. One is the external world of objects, events and other people—a world which we all share and which we define by consensus. The other is the psycho-physiological world, where experience consists of dreams and fantasies, images and emotions—a world which exists entire and complete within each one of us. We have to adapt ourselves to simultaneous existence in each of these two worlds, and the process of adaptation is a continuous one because both the worlds are subject to *change* over which we have only a limited degree of control. We may, therefore, conceive of the individual as being engaged in a continuous process of *self-reorientation* with respect to his environment, both internal and external.

The question to consider is whether the ideas and perspectives characteristic of SF might be particularly useful within the historical context of the last fifty years, during which the concept of 'science fiction' was first discovered and developed.

SF deals not with the substantially real but with the speculatively possible, and by virtue of this it assumes what may be called "the cosmic perspective"—the ability to see individual events in a very wide context. It deals with the present (or the future) as an aspect of eternity, and with the Earth (or another world) as an aspect of infinity. SF may not show us the future, but it makes us aware of it, and though the galactic civilizations of SF may be nonsensical, they do help us to feel something of the vastness of space.

Perhaps even more important, the range of *alternative* futures and worlds presented by SF helps us to become aware of the range of alternative futures implicit in the present.

Can we discover any reasons why "cosmic perspective" should be particularly useful in adaptation to the circumstances of the present day? Well, yes we can—quite easily, in fact. For one thing, the future is a great deal closer to the present than it used to be. The velocity of change is higher today than it has ever been before, and the acceleration continues. The rate of *innovation* in the external environment is very great. In addition to this, the innovations themselves tend to be complex, often hard to understand. Even the personal, domestic environment of the home is filled with objects whose mode of functioning many people simply do not understand: things invaluable to the pattern of life which are operationally 'alien.' (As I sit here at my electric typewriter my self-winding wristwatch tells me it is nearly time for dinner, which is cooking in the automatic oven. After dinner I may watch TV.) These objects fall into the broad category of 'machines.' The importation of mysterious objects into the domestic environment on a large scale began with the radio. According to Sam Moskowitz, Hugo Gernsback—the man who first delineated the concept of SF—also designed the first home radio set, the Telimco Wireless. *Amazing Stories* was originally a companion to Gernsback's radio-technology magazines.

While the domestic environment was changing more quickly and becoming more conceptually more complex, changes were also taking place in the world at large. Methods of transport became much quicker and much more efficient. News became instantaneous: the radio was an ear eavesdropping on the entire Earth, the TV became an eye. Common parlance has it that the world 'shrank'—McLuhan's phrase "the Global Village" implies this—but in actual fact it is we who 'grew': we extended ourselves, *via* our media of communication, to distant parts of the world. Wars became world wars, economic and resource crises became world crises.

Like the personal environment, the world of science—the models by which we understand the universe we live in—has been 'mystified' during the twentieth century. In 1887 Berthelot announced flatly that there was no more mystery about the universe. Twelve years earlier, according to rumour (possibly apocryphal), the director of the American Patent Office had resigned because there was nothing left to invent. Since Einstein, understanding of the universe has been removed from the realms of common sense to the realms of higher mathematics and quantum mechanics.

In adapting to circumstances like these, is it surprising that we are acquiring "cosmic perspectives"? How else are we to reorientate ourselves within the modern world?

Alvin Toffler has defined "future shock"—the psychological impact of the acceleration of change. Modern man, he claims, no longer experiences life in the same way as his ancestors, but feels the world to be *in transit* rather than permanent. We no longer experience change as waves disturbing the surface of an unmoving lake, but as turbulence in a rapid river. In addition to the fast rate of change and the constancy of innovation, Toffler points out that sophisticated technology permits objects to diversify in appearance rather than being standardised by function. (In its extreme forms, this becomes a kind of gadget-mimicry: cigarette lighters shaped like guns. It is most noticeable, however, in attempts to give products 'personalities' of their own so that the image of one package sets its contents apart from essentially similar things in a different package.) This diversity also adds to the problems of self-reorientation within the environment.

Marshall McLuhan has also done a great deal to popularise the fact that the world in which we live now is very dissimilar to the world which nineteenth century man inhabited. He claims that the type of linear thinking encouraged by printing is no longer appropriate to the world in which we live, and that we must completely re-adapt ourselves to the new kind of sensory environment which we have created.

Ritchie Calder has pointed out that man, as scientist and technologist, has outstripped his own natural philosophies. Science, he says, is not wisdom but knowledge, and there is a grave need for that knowledge to be reabsorbed into wisdom, tempered by judgment. He argues that a bridge must be built between science and man, because it is not enough that we should 'know' science—we must also know what the knowledge implies, and we must discover how to decide what use is to be made of it.

All these writers point out the necessity of re-orientation, and each provides an account of what has made their particular kind of re-orientation necessary. What they do not provide is a formula for re-orientation. "You must learn to think *this* way," they say, but they can hardly begin to tell us how.

Toffler is perhaps the most constructive of the three, suggesting that courses in "Future" should be offered alongside courses in History, so that children may be encouraged to become future-conscious. He suggests that SF may be useful in such courses as "a mind-stretching force for the creation of the habit of anticipation." It is interesting to note that the kind of SF which might be recruited to serve such a purpose would not necessarily be the kind of SF approved by literary critics. Its stylistic qualities would be unimportant compared to its perspective qualities. The relative probability of events taking place would, perhaps, not be so important as their futuristic 'image.' Fidelity to

known science would not be as vital as psychological glamour. The *pretence* of quasi-realism would be far more important than the fulfilment of the prospectus.

McLuhan has suggested that SF may be useful in the imaginative design of environments which would permit us to co-exist safely and symbiotically with our new technology. According to this thinking we might represent SF as an arbitrator in man-machine relationships. This is also one way in which SF may become relevant to the kind of thing Calder talks about, but there is a simpler function to be performed in this respect: the popularisation of scientific concepts for the layman. I do not suggest that SF is or should be straightforwardly didactic in the old Gernsbackian manner of discovering 'nuggets' of scientific information buried in the bedrock of exotic romance, but that SF puts scientific ideas into some kind of life-like context—the relevance of new discoveries to the individual is explored and elaborated *without* (or alongside) technical explanation.

The SF which circulates in our society today comes far closer to fulfilling the expectations set out above than the expectations of the literary critics, and if so, isn't it reasonable to suggest that science fiction *is* being used by its readers, consciously or unconsciously, to perform the functions here set forth? It is quite legitimate to criticise individual SF stories and writers on the grounds of scientific infidelity and literary ineptitude, but perhaps we must come to recognise that scientific infidelity and literary ineptitude are not necessarily deleterious to the *usefulness* of SF.

Thus far I've been concerned with re-orientation of the individual relative to the external world. When we turn to the question of whether SF may also be useful on a purely psychological plane, we enter an area much less well-defined. The relationships which exist between the ego—the conscious self—and those areas of the mind which transcend or are 'submerged' beneath it are to a large extent unknown, despite the efforts of Freud and those who followed him. It might be argued that needs arising in the inner, psychic world are necessarily unique to the individual, but to some extent we all have the same type of mind, and if Jung's concept of the collective unconscious has any foundation in reality, then the unconscious minds on which our individual egos are superimposed may be very similar.

The relationship between the SF fan (a category rather narrower than that of the SF reader) and his reading matter is curiously intense. This fact is very difficult to explain unless we are prepared to invoke some hypothetical inner need which SF satisfies for those whose involvement with it is taken to such lengths.

It hardly needs pointing out that fantasies play a very considerable role in our inner life. It has been said that insofar as people are not mere mechanical entities, they are "pieces of fiction," and that we may represent the continuity of our internal existence as "the constant re-writing of the narratives of our lives." The events which happen to us are real, but the context into which we fit them, to give them significance within our lives, is largely a fiction compounded out of beliefs and ambitions, self-images and value judgments. The situations we encounter are real, but our behaviour within those situations may be measured against a 'script' of assumptions and expectations by which we absorb those situations into the continuity of existence as we experience it.

In view of all this it's obvious that in learning to make a successful piece of fiction out of our own lives we should rely to some extent on the examples of other pieces of fiction—artificial constructions including literature and myth. It's easy enough, on this basis, to account for the success of a great deal of mundane literature. It isn't quite so easy to see where imaginative literature—which is, by definition, strategically *unreal*—fits in. The simplest, and perhaps most common explanation bandied about by psychologists and literary critics alike is that imaginative literature is a kind of 'aberrant' literature which provides 'escapist' fantasies to divorce the individual who finds a use for them from harsh reality. Opinions vary as to whether or not this is 'healthy.' The people who attack SF as though it were somehow immoral generally take this approach. I'd like to suggest that instead of starting with literature and then going on to account for imaginative fiction as a *type* of literature, it may be more fruitful to begin with imagination, and then go on to ask what kind of a function imaginative fiction (and, in particular, SF) might perform within the activity of the imagination.

Most people tend to see imagination as a *creative* process, and indeed it can be, but the creative act of imagination is in fact a thing of great rarity. With a very few exceptions, the act of imagination is one of selection or transmutation. When we 'make an image' in our mind we almost invariably call up something we've already encountered, whether in reality or in fiction of some kind. We use the imagination to recall and give form to memories, or to anticipate situations with which we will have to deal in the near future. When we imagine things which are unreal, we generally begin with something real and transform its image so that it acquires new properties. (When we think of monsters we envisage giant spiders, or weird conglomerates of all the insectile and reptilian characters we find most repellent.)

What the imagination does, then, is to abstract elements from either the external or the internal world and make them available to conscious, rational consideration, and to the process of self-reorientation. It also allows the transmutation of these elements into the forms which are most readily adaptable to the 'narrative' of individual existence.

SF is particularly rich in images of a hypothetical nature—it has a highly diverse vocabulary of novel ideas. But we mustn't fall into the trap of regarding SF *only* as a vocabulary of symbols—assorted ideas in colourful packets—because once again the important thing is liable to be the *contexts* in which the images are presented. SF provides *sequences* and *patterns* of images, and—perhaps most important—imaginative *landscapes.*

What many people seem to overlook in describing the SF reader-experience as an 'escape' is that books come to an end. No matter where the reader's imagination takes him while he is absorbed by a story—and I doubt that the absorption is ever total—he always ends up where he began. I think it's much more appropriate to consider the reader-experience as an imaginary *voyage* rather than an escape. We may compare it to the customary annual vacation, which is 'getting away from it all' only in a very limited sense. ("It's a nice place to visit but I wouldn't want to live there.") The whole point of the annual vacation, even if you drive yourself to distraction pretending to enjoy it, is that it puts the ordinary, routine working life into a much broader context—the context of the more complex and richer 'life as a whole.' This may also be the function of imaginative literature: it makes the life of the psyche so much *richer,* with its 'wealth of ideas' than the mundane life which may seem endangered by the possibility of degeneration into the mere mechanical process of living from day to day, from meal to meal.

The particular imaginative landscapes of SF provide the SF reader with the ability to put his real, ordinary life into the kind of context which he feels appropriate to it—the context of the cosmic perspective. He does *not* necessarily want to *escape* from that ordinary life. To see a world in a grain

of sand, and Heaven in a wild flower (as William Blake so eloquently summed up the cosmic perspective) is not necessarily to lose sight of the grain of sand or the flower, but is instead merely to enrich that which one sees.

From this point of view, too, it's the perspective element of SF which is important to the reader. The *pretence* of fidelity to what is already known (i.e. to the context of the real world) is important, but only the pretence. Actual scientific fidelity is not important so long as the illusion is maintained (though dissatisfaction arises from the fact that what is sufficient to support one man's illusion isn't always adequate to support another's).

It is most interesting, in considering the issue of science fiction's possible merits as a tool in psychological self-determination and self-repair, to look at certain elements within the psychological philosophy of R. D. Laing. Laing has provided a 'map' of a transcendental voyage by which the self may be 'stripped down' so that repairs can be effected. Laing relates this voyage to schizophrenics, but I wonder whether the same process (at a much more superficial level) might not be useful to many people whose mental and emotional problems haven't become anywhere near so acute.

According to Laing, what the process of self-repair involves is: "a voyage from outer to inner, from life to a kind of death, from going forward to a going back, from temporal movement to temporal standstill, from mundane time to aeonic time, from the ego to the self, from being outside (post-birth) back into the womb of all things (pre-birth); and then subsequently a return voyage from inner to outer, from death to life, from the movement back to a movement once more forward, from immortality back to mortality, from eternity back to time, from self to a new ego, and from a cosmic foetalization to an existential rebirth." (From *The Politics of Experience,* chapter 5)

How well this kind of voyage is provided for by the characteristic imaginative landscapes of SF! So much SF is concerned with immortality rather than mortality, with aeonic time rather than mundane time, with the disparity between life and death becoming blurred, with images of "cosmic foetalization" and all kinds of rebirth; in fact the whole *weltanschauung* of SF provides unlimited opportunities for voyages of this general nature. The initial reversal of attentiveness, from external experience to internal, happens every time you pick up a book and begin to read.

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The SF universe is unreal, but this doesn't mean that it's unrealistic. It's an *ordered* universe in which the principles of reality always *seem* to hold good, even if individual stories are incompetent and authors often cheat. It's a fantastic universe, but so is the universe of the mind. To be ultimately limited by reality is to be an animal or a robot—essentially mindless. We must, of course, ask why SF has emerged within the zeitgeist of the twentieth century to become moderately popular with a small (but growing) minority. It seems to me that the rise of these particular varieties of imaginative landscape is connected with the slow dying of the supernatural imagination and the concomitant reinterpretation of transcendental concepts and images to suit the precepts of the scientific imagination: the ongoing translation of the langauges which codify our beliefs.

It has not been my purpose in this article to make definite statements about the social role(s) of SF and to lay them out flat on a take-it-or-leave-it basis. What I *have* tried to do is explore some possibilities relative to the questions which seem to me to be there to be asked: Why *do* people read SF? Why do they read the SF they read? What part does it play in their lives? But it's necessary to begin looking for evidence which will either support these hypotheses or make nonsense of them.

What sort of thing constitutes evidence? With respect to the suggestion that SF is (or is potentially) socially orientative, it seems to me that one must carefully compare the roles played by certain symbols within science fiction—especially in terms of the historical development of those roles since 1926—with the roles appropriate to their analogues in real life. If one can discover an intimate association between the role of the hypothetical machines of SF with the social usage of and attitudes to the real machines of the environment, then this is evidence that SF may be participating in the orientation of the individual within his environment. Secondly, one must try to compare the ways in which social systems and social situations are designed in SF to the way in which people in the real world are constantly attempting to modify social systems and alter their own social situations. If an association can be discovered, this is evidence.

With respect to the suggestion that SF may be providing imaginative landscapes for psychological re-orientation, it seems to me that we have to look closely at the purely hypothetical symbols within SF—those which are defined as *alien* to ordinary experience—and at the way symbols are gathered together into characteristic plots and standardized reader-experiences. In this case we're not looking for perspectives and attitudes which are rapidly changing in association with historical changes in the external world, but for the re-emergence of old ideas in new symbolic dressing, and for constant factors which may relate to psychological phenomena—perhaps Jung's archetypes or Levi-Strauss's elementary myth-structures. If one can discover "alien archetypes" or recurrent idea-structures, then this, too, is evidence.

Perhaps, in future articles, I will be able to document some of this evidence, so that these explorations may aspire to become explanations. ■

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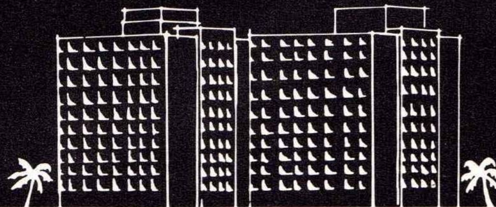

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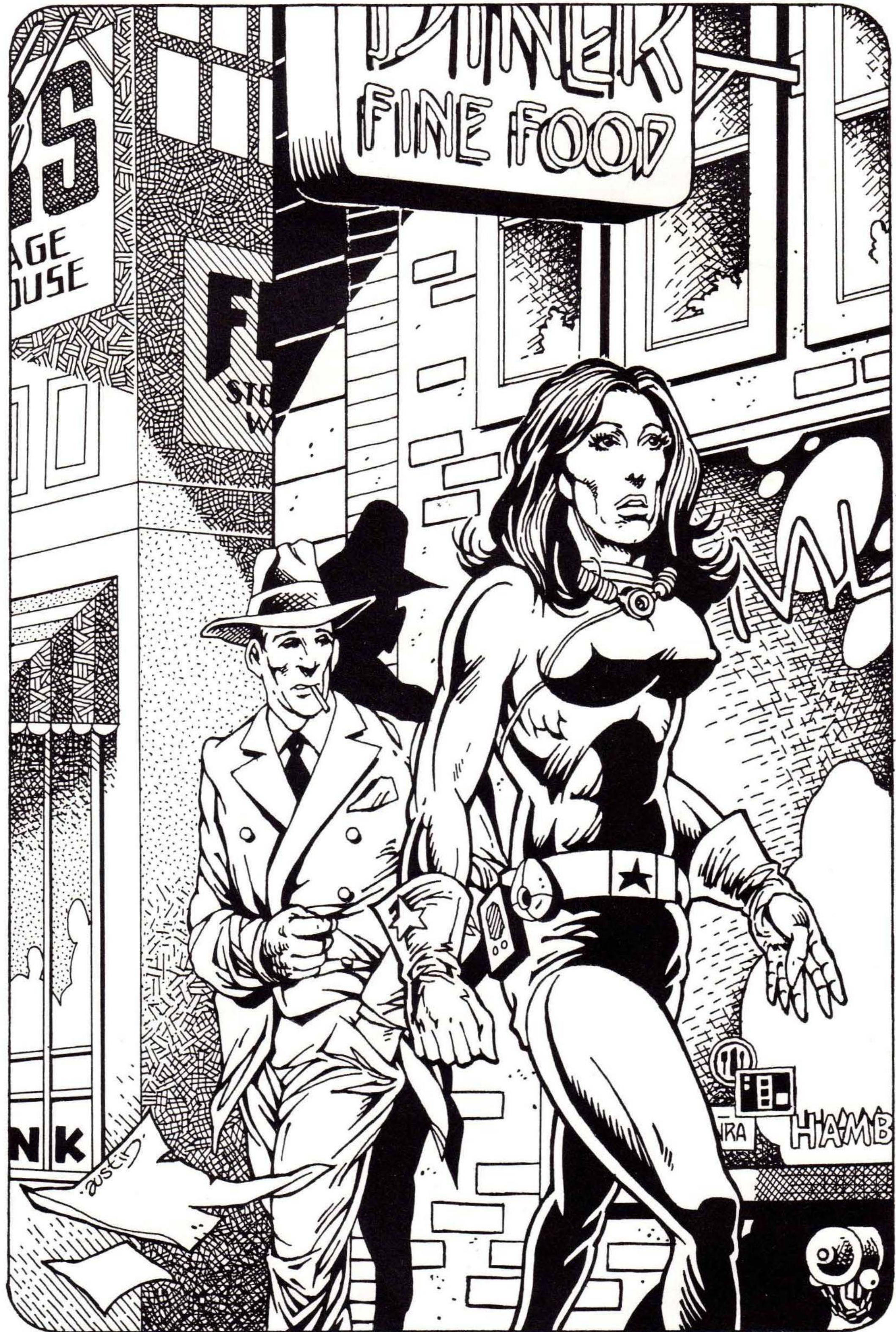

DHALGREN by Samuel R. Delany. 879pp. $1.95. SBN 553-08554-195. 1975. Bantam Books.

Chip Delany is one of the best people in the science fiction world, and I wish my path would cross his more often. The last time I saw him was in San Francisco in 1969; I asked what he was working on (some writers love to talk about work-in-progress, others would rather talk about anything in the world except work-in-progress) and he said he was in the early stages of a gigantic five-volume project dealing with life in a deteriorating city.

Somehow the five volumes metamorphosed into one, but it's a super-blockbuster. Despite its organization into seven sections *Dhalgren* is really all of a piece, and to have split it into five volumes would have been clumsy and false.

Dhalgren isn't an easy book to read—not 900 pages. It has very little plot; I don't mean that nothing happens, I just mean that it's difficult to see a significant pattern in what happens. And it is paced in an unusual way to achieve a particular effect. To wit: where Delany might have said *Lanya got dressed and....* Or, for enhanced vividness, *Lanya put on her old blue jeans, grey sweatshirt and sandals....*

Chip does it this way: *Lanya sat on the edge of the mattress. She yawned, looked at the sky. She reached for her jeans. She stood up and wriggled one dirty naked foot into a flopping denim leg. The material clung to her ankle. She pulled it up until her foot emerged from the bottom. Then she balanced on that foot and began to skin the other into the trousers. She....*

Yes, you get a terrific sense of presence and participation that way, but it does get wearisome after a while. It's a good yoga; you really have to get your head into it, and move right along with the book, at *its* pace, not pushing, not demanding that something *happen right now* if Delany doesn't want something to happen for another twenty or thirty pages. And it isn't a good book to skim. The point of *Dhalgren* isn't its events. The point is its characters and its mood, its context, the presence, environment, atmosphere, the feel of the place of the book.

It takes place with the arrival of the Kid (or Kidd) in the strangely disaster-struck city of Bellona. We never learn the nature of the disaster; apparently it has not struck the rest of the country, and even in Bellona, although the population is drastically reduced, there do not seem to be casualties of the disaster. There is electricity, water and food readily available. There is even a daily newspaper of sorts still being published.

But the sky is dark and smoky, government has disappeared, services are deteriorating or absent. And strange things are going on in the heavens. A second moon appears and is named for George Harrison—not the ex-Beatle, by the way, but a gargantuan black rapist. Later a bloated second sun appears, rising and setting in the same quarter of the sky.

We learn neither the physical nor symbolic reason for these phenomena. At least I failed to detect their bases.

The book is full of well-wrought, marvelous characters: a dotty woman psychiatrist and her dog, mobs of quasi-bikers called Scorpions, the Kid himself a struggling sensitive young poet, various odd hangers-on and sexual eccentrics, a visiting astronaut, a preacher, an old poet, a very straight family trying to preserve the norms and proprieties in the middle of catastrophe....

The book seems obviously to partake heavily of autobiography; as obviously as the Kid is Delany other characters in *Dhalgren* are presumably persons of his acquaintance, and various scenes and incidents seem to have taken place in Greenwich Village or in the Tenderloin or the Haight or South of Market in San Francisco.

There are a number of explicit sexual scenes in the book. Some of science fiction's more conservative elements may even find it degraded and/or pornographic. I must say that I did not, and I'm not too worried about those who might, for they will long since have thrown down the book in bafflement or rage before they come to a *really* graphic one.

I suppose that there is some "meaning" to the book, and it is tempting to attempt an interpretation, but I'm going to hold back from that. I don't think it's a *message* book. I think it's a head-trip, a fantasy-autobiography which Delany invites us to share with him.

It contains wonder, beauty, delight, boredom, tragedy, banality, art, vast gobbets of self-indulgence, self-doubt, self-praise, self-examination, self-deception, wish-fulfillment, possibly fear-fulfillment, reportage....

It's incredibly rich, and very demanding of the reader. If you aren't willing to invest a good deal of time and a substantial amount of hard labor in the book, I recommend that you don't even try to read it. As for me, I think I'm going to read it again. ●

LOVECRAFT: A BIOGRAPHY by L. Sprague de Camp. 510pp. $10. 1975. Doubleday.

Following the death of H. P. Lovecraft almost forty years ago there was a great stirring in the little world of super-gruesome horror of which he had reigned as monarch-in-tatters through the pages of *Weird Tales*; Lovecraft's admirers feared that the writings of their deceased doyen would perish away with those self-same pulpish pages, and the genius of America's second Poe would be denied the immortality it so richly deserved.

Out of the confusion and depression of that period arose Arkham House, dedicated to the preservation of Lovecraft's works. Arkham House was headed by August Derleth, a protege of Lovecraft's, and for over thirty years Derleth kept Lovecraft's name and works alive, issuing and reissuing the holy writ in endless new combinations and editions, enlarging the canon with various posthumous "collaborations" based on Lovecraft's notes and fragments, producing stories of at times dubious legitimacy. (The ultimate example of this, I have been told, is a novel "by Lovecraft" but "completed by Derleth" of which Lovecraft's share is two paragraphs and Derleth's the entire remaining text.)

It was believed for the thirty-odd years following Lovecraft's death that Derleth would eventually produce a definitive biography of Lovecraft; pending its publication lesser materials were made available in a slow trickle: various fragments, reminiscences of Lovecraft's acquaintances, and in later years collections of Lovecraft's letters which, at last count, had reached to some three or four fat volumes with the end not yet in sight.

But Derleth in turn died and the more than thirty years which had separated the demise of his mentor from his own proved too short a time for the completion of that anticipated biography.

We have, instead, a biography of HPL by de Camp, and with no desire to speak ill of the dead or to gloat at Augie Derleth's lamentable passing, I have to say that it is surely the best thing that could have happened.

Derleth was the passionate devotee, the aficionado, the chela crouching at the feet of the guru, the disciple preserving and sanctifying every last fingernail clipping and discarded pencil stub as a holy relic of the departed master. His biography, had it ever materialized, would almost certainly have become a gilt-edged and limp-covered hagiography in which Lovecraft would have been glorified and justified while his every detractor was execrated.

Not so with de Camp.

de Camp has produced a volume which is balanced, intelligent, thoroughly informed and perceptive. He presents Lovecraft only slightly in the context of the school of weird fiction

writing which he headed, but more illuminatingly in the context of his family and home life, which were, in a word, incredible. If ever a man lived a life of gothic horror, it was Howard Phillips Lovecraft; and like the best of horror stories the life he lived was filled not with slithering beasts and creeping menaces, but with the psychological horrors that produced a warped, stunted, and ultimately self-destroying personality.

His father was a dandy, a travelling salesman and possibly a philanderer; he went mad and was hospitalized and died while Howard was still a small child. His mother was a neurotic, immature woman who worked out her oddities on her lone child. She dressed him as a girl, kept his hair long, yet treated him to an arm's-length regime at home: de Camp quotes Lovecraft himself as describing his mother as a "touch-me-not."

Orthodox Freudianism may be a passé form of investigation, but the implications in Lovecraft's case seem unavoidable.

His mother also went mad and died in the same hospital where Lovecraft's father had died! Although Howard was by this time a man who might have broken the smothering, over-protective web that his mother had spun about him, his two aunts stepped from the wings and continued the treatment. One of the aunts also died before Howard, but the other, Annie Gamwell, survived her nephew.

Perhaps the only real chance that Howard had of getting into the world was in Brooklyn during his brief marriage to Sonia H. Greene. Sonia was an incredibly warm and energetic woman, and reading de Camp's pages I could almost believe, for a while, that she was going to succeed in helping Lovecraft to burst from that web. But, alas! its strands were too strong. The self-destructive habits and attitudes which Howard had ranged round himself virtually guaranteed his failure in the world, and he fled, at last, back to the comforting security of his boyhood home and his two smothering aunts.

An interesting aspect of Lovecraft's character was his extreme political reaction and racial intolerance. He believed that the American Revolution had been an historic tragedy. He was a "nativist" who despised and execrated blacks, Jews, eastern Europeans, any American not of "old American" (WASP-teutonic) background.

de Camp presents this side of Lovecraft's character honestly, but without excusing Lovecraft's excesses he places them in the context of their time and place in America's past. He points out, further—and with documentation—that in his later years Lovecraft altered these attitudes. Lovecraft's wife was Jewish, his very close friend the poet Samuel Loveman was Jewish, and Lovecraft himself largely abandoned his ethnic prejudices as the years passed. From a posture of political reaction he shifted as far as to become an admirer of Roosevelt's New Deal.

The book relies heavily on Lovecraft's letters, along with other available documents and interviews with the surviving members of the Lovecraft circle—which included such survivors as Robert Bloch and Donald Wollheim. I think that de Camp's researches are well rounded—his use of Lovecraft's letters has been criticised as making the biography superfluous, but having waded through some thousand pages and more of the letters in the Arkham editions, I must say that de Camp's use of them is fair, selective and intelligent, and his placing of them in context with material from other sources adds greatly to their value.

The book does contain a number of errors and controversial points. Among the former are such minor points as the name of the old pulp writer A. G. *Birch* being rendered as *Bird*, but de Camp is a man receptive to comment and discovered errors will be corrected in later editions of the book. Among the controversies is that of the cause of Lovecraft's death—and, oddly enough, of the cause of death of Harry Houdini, who appears in the book because Lovecraft ghosted for him.

de Camp has also been criticised both for concentrating too much on Lovecraft's fiction—and for concentrating too little on it! One need only suggest that the de Camp book is a biography of HPL, not a literary study. Obviously, as Lovecraft's claim on our attention is his writing, references to that writing are relevant in the biography, but should not be its main focus. In this regard, I think de Camp has trodden a delicately balanced line and done it well.

On one point I do disagree with him, and this is a matter which de Camp raised many years ago in regard to Robert E. Howard, and raises again in concluding his look at Lovecraft. de Camp is himself an eminently sane man, and he understands that both Howard and Lovecraft were the possessors of warped personalities. (With regard to HPL, de Camp agreeingly quotes Avram Davidson's acerbic assessment that "Lovecraft was as nutty as a five-dollar fruit-cake.")

Indeed, he was!

But de Camp next suggests that had Lovecraft *not* been such a tortured, demented soul, he would probably not have written the good stuff that he wrote. (de Camp said the same thing years ago about Howard, and in the conclusion of *Lovecraft* reiterates the judgment, throwing in a similar appraisal of Clark Ashton Smith for good measure.)

Well, I just don't believe that you have to be an agonized, crazed, and preferably poverty-stricken psychic freak to produce valid artistic works. No, I just don't buy that, and as evidence that a sane and comfortably well off man can still write good books, I would call to the witness stand L. Sprague de Camp. ●

MOTHER WAS A LOVELY BEAST Edited by Philip José Farmer. 246pp. $6.95. 1974. Chilton.

THE ADVENTURE OF THE PEERLESS PEER by Philip José Farmer. 111pp. $5.50. 1974. The Aspen Press (P.O. Box 4119, Boulder CO 80302)

In addition to his own contributions to literature—original, controversial, distinctive, uneven but frequently exemplary—Phil Farmer has shown great interest in the mythic images created by modern writers of extravagant fiction, and has repeatedly borrowed and manipulated the creations of others to amusing and often illuminating effect. His supreme favorite, to whom he returns again and again, is of course Tarzan of the Apes. He has done a good deal, as well, with Doc Savage, and has lately sought to investigate other such larger-than-life figures.

Mother Was a Lovely Beast investigates the Tarzan theme—generically, the feral man theme—in essay and fiction; Farmer here collects works of seven writers other than himself, and shows *their* usages of feralism, both in the classic mode (he has one of Burroughs' own Tarzan stories in the book) and in the works of later writers who themselves have undertaken to advance the use of the archetype.

In 1972 Farmer published *Tarzan Alive,* a volume in which he offered a "definitive biography" of the Ape Man. *Mother Was a Lovely Beast* contains further amplification on the subject, Farmer's (or Lord Greystoke's) contribution being a lengthy memoir, largely concerned with the language of apes. There are interesting treatments of the Tarzanic archetype by Gene Wolfe and Mack Reynolds, and classic tales of feralism by William L. Chester, Olaf Baker and George Bruce. Bruce's yarn, "Scream of the Condor," is the most interesting, and by far the most audacious. Traditional feral themes include ape-people, wolf-people, bear-people, and more recently even dolphin-people. But the foster-parent in each case is at least mammalian.

Bruce has a child raised by condors! He turns up in France ready to become an aviator in World War I, and of course he can handle a plane the way no other pilot can—to say the least!

The Adventure of the Peerless Peer is Farmer at his most playful, irreverent best. The book purports to be nothing less than a hitherto unreleased case of Sherlock Holmes, written by Dr. Watson and merely edited by Farmer. The case in hand is a direct sequel to "His Last Bow," the incident in which, even the most casual Sherlockian will recall, Holmes emerged from retirement to smash a spy ring headed by a treacherous Von Bork, on the eve of the outbreak of World War I.

In *The Peerless Peer* Von Bork is back, and Holmes and Watson go off on an adventure that carries them by aircraft all the way from England to the African jungle; along the way they encounter an unending *roman a clef* of characters including the Shadow, the Spider, G-8, and finally, of course, Tarzan of the Apes.

The book is part affectionate spoof, part sincere tribute, part jape. I found it highly entertaining reading. It is also, I should mention, a very nice piece of book-crafting by a small publisher, with attractive typography, fine-grade paper, and an excellent binding. I am appalled at the amateurish jacket art, however, and suggest that you simply turn the jacket inside-out and present it as a plain paper wrapper to avoid arousing the scorn of passers-by and offense to your own eye.

Do get the book. Aspen Press is at P.O. Box 4119, Boulder, Colorado 80302. ●

THE FEMALE MAN by Joanna Russ. 214pp. $1.25. SBN 553-08765-125. 1975. Bantam Books.

Joanna Russ is one of our leading critics—certainly by far the best academic critic in the science fiction field—but her own fiction has always seemed to me somehow to miss the mark. There is technique, there is style, pointed intellect and high passion—and yet, somehow, it doesn't all come together and *work*.

The Female Man is a case in point. It is certainly the most powerful of her novels and yet, where *Picnic on Paradise* could be rated a qualified success and *And Chaos Died* a baffling experiment, *The Female Man* is, in a single word, a failure.

The notion was to write a militant feminist novel.

The technique was that of the traditional SF-based satire, the observer in the foreign land. Gulliver among the lilliputians, Nebogipfel among the eloi, Tarzan in Baltimore. Russ's observer is a woman from the future, Janet Evason, returned to the present on a sort of diplomatic mission. Evason's future (Russ rings in the multiple-time-lines notion) is one in which all men have been wiped out by some sort of catastrophic plague. Women have avoided extinction by developing a technique for breeding without males. It isn't parthenogenesis, but rather a way of sharing halved ova to produce zygotes.

This future world is of course non-sexist, surely an appealing way to eliminate sexism, just as color-prejudice was eliminated in one of the effective dreams of Le Guin's *The Lathe of Heaven* by making everybody a uniform dull gray. This doesn't exactly *solve* the problem so much as it completely wipes it away, and just as many blacks have rejected the idea of total assimilation as an answer to racism, it seems at least reasonable that as many women as men would reject this ultimate unisex as an answer to sexism.

But I don't think that Russ is seriously proposing an all-female society as a desirable goal. It must be a satirical device, and something similar has been used to good effect as recently as *The Dispossessed.* What then does Russ do with her materials?

I think she makes a technical mistake in jumbling in a parallel-track sequence set in an alternate present where World War II was averted and the planet is still in the grip of what looks like a permanent Great Depression. This too is an interesting world, and I think would have made a background for a successful novel, but the book falls into a jumbled disorder as Russ tries to manipulate her future/present satire, her alternate-present theme, and (later) still another universe in which both men and women exist but are engaged in a state of perpetual warfare.

The problems, the agonies, the occasional humor, the entire thrust of the book is feminist, and I don't think it's at all a bad idea that this book exists. It is unfortunate that it doesn't succeed. The pain, the despair, the frustration, the rage that the author clearly feels, provide an almost overwhelming force and urgency, but unfortunately Russ herself is overwhelmed by her own passion and the book dissolves in a barrage of polemics, cryings out against the injustices done to women by men.

You see, what I find painful here is that I am convinced that Russ's outcry is justified, that the case she makes is at base a sound one. This makes it all the more difficult for me to say that the book is very bad—no near miss, but a complete mess. The author must have realized this herself as she neared the end. She includes a section of anticipated reactions to the book ("... some truth buried in a largely hysterical ... another tract for the trash-can ... formless ...") which amounts to an ingenuous attempt to disarm her critics by telling them in advance, scornfully, *I know what you're going to say ....*

Well, she does, and unfortunately she's right, and unfortunately *they're* right.

A book which deals with a serious and important topic on a serious and intelligent level, yes; which starts promisingly, yes; but which shimmies, and crumbles, and ultimately dissolves utterly into, yes, "a largely hysterical ..."

Chalk it up to noble failure rather than mean success, but the book is still a failure. ●

BORN WITH THE DEAD by Robert Silverberg. 267pp. $5.95. ISBN 0-394-48845-8. 1974. Random House.

If you're as old as I am you remember the day when science fiction's apologists would respond to the charge that most SF was just plain bad writing with the statement that science fiction was the literature of *ideas,* not just style. What those apologists were saying—they had their fingers on a valid analysis but they couldn't find the handle—was that our writers lacked the technique it would take to properly express their vision. Thus Doc Smith amidst scores or hundreds of others.

What a pleasure to open any new book of Silverberg's: a man who spent decades paying his dues, writing hundreds of stories and scores of novels. By now we know that any time Silverberg produces a new story it will be crafted with high skill. The problem, then, is Silverberg's subject matter, which in recent years has been increasingly introspective.

The present volume—subtitled "three novellas about the spirit of man"—is an excellent example.

The title story (from *F&SF*) is a strange story, eerie in its feeling. It posits a near-future not much different from the present save for the development of "rekindling," a method of restoring life to the newly deceased. The process is never explained; Silverberg is not concerned with technology here. He is interested in the sociology of such a development, and even more with its psychology, and he approaches the latter in characteristically oblique manner: through the viewpoint of the surviving husband of a deceased and rekindled woman, rather than through the viewpoint of the rekindled person.

The husband simply cannot understand what it is like to have known death and rekindling, to live in the Cold Towns of the deads. He cannot

grasp the attitudes of the rekindled, and follows his wife from continent to continent as she travels in the society of her kind.

The story is utterly gripping, thoroughly successful. It is a temptation to describe it further in order to make further comments, but I will not deprive you of the experience of reading it with a fresh eye.

The two other novellas deal with related themes. "Going" (originally in *Four Futures*, Hawthorn) is a powerful story about dying; in the process, it is also a story about living—about joy, pain, art, success, love. The story deals with human values, with mostly internalized human values; it's the kind of thing Henry Kuttner was getting into just before his death, and is a storv Kuttner might have written had he had another five years in which to work.

"Thomas the Proclaimer" (originally in *The Day the Sun Stood Still*, Nelson) is the least successful of the three stories. It deals with a sort of latter-day Elmer Gantry, a preacher who rises on the accomplishment of an authentic miracle and falls on the universal folly of the human beast. The story is somewhat diffuse, at times mechanical. The technique is still head and shoulders superior to 90% of the SF being published, but there is a lack of involvement in the story which forces it down to the grade of minor Silverberg.

"Going" bears unchallengeable marks of autobiography, and its pages illuminate Silverberg's recent statements to the effect that he will write no more science fiction (perhaps no more anything) for the forseeable future. There will be at least two more novels from him, however: *The Stochastic Man* recently serialized in *F&SF* and to be issued later this year, and still another novel which Silverberg says he is just finishing as I write this review.

If Silverberg doesn't change his mind—this will be his second or third retirement from the field and his statement lacks both the absoluteness and finality of General Sherman's—we will be losing one of the few authentic masters this field has produced. I'm not talking about people like Asimov, Heinlein, Bradbury, Sturgeon, who produced their major works twenty or thirty years ago and who thereafter hover like the proverbial *eminence gris.*

We're dealing here with a man who has grown and changed with the times, who can stake a legitimate claim to the title of the greatest living science fiction writer. And his hand has not lost its skill; on the contrary, his most recent works have been his best. The man does not coast.

Why quit?

Well, Silverberg can make his own statement, but I know that he visits some of the same newsstands and bookstores that I do, and follows some of the same sales figures that I do, and he sees that the best selling science fiction in the past couple of years is the Perry Rhodan series, the various Star Trek books, John Norman's Gor cycle, Alan Dean Foster's *Icerigger* and so on.

Some of this material is innocuous adventure stuff, some is useful for working out warped libidoes, and some of it is sheer trash—but where does it leave anybody who is interested in writing seriously within the genre? Exchanging manuscripts with a closed circle of like-minded dilettantes?

There *is* a way out of this—if you can make it work!—and that is to go your own way, write your own stuff, and if it happens to involve the use of *genre* themes or devices, let that be as it may, but above all, avoid the category *label.* Vonnegut has done that with total success; earlier writers from Swift to Wells to Huxley to Orwell did the same; currently Ursula K. Le Guin seems to be doing it, largely thanks to having won the National Book Award—Le Guin didn't have to deny that she wrote science fiction or fantasy, and she has not denied that, but the Right People are beginning to read her stuff: Harlan Ellison is struggling mightily to do it, and may yet bring it off although he hasn't yet except to a limited extent.

But Silverberg, for better or worse, has become so thoroughly identified with science fiction that even when he wrote novels that were not SF and that were published without the SF label—*Dying Inside*, *The Book of Skulls*—he speaks sadly of strolling into book stores and finding those titles shelved with the sci-fi anyway.

Maybe he ought to publish a "first novel" under some pseudonym, say C.M. Knox for example, and see if anything happens. Maybe he ought to lay out for a year or two and see if he feels any different. Maybe he should just sit back and rest on his laurels after these next two books appear.

Whatever.

Meanwhile, let us take joy in the very fine books he has given us, *Born with the Dead* standing high among them. ●

NUTZENBOLTS & MORE TROUBLES WITH MACHINES by Ron Goulart. 172pp. $6.95. 1975. Macmillan.

These eleven stories show Goulart's strength and his weakness to a fine clarity, and I guess he has to be one of those authors who is going to be delicious in small doses forever after. He has a clear, funny, satirical vision of the future; the stories in this volume are all science fiction of the close-in, here-comes-tomorrow sort that filled so many issues of *Galaxy* back in that magazine's days under Gold and Pohl.

In fact, while the stories in *Nutzenbolts* come from a variety of sources including several science fiction magazines, none of them are from *Galaxy*—there's something ironic there that I like a lot.

Goulart sees the future with a wry look—man is a weak, foolish creature whose own machines are going to take over and dominate him, and the whole thing has a kind of sitcom/soap-opera funny poignance to it that makes us feel involved with his characters, sorry for them, and yet laugh at them all at once.

In the lead story, for instance, "Gigolo," a robot manufacturing firm produces a line of home companions for women whose husbands have to travel much of the time. No problems of loneliness and frustration, nor less of complicated liaisons with neighbors, milkmen or the like: you buy your wife a robot to keep her company while you're gone.

Goulart turns this odd notion with its peculiar near-plausibility, into a hilarious bedroom farce that leaves the reader laughing—but a little worried. Computerized swingers parties, restoration of debtor's prisons in a super-credit-card society, corpse recycling, unintentional cyborging and near immortality through massive use of prostheses. . . these and other almost-here, funny-horrifying events are wrung for every possible acid laugh.

The problem is that there is a sameness of atmosphere and technique in each story. It's a problem that Goulart shares with David R. Bunch, that darling of the QualLit set—a point once made, then reiterated over and over and over until the reader begins to see the author's by-line as an automatic turnaway sign.

Which is not to say that Goulart suffers from this disease of sameness to anything like the degree that Bunch does. Goulart is the better writer of the two: amusing where Bunch is merely depressing; lighter, funny, witty.

Goulart's world is a pleasant one to visit, or if not exactly pleasant, at least energetic enough to be fun, while Bunch's Moderan is a place which I find myself avoiding as much as possible these latter years. But the problem is essentially similar.

I really hope that Goulart will get into some new stuff soon, before he becomes hopelessly typed.

In the meanwhile, however, *Nutzenbolts* is a fine showcase of archetypal Goulart SF—thoroughly readable, thoroughly enjoyable, and not entirely forgettable. You could spend a couple of hours in a much worse book than in this one. ●

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GUERNICA NIGHT by Barry N. Malzberg. 140pp. $6.95. 1975. Bobbs-Merrill.

OUT FROM GANYMEDE by Barry N. Malzberg. 188pp. $1.25. 1974. Warner Paperback Library.

ORACLE OF THE THOUSAND HANDS by Barry N. Malzberg. 216pp. $3.95. 1968. The Olympia Press.

SCREEN by Barry N. Malzberg. 180pp. $3.95. 1968. The Olympia Press.

Not the most important thing about Malzberg but certainly one of the most striking, is his amazing prolificity. There's a little introduction in *Out from Ganymede,* in which he estimates that he's written fifty or sixty novels as of May 1973. The way he turns them out—Malzberg writes novels the way the rest of us write short stories, and short stories the way the rest of us jot notes to our children's teachers explaining that they missed school yesterday because of the sniffles—the total by now is probably closer to 100.

On one occasion Malzberg is said to have received a request from an editor for a novel to be "written to order"; the request was made on a Friday and Malzberg hand-delivered the book to the editor the following Monday. Apocryphal, you will doubtless snort, but I had this story from the editor involved—and he said that the book was excellent!

Working at this breakneck speed means that the output will be of uneven quality, often sloppy, sometimes repetitious and occasionally (or more than occasionally) inadequately developed. On the other hand, it is marked by great drive and energy and by a dynamic intensity that would almost certainly be attenuated, if not wholly wiped away, by a more deliberate, considered approach to work.

In some of Malzberg's novels the end product is overwhelmingly successful—*Destruction of the Temple, Overlay, Herovit's World,* and the early "fan" novels dealing with science fiction collectors and conventions are brilliant exercises. When Malzberg fails—as in *In the Enclosure, On a Planet Alien, Tactics of Conquest*—it is almost always because he has taken an idea too small to carry the length and weight of a novel and carried it to that length.

Tactics of Conquest, for instance, deals with a man drafted into a cosmic chess match for the fate of the universe. It was clearly written in a blaze of speed and there simply wasn't enough there to make a book. There was enough material for a good short story—or to provide the starter for a novel. Malzberg could have sat down and thought about his project, added plot elements, enlarged his *framework*—and made it a good novel. But too large a structure built of inadequate materials inevitably failed.

An aspect of Malzberg's work which has not received sufficient attention is his humor. It is of the blackest sort, a near-hysterical shriek of cosmic despair, but the fact is that Malzberg is one of the funniest writers around. The opening paragraph of *Guernica Night* is one of the finest bits of writing that Malzberg has ever done, and is one of the funniest things I have ever joyed to read. Let me share it with you:

"Here we are in Disney Land/Disney World. Disney Land or Disney World: hard to make the changes on these—one in California, the other in Florida—but the continent has become spliced, as we know, and Disney, God rest him at the age of sixty-five and through eternity, believed in the controlled and timeless environment, stripped of any conception of space. Disney was right. This is the concept that must be held at all costs, unless, of course, you hold that he is wrong, which is also a possibility. Right. Wrong. California. Florida. Here we are: this is the point."

Have you ever experienced the horror of Disney Land/Disney World? Clearly Malzberg understands the meaning of being swallowed up into the media-replicated mind of a single, voracious personality. This novel, *Guernica Night,* is oddly structured: the jacket design is of a crude, wooden-jointed puppet and that is a strikingly apt image for the book. The front- and end-matter of the book deal with the media phenomenon, the nature of literature and media; the central bulk of the book is an engrossing study of a fairly near future in which suicide, having become socially acceptable, has grown to such proportions as to represent a menace to the continuity of society.

Malzberg treats the subject from two sides: half the book is seen through the eyes of a potential suicide; the other half, through the eyes of a bureaucrat attempting to prevent the death.

Why is there so much self-destruction in this world? And what is there to live for?

It's a strange little book, even by Malzberg's standards, disquieting rather than satisfying to read.

An accompanying essay on Malzberg by Jeff Clark is well done.

Out from Ganymede is a collection of Malzberg's short stories, most of them from the science fiction magazines or original anthologies but a few from such unlikely sources as *Mike Shayne Mystery Magazine* or *Escapade*; and most of them quite recent, but a few dating back as far as 1967.

Clark asserts in his essay accompanying *Guernica Night* that Malzberg writes about states of mind (rather than events, characters in broader context, etc.) and while this is an oversimplification I think that it has a good deal of validity to it. Certainly the story "Linkage" in *Out from Ganymede* is one of the most skillfully crafted short stories in recent years, a brilliant examination of a state of mind—and, incidentally, one of the few optimistic stories in Malzberg's canon.

And "Some Notes Toward a Usable Past" is one of Malzberg's periodic examinations of science fiction, the SF mentality; it can stand with *Herovit's World, Gather in the Hall of the Planets,* and *Dwellers of the Deep* in that peculiar alcove reserved for fiction-about-science-fiction. It will *not* bring great comfort to the dyed-in-the-wool aficionado.

Oracle of the Thousand Hands and *Screen* were Malzberg's first two novels; I won't suggest that you run right out and buy them because I think they're both long-since out of print, and it is only through the generosity of Bill Pronzini that I was able to borrow copies. They're not nearly as good as Malzberg's later work, they don't have anywhere near the polish or force that he has today, but they are of interest in that they treat of the themes still found in most of his books, and show many of the same interests and attitudes, and in this connection can be regarded as prototypes of Malzberg's later works.

Although they were published simultaneously (in 1968) *Oracle* seems to be the earlier written of the two. It is a hugely comic biography or autobiography (it's a little bit hard to tell which) of a contemporary Casanova; early on there is a long, long section on masturbation that would make Philip Roth livid with envy, and later we realize that Malzberg's anti-hero never did outgrow the onanistic attitude, for all his success with women. His idea: coitus is nothing but simultaneous masturbation.

And throughout, Malzberg's hero (D'Arcy) *really* prefers pictures of women, to women. Similarly Martin Miller, the anti-hero of *Screen,* prefers his fantasies of being Marcello Mastroianni bedding Sophia Loren, Richard Burton bedding Elizabeth Taylor, Roger Vadim bedding Brigitte Bardot, even Rock Hudson bedding Doris Day—to any real relationship with his flesh-and-blood girl friend Barbara.

Miller is a welfare department case worker. He is bored by his job and oppressed by his supervisor—themes that appear in several later Malzberg works. And of course the overwhelming sense of reality being taken over by media images is pervasive—remember that Disney quote in *Guernica Night.*

Malzberg is quirky, sad, sloppy,

hilarious, despairing, more than three-quarters crazy, brilliant, fascinating, adorable. What a blessing it is to have him! ●

EXPLORING CORDWAINER SMITH Edited by Andrew Porter. 36pp. $2.50. 1975. ALGOL Press (P.O. Box 4175, New York NY 10017)

Still more small press publishing, this time issued by the present magazine. The typography and general production quality of this little book are most attractive, making up (at least in part) for the relatively high price associated with short-run publications.

Cordwainer Smith—Paul Linebarger—was one of science fiction's mystery men for some time; his real identity was, I believe, revealed a good while before his death, and with the appearance of definitive editions of his works, interest in this unusual man is on the wax.

This is the man whose book *The Political Doctrines of Sun Yat Sen* was published in 1937—having been based not on dusty academic researches but upon Linebarger's long and close association with Sun. He is also the man whose one major science fiction novel was chopped and battered, appeared in two fragmentary versions in the 1960s, and has been issued in its full and definitive form only this year as *Norstrilia* (Ballantine Books).

Although *Exploring Cordwainer Smith* is a slim volume it contains an amazingly rich lode of vital material—a graceful reminiscence by Linebarger's old friend Arthur Burns (not the economist), a literary appreciation by John Foyster, a very different one by Sandra Miesel, a concordance-chronology of Smith's works by Alice K. Turner and a good bibliography by J.J. Pierce.

Cordwainer Smith's production of science fiction was too limited and his appeal too special for him to be regarded as an author of first-line importance or influence. (This is not to say that he was not one of first-line quality.) I think that he was good enough, however, and quirkily distinctive enough to gain a place as a "major minor author."

Exploring Cordwainer Smith is a good introduction to him, and will be a valuable adjunct to his own works. ●

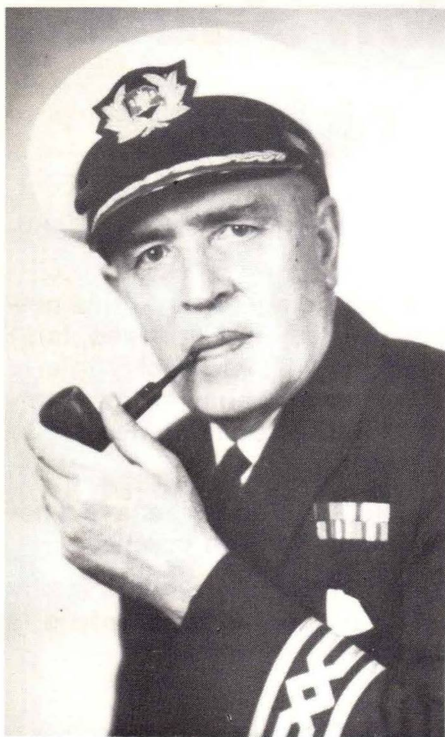
FORERUNNER FORAY by Andre Norton. 286pp. $1.50. SBN 441-24620-150. 1975. Ace Books. (Original edition: Viking, 1973)

Andre Norton is of course one of our most prolific and most popular authors. She's been writing for decades, has over forty books to her credit with (according to Ace's blurb) millions of copies in print. And her popularity is not just that of the trashmonger among the trash-lovers. She is well reviewed in the right journals, accepted by librarians, regarded as a "good author" as well as a popular one. No Perry Rhodan stuff.

Folks, I just don't understand this. I read several of her books some years ago, and failed to detect the charm, and friends told me that I had read the wrong Nortons—I ought to try this or that other title, then I would understand the wonder and the fascination of Norton.

Folks, have I picked the wrong book again?

Forerunner Foray has a fascinating idea to it, and is a very interesting book structurally. It is set—initially—in a typically space-operatic future universe where some sort of large-scale interstellar spying, commercial rivalry, and at least cold warring are going on. There's a good deal of psi-ing going on as well, and our heroine, Ziantha, is an esper. Among her varied wild talents is



A. Bertram Chandler

Once Australia had to import all its SF; but look what we've recently published (prices in US$, post paid):

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Coming in time for Aussiecon...
BEYOND TOMORROW: An Anthology Of Modern SF, edited by Lee Harding. Price to be announced.

SPACE AGE BOOKS

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psychometry—the ability to read the past surroundings of an object from the object itself.

Ziantha is sent to steal some sensitive items, stumbles upon an ancient gem and falls into a sort of super-psychometric trance in which she lives the life of an ancient owner of the gem. It takes Norton about 100 pages to get through this framing sequence, following which a sort of sword-and-sorcery adventure occupies the rest of the book (or nearly so).

I might quarrel with the excessive length of the framing device or lead-in to the main adventure, but that isn't my major concern. My major concern is that the book is so badly written. I *don't* mean that it is florid or overwritten or excessively "lit'ry" as some such books, particularly the works of Edgar Rice Burroughs, are accused of being.

It's badly written in that it's *flat.* The writing is plain dull and uninteresting. It early becomes an effort to keep reading. And the writing is murky—it's hard to figure out what the hell is going on most of the time, and I don't think that this is artifice on Norton's part (although it might be, I will concede). I think it is simply an inability to visualize a scene, develop a concept of a situation, and express this clearly to the reader.

Further, the characters suffer from a classic pulp weakness that has been pointed out by James Blish (not necessarily in regard to this author). They appear onstage and speak their lines and perform the actions that they are assigned by the script, but I have no sense of their living at all. If not two-dimensional they are at least hollow.

I don't know anything about Ziantha's girlhood, what her parents and home were like, whether she had brothers and sisters, what kind of person she is, what her interests and desires are, what are her favorite flavor of ice cream, position for fucking, color dress, spectator or participant sport, etc., etc., etc. . . all of the things that make up a complete personality.

She's a cipher—and she's the *best*-developed character in the book.

I think this is a weak book, not badly conceived but feebly executed, utterly lacking in vivid character or setting or action. And with the exception of one or two scenes in the first of the Witch World books, this reaction is typical of my response to Andre Norton's books.

But I will certainly concede the possibility that I am missing something here; therefore I am being neither sarcastic nor rhetorical, but sincerely ask, Will somebody out there who understands that great charm and popularity of Andre Norton's books please explain this to me? ●■

EN HOMMAGE AUX ARAIGNEES by Esther Rochon. 127pp. $2.50. ISBN 0-7752-0052-2. 1974. Les Editions De L'Actuelle, 955 Amherst Street, Montreal, PQ, Canada H2L 3K4. In French.

This first novel by Montreal resident Esther Rochon is set in the fantasy world of the Vrenalik Archipelago, in the crumbling, once

Your daily bread... without farmers like Ron Sauder, it wouldn't be on your table.

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Without a healthy agriculture, a lot of us might have less of the means with which to buy it and other good things of life. Farmers like Saskatchewan's Ron Sauder are responsible for generating about 40 per cent of Canada's gross economic activity. They're the biggest customers the railways have, and just about the biggest for the banks. They spend billions every year on goods and services.

Ron Sauder is one of 73,000 active members of Saskatchewan Wheat Pool, a co-operative farm organization that's a model of what farmers can do for themselves. Its goal is to bring stability to agriculture.

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Saskatchewan Wheat Pool

capital city of Frulken. The narrator is Anar Vranengal, a young girl emerging into adulthood, apprentice to the sorcerer Ivendra Galana Galek.

Frulken is a remnant of the once-mighty Asven civilization, now four centuries past its height, decaying under the apathy of its inhabitants, who await final destruction with no attempt to stave off its coming.

Into this world of dull resignation comes Jouskilliant Green, a southerner fleeing the responsibilities of life. At first his ambition is to improve the lot of Frulken; he cannot understand their conviction that their fate is dictated by an ancient curse, that no effort of their own can change anything. Eventually Green succumbs to apathy himself and descends in solitary exile into the network of caves beneath the city. There he will remain for 17 years, until brought back to the surface by the efforts of young Anar.

Frulken's inhabitants have given in to the belief that all is rigid and ordered, that one cannot escape one's preordained fate. Counter to this is the sorcerer Ivendra, believer in Chaos. Where the apathetic have let belief conquer them, Ivendra seeks to put his beliefs to work: "Le monde ou l'on vit est incertain, ambigu; il faut continuellement se servir de cette ambiguite." ("The world you live in is uncertain, ambiguous—it is necessary to make constant use of that ambiguity.") Anar is the antithesis of the Frulkenese, yet in a way she parallels Green. She too comes from outside the city; she too wishes things to change. However, where Green seeks escape by involving himself in the lives of others—thus fleeing his own problems—Anar has the interest born of youth, the curiosity of adolescence.

There is conflict throughout the book; it is understated, muted, yet an active ingredient. Order versus chaos, resignation versus defiance. Anar herself, named for a town, is counter to the city; she is young and alive, the city old and dying. There is conflict within Anar when Green emerges from his exile. As a myth-figure he is more admirable than the reality—a man who ignores her, who lets perish the great spider that accompanied him from the depths. Yet, when Green finally leaves Frulken, it is to Anar that he bequeaths a map of the maze below the city; it is Anar with whom he shares the secrets he has uncovered. He is her first love, her first pain, her opening into the realities of adulthood.

This novel is best described as a philosophical fantasy. It is le Guinesque without being an imitation of Le Guin; it is extremely well written and deeply thought out. The imagery is extraordinary: the seascape static and lifeless, the stone city a sea of crumbling rock.

Perhaps Esther Rochon's *En Hommage Aux Araignees* would lose some of its poetry in translation. It would not lose any of its force. ●

—Asenath Hammond

SURVIVAL SHIP And Other Stories, by Judith Merril. 229pp. $1.95. ISBN 0-919588-07-7. 1973. Kakabeca Publishing Co., P.O. Box 247, Toronto, Ontario, Canada M4P 2G5.

This handsome volume, with cover art and design by Toronto artist Derek Carter, consists of 13 stories which, despite headings which call them "Chapter One," etc., are completely separate. Each story is introduced independently by Ms. Merril, who places them within the context of date of publication and of her attitudes toward life in general and science fiction in particular. This becomes especially interesting when one realizes that Ms. Merril is an immigrant to Canada who did so of her own choice, rather than having the impetus of the draft deciding the situation for her.

As this is the only currently available collection of stories by Ms. Merril, it is especially worth getting. Judith Merril has had a major influence on SF of the '60's both as writer and an anthologist/creator of the "New Wave."

This book, as well as the one reviewed directly above, is available across Canada as well as through many SF bookstores. They may also be ordered directly from the publishers. *Survival Ship* has had a small printing, as compared with SF paperbacks in the United States, so if your local supplier is out, I'd recommend you write the publisher. Reports from Montreal indicate that Esther Rochon's book may also soon be in short supply, despite a very respectable first printing.

Next issue I'll attempt a review of *North by 2000: A Collection Of Canadian SF,* to be published by Peter Martin Associates, Toronto. ●■

—Andrew Porter

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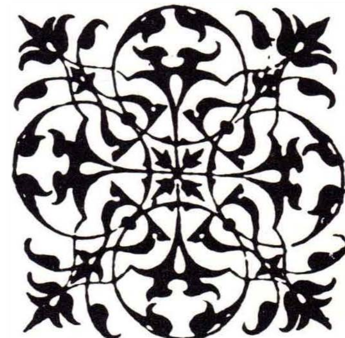

LITERATURE OF CANADA: Poetry And Prose In Reprint

THE HOMESTEADERS by Robert Stead Introduction by Susan Wood

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

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

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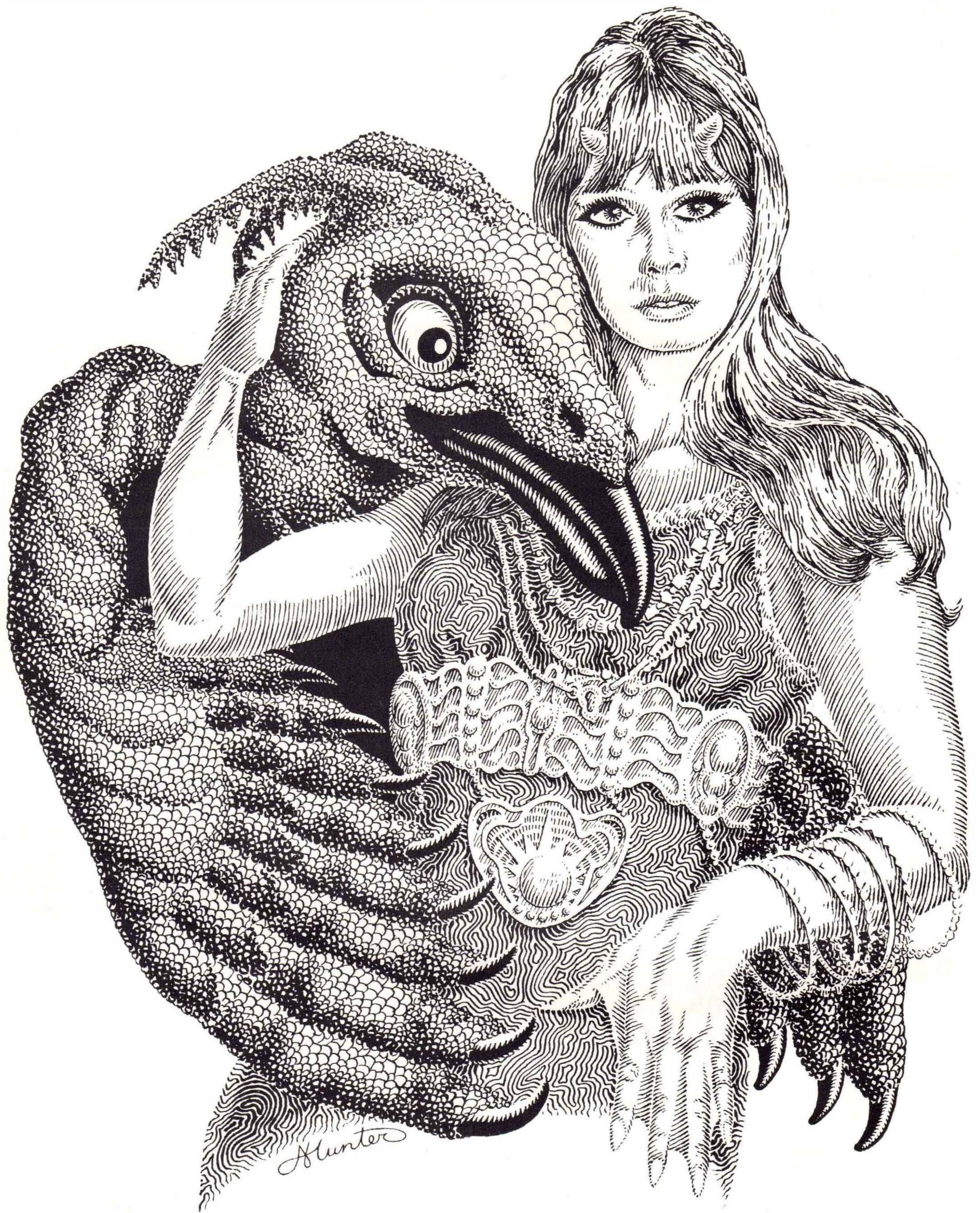
Hunter

ALGOL Reader Survey

THE PURPOSE OF THIS SURVEY is, as noted in the editorial, to find out exactly who you are, your interests and disinterests, what parts of ALGOL you like the most (and why), and, from an advertisers' viewpoint, how much money you invest in SF over the year. If we're to expand, both editorially and in advertising, this information is essential. Please take the few minutes needed to fill out and return this form. All information received will remain strictly confidential.

Name______________________________ Age_____ Sex_____

Do you have brothers_____ sisters_____? How many of each__________

Principal occupation______________________________

Are you Married[ ]   Single[ ]   Widowed[ ]   Divorced[ ]

Own a house[ ]   Own a condominium[ ]   Live with parents/relatives[ ]
Own a cooperative[ ]   Rent an apartment[ ]   Share a house/apartment[ ]

If a college student, please list major____________________

If non-student, list highest level of education____________________

Approximate annual income:
$0-$6,000[ ]; $6,000-$10,000[ ]; $10,000-$18,000[ ]; over $18,000[ ]

1. How did you find out about ALGOL?
   Mention in professional magazine[ ]; mention in fanzine[ ]; Sample copy [ ]; At a convention[ ]; Through friends[ ]; Through club[ ]; Through bookstore[ ]; Through advertisement[ ]; Other (list)__________

2. Do you read ALGOL in its entirety? Yes[ ]   No[ ]

   If not, which parts don't you read?____________________

   ____

3. Which parts of ALGOL do you like the least?____________________

   ____

4. Which parts of ALGOL do you like the most?____________________

   ____

5. Have you ever taken a course in science fiction? Yes[ ]   No[ ]

6. Approximately how much money do you spend on new SF per year?________

7. Approximately how much money do you spend on used SF per year?________

8. How many other people read your copy of ALGOL? 0[ ]; 1[ ]; 2[ ]; 3[ ]; 4[ ]; more than 4[ ]

9. Which of the non-reprint SF magazines do you read regularly?
Amazing[ ]; Analog[ ]; Fantastic[ ]; F&SF[ ]; Galaxy/If[ ]; Vertex[ ]

10. How many general circulation fanzines (other than ALGOL) do you read?
1-3[ ]; 3-5[ ]; 5-10[ ]; 10-20[ ]; more than 20[ ]

11. How many local science fiction conventions have you attended?________

12. How many world science fiction conventions have you attended?________

13. Do you nominate[ ] and vote[ ] for the Hugo Awards?

14. Are you a member of an SF club? Yes[ ] No[ ] If yes, which ones?_____

____

15. How long have you been reading SF regularly?____________________

16. Which of the following SF-associated subjects are you interested in?

Star Trek [ ]; Comics [ ]; SF/Horror Films [ ];
Weird fiction [ ]; Heyer Fandom [ ]; Sword & Sorcery [ ];
Pulp Heroes [ ]; Old radio shows [ ]; ERBurroughs fandom [ ].

17. Should ALGOL publish...

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Fanzine reviews & news about conventions	[ ]	[ ]
A coulumn about the art in science fiction	[ ]	[ ]
Short fiction of professional calibre	[ ]	[ ]
More book reviews	[ ]	[ ]
More artwork	[ ]	[ ]

18. If there's anything not covered here, this is the place to put it:

____

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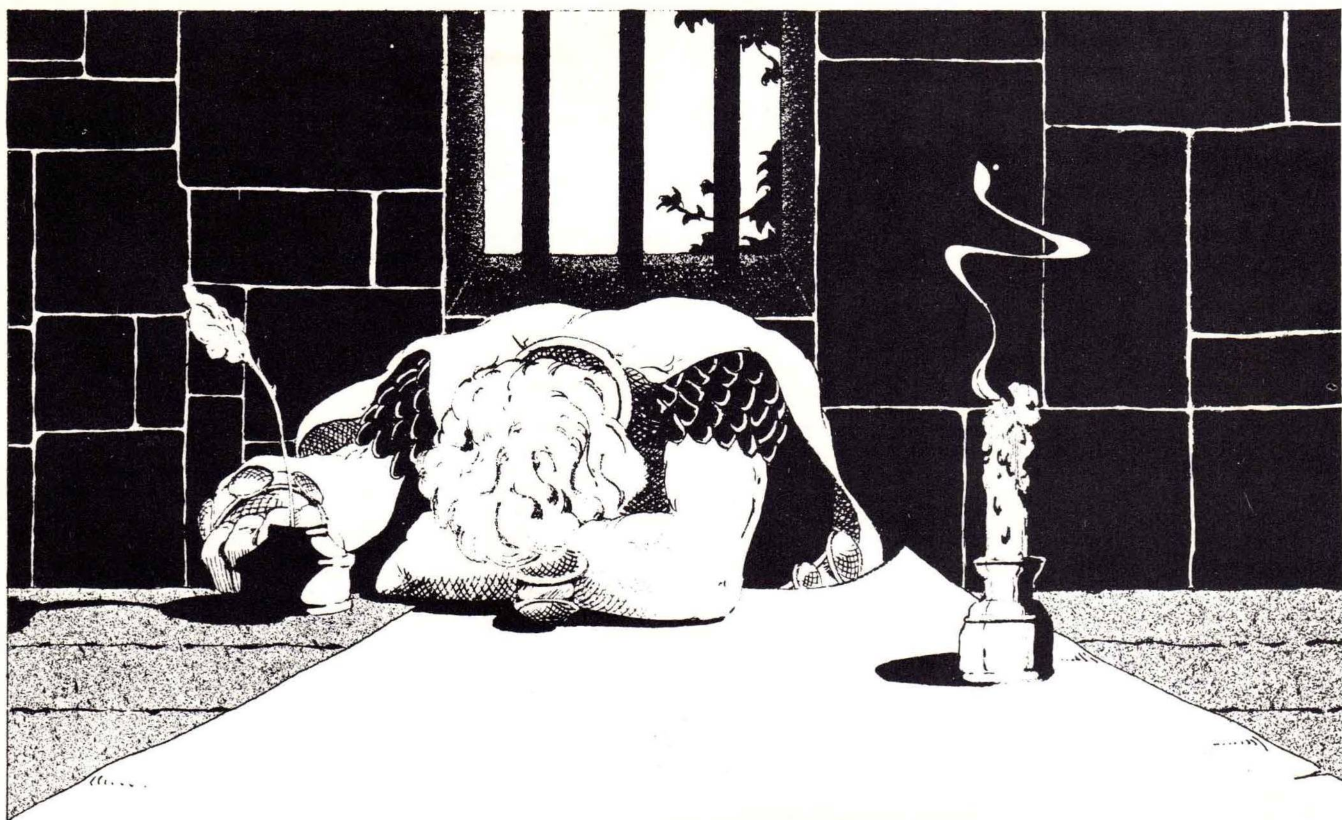

RANDOM FACTORS: LETTERS

Arthur C. Clarke
25, Barnes Place
Colombo 7, Sri Lanka

A few comments on some of the facts (or factoids!) in the various articles. Page 16, it should be John (*Midnight Cowboy*) Schlesinger, not Arthur. And I didn't say *all* the astronauts had been customers here! It wasn't a parachute jump at Acapulco—it was something much more modest—a towed parachute ride. Still, that's quite exciting, especially when you crash two or 3 times as I did, owing to the jeep engine stalling!

I thought Richard Lupoff's review of *Rama* was very fair and I have no criticism—only a couple of comments: In the first draft of *Rama* I *did* use miles and feet, and went to much trouble to convert into metric. After all, *every* country will be metric by the end of this decade, except for some backward colonials. After 1980, any stories that use miles and feet and inches will read like some old Jules Verne translation, full of versts and leagues. I suggest any writer who expects to be read after 1980 should bear this point in mind.

I also have some bad news for Dick; I'd like to go on record that I never dreamed of a sequel to *Rama*, and have *no* intention of writing one. The last sentence of the novel, though it now seems so inevitable, was an afterthought added to the final draft. Sorry about that, but I have no intention of re-visiting old territory.

Ken Ozanne
'The Cottonwoods'
42 Meek's Crescent
Faulconbridge, NSW 2776
Australia

Fred Fowler struck a chord with his criticism of viewing SF as 'art.' I've tried to make a similar point in various places. It's epitomized for me by my reaction to Golding's *Pincher Martin*. I thought the book was a finished masterwork of art and I was sorry I had read it.

On Rottensteiner vs Turner I'm right with Turner. It's a pity Lem is (apparently) so overrated in Europe—with a good dose of humility and a willingness to learn he might have the makings of an excellent writer.

Lupoff seems to have missed the main point about *Rendezvous with Rama* (or else I have). The next book isn't going to be a sequel in the sense of a new book about the same characters/situation/whatever—it's going to be the second part of this book. And the third 'book' will be the third part of this book. It just isn't cricket to write more than 60,000 or so words for an SF 'novel' so that the author who has more than that to say must disguise his efforts as 'sequels' or 'trilogies' or whatever. It's a hell of a situation, but that *is* the situation. R with R could turn out to be the start of something grand, but I'm reserving my judgment until I can see the work whole. (If I am wrong in the foregoing, then I say without hesitation that the book is very poor in spite of some good writing.)

Another hassle with Dick: While I agree on the danger of quick judgments, I am not convinced that any 'revisionist critics' can show that the classics of SF are less good than I thought them. I can see a critic (if he is good enough) helping me to understand why a book is great, even to look at a story through new eyes. But to convince me that the 'great' story is really poor—no way. Sorry, I don't brainwash that easily.

I hasten to add that I think Dick produces one of the best 'review' columns about. I wouldn't bother trying to argue with him otherwise.

Robert Bloch
2111 Sunset Crest Dr.
Los Angeles CA 90046

I was particularly gratified to see the material on Arthur C. Clarke. It was Arthur, I feel, who was the first to make SF "respectable"—largely because his non-SF *The Exploration of Space* led to a focus of attention on his other writing. Now that "respectable" has become a dirty word to a large segment of fans and pros, it's important to remember that at one time it was the only key to the world of hardcover and slick-paper magazine publication which both fans and pros faunched for. Anyway, Clarke deserves all praise—and he's still opening doors for all of us!

Doug Barbour
10808 - 75th Avenue
Edmonton, Alberta T6E 1K2
Canada

Your section on Arthur C. Clarke is worthy, and of interest. Tom Clareson's piece is useful and whets the appetite for the longer

essay in *The Worlds of Science Fiction.* I, for one, don't think 'academic' articles *have* to be unreadable, nor must they put you off the author for life. They can even help you to get more out of an author's work than you had previously done (gosh, is that so?). Clarke's an interesting figure with his mixture of heavy science and near mysticism, and Clareson shows us how fully that paradoxical mix has been with him from the very beginning of his career. I've always enjoyed the mystic Clarke the best, but both seem to work well together, and did so most fully, perhaps, in *Rendezvous with Rama.*

The continuing attacks and defences of Lem are lots of fun, but we shall really have to wait until his big theoretical book is available before we can be sure the emperor has absolutely nothing on. And even so, he may just be well-hung. What is at stake here—and it applies in some circumstances to many academics who *are* merely jumping on a bandwagon, and not coming to SF because it's always been a major force in their reading lives—is just what "SF" should be taken to cover, and, as well, how much of it one must know, pretty intimately, to be able to make large generalizing comments on it. Lem, for all his theoretical and fictional brilliance, does seem to be quite unaware of a great deal of what goes on in American SF (and has gone on for the past 40 years or more). To be fair, a lot of what he has missed is eminently missable; nevertheless, he has missed too much. His article in *SF Commentary* revealed the paucity of his practical acquaintance with American SF and its fandom, and because he did not realize how great that paucity was, he was betrayed into some pretty reckless statements. On the other hand the man can do, and has done, a lot of thinking on the subject, and not all he says can be dismissed out of hand.

William Lanathan's article on the Gor books is all very well, but I think it's a waste of good thought. Are they really worth the defence? I doubt it. Sexism is sexism, for example, no matter how well it is defended as a part of a brilliantly executed piece of ironic construction.

When Lupoff's on he's very perceptive; when he's off, as he is, I think, with Aldiss's fine, fine, *Frankenstein Unbound,* it all falls apart. Oh well. More hits than misses this time. Certainly Le Guin's novel is deserving of much careful reading by everyone faintly interested in what the best SF is up to these days.

Lettercol, as usual, great fun. I especially want to give praise to Baird Searles, despite the fact that I disagree with him on movies so much. He's right to be as harsh as he is to Elwood. It becomes apparent that Elwood is going too far to "communicate," as he puts it, through interviews with the readers he hopes to reach. This is hype, and self-produced hype, at that. Moreover, though I've read *Future City* and enjoyed most of it, he reveals in its introduction how little he understands of some of the stories, as e.g., Malzberg's vignette, which isn't, as I feel it, anti-homosexual per se at all. Anti-bureaucratization of the sexual impulse, yes, but that's a very different thing. Anyway, his prejudices are, indeed, rather hard on some stories I, personally, find the most engaging in the canon. Let him be a critic, where he can attack what he doesn't like; but to have the power to prevent it from appearing: no, no, that's bad, very bad.

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It was a pleasure to read Dick Lupoff's reviews in the last ALGOL, particularly as I have sometimes been browned off with his performances. It was particularly pleasing to see him put in a column of praise for *The Godwhale,* a novel which deserves some success. Perhaps the biological approach is too formidable for the casual reader, for formidable it surely is. And perhaps his boundless admiration for *The Dispossessed* will cool to a juster delight; it's a very fine piece of SF, but having had to read it twice, review it three times and argue about it at a club meeting I am beginning to see it in clearer perspective—very important to SF, but less so in the larger literary sense.

But may I take some space to consider his thumbs-down review of *Frankenstein Unbound* with perhaps a word or two about old *Frankenstein* itself?

It is easy to see why he didn't like the book and why many will agree with him, but less easy to see why it is far better and worth more attention than he allows. I don't think it's any world prize-winner, but it has its excellences and these should be noted because they are of some importance if readers are to appreciate the attempts of writers like Aldiss, Ballard, Lafferty and others to expand the SF frontiers of interest—to carry it beyond the simple expectations of melodrama and give it some of that intellectualism it often ferociously claims but rarely displays.

Dick leads off his plot summary with: "In the year 2020 there's so much high-energy weaponry going bang that the basic fabric of space-time is threatened with unravelment."

Right at this point he, and many another, seems to have missed the signal that a staunch Aldiss reader would recognise at once. Aldiss just doesn't deal in that kind of super-smash, invented-for-the-nonce cataclysmic razzmatazz, and he knows better than to ladle out such nonsense (and Van Vogt vintage nonsense it is) without a nod in the direction of plausibility. The signal reads: "Forget the SF conventions—this is a trip where anything goes and it doesn't matter how we get there so long as a twenty-first/twentieth century axis is established. This time it is better to arrive hopefully than to travel by established physics." It means that not only are we not to be treated to conventional SF but we'd better watch out for the true theme and the method.

Whoever has missed that point and the multiple puns and allusions in the novel's title won't get much return from the book, as Dick shows when he worries over the "hackneyed" aspects of the plot. He mentions "a marvellous opportunity here for drama and for confrontations of the ideas and attitudes of different periods. But somehow Aldiss fails. . ."

He surely fails if that is all you are looking for in terms of Bodenland and the Shelley-Byron circle at Villa Diodati. (Here Aldiss does fail—these people are stick figures whom I suppose he couldn't avoid introducing though they are not much relevant to his purpose, and his brief scene with Polidori must have raised many a student eyebrow.) The fact is that the confrontation is not between the centuries but between Aldiss and Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein.* If you don't see this by page 60 or so, the book is not for you.

Mary's *Frankenstein* was not the "gothic" romance that many (Aldiss among them, alas) have called it, but a modern (1816) shocker designed to thrill and chill, not to carry on the silly secret-passage-and-ghostly-moan tradition laughed out of countenance by Jane Austen in *Northanger Abbey* only two years later. But, since the style of literary thought of her day demanded it, she was forced to take a philosophic attitude—which may well have been genuinely her own, despite her "advanced" ideas—on the side of God and against meddlesome scientists who (shudder) "go too far!"

The peculiar result is that the "hero," Frankenstein, is murdered by his creation, which in the terms of the day served him right for usurping the privilege of God. But the monster floats off on an ice floe (to turn up many years later at Universal Studios where the makeup man turned him into much clumsier horror material than Mary's pitiful, hounded abortion—who, in passing, did *not* have a murderer's brain). Why did she let him live? Simply because, whether she intended it or not, the nameless monster is the real hero of the book, shabbily and shamelessly treated by every character because his appearance is abnormal. The modern reader is helplessly on the side of the monster throughout (I can't answer for the 1816 fans) and feels that Frankenstein got what he deserved for being a gutless prick and not on account of any outraged feelings on the part of God. In fact, the scene where Frankenstein destroys the female companion he had made for his monster must stand as one of fiction's great moments of febrile pusillanimity.

It is at this point that Aldiss takes issue with Mary Shelley and rewrites the story in terms of more modern ethics—and lack of them. The female is made, and the ensuing scene of the mating dance between the monsters is one of the highlights of modern SF, no matter what anybody may think about Aldiss' prose.

Some plot manipulation gets rid of Frankenstein, and

Bodenland takes up the chase with a 21st century rifle. Like the old Frankenstein he hounds them to the arctic ice and then does to them what Mary, in her ethical honesty, did not—like the good, moral, more-advanced-than-the-nineteenth-century man he is, he shoots them.

He kills them under circumstances I will not relate for the sake of those who may wish to read the book and muse on the climax for themselves. The ending has many possible meanings and some beauty, while the motivating action makes an ugly authorial comment.

Description of the story in terms of a "hackneyed chase-capture-escape tangle" is superficially right but bitterly unfair to the underlying motives and meanings. I imagine Dick must know, as every reviewer must, that plot is a mere peg—only what the writer hangs on it counts. Aldiss has hung on Mary Shelley's plot a thoughtful commentary about morality and ethical beliefs. As to the remark that both Aldiss' novel and the original are crashing bores, I can only disagree, with a considerable body of readership to support me. And if the simple bridge passage he quotes as a sample of style is "dull," what does he want? High tension prose every line? The shrill screaming of the *Dangerous Visions* extremists who can't leave a simple sentence alone to offer its content straightforwardly? On the other hand, he did like *Rendezvous with Rama,* and Clarke's prose is some of the most unadventurous in the business.

Frankenstein Unbound is a literary novel about the ideas of another novel. The literary fans will like it; the thrill hunters will not. It's as simple as that.

It is time to end the serial exchange with Rottensteiner, who refuses to be brought to the point at issue and prefers to snipe at opportunity targets. Any ass can do that. Anent his remark about "all those real critics emerging from their hiding in the Australian bush," I still have my copy of the fanzine in which he wrote that the best criticism comes from Australia. He really shouldn't turn his back on his own statement for the sake of a sneer; it exposes the true level of his reaction. For my part, that's the end of it.

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The general appearance of the magazine is lovely once again. My two favorite illustrations are, coincidentally, the ones on facing pages 18-19. Ross is always good, but the heading picture on the Holmberg article is unusual for him. As for James Odbert, I think I'm falling in love with that nude of his. This is the second consecutive time. Despite the American Pop Culture infatuation with big-bosomed blondes, I find the slim, graceful, small-breasted, dark-haired type of woman far more appealing. Odbert really has my number.

I'm sorry to see Baird Searles angry at you and me for what Elwood said in the interview. I'm afraid that Baird is falling into that ancient and easy error of blaming the messenger for the message, the news media for the bad news.

Let me say that I find Roger Elwood's sexual intolerance completely obnoxious, as I do many other things about Elwood. My point in the interview was to attempt to be an honest journalist, to report as accurately and objectively as I could, what he had to say. I did not feel it appropriate to judge him, but rather to let him speak for himself and let the readers judge him.

All of this notwithstanding, I do realize that I could and should have pressed him harder on certain points, certainly including that of his manifest sexual bigotry. It might interest Baird to know that Roger invited me a while back to collaborate with him on "the definitive novel about homosexuality." I did not accept the invitation.

Certainly social attitudes are evolving and (I hope) enlightenment is increasing with regard to a number of topics, including varieties of sexual orientation. Having been raised in the fine macho tradition of Let's-Go-Out-and-Find-Some-Homo-Faggots-and-Stomp-the-Cocksuckers, it has taken some learning for me to understand what "consenting adults" is all about. It helped when I learned that—eeek!—Some of My Best Friends are Gay! It helped further last fall when I taught a course in science fiction within the walls of San Quentin prison, and one of my students turned the tables on me by getting hold of my old novel *Sacred Locomotive Flies* and wrote a paper on its anti-homosexual stereotyping and bias.

Maybe Elwood will live and learn too, although I doubt it.

Certainly Fred Fowler is free to take issue with my opinions of Lin Carter and/or J.R.R. Tolkien. But Mr. Fowler misreads me on at least one point, and that is the old pulps. I loved and still do love the old pulps. They're delightful kid stuff. What I'm trying to get at is that both elements must be recognized—that they are delightful. . . and that they are kid stuff. Either without the other leads to a distorted view.

As for Mr. Fowler's assertion that I am an atheist or agnostic ("Lupoff is clearly one of these")—I think Mr. Fowler's statement is unsupported by available evidence and is further an impertinent intrusion in what I consider (or have considered) a private aspect of my life. I find Mr. Fowler's section on religion to be a piece of obnoxious Christian arrogance of a type all too familiar. I do not mean by this to tar all Christians with a too-broad brush. (Some of my best friends are Christians.) But this superior tone of snide condescension and contempt for others is something which I have encountered in a number of Christian persons and not in professors (in the non-academic sense of that word) of other—or no—religions.

For Mr. Fowler's benefit, I am neither an agnostic nor an atheist.

I have been at various times in my life a Jew, a skeptic, a pantheist, a Buddhist, and most recently a Jew again, the last as a result of my studies of the Holocaust this past season, in preparation for a novel I am currently writing. As for knowledge of religions, I think I will match my studies against Mr. Fowler's very willingly. I did study comparative religions as an undergrad. ("Yes, but which one is *true?*" I remember saying to one professor back in 19-ought-fifty-something, to be greeted by gales of laughter from my fellow students.)

But the fact is that almost all of my stories have religious backgrounds. Perhaps Mr. Fowler would find it rewarding to get ahold of some of them and read carefully. Here, I'll cite a few for him, and even tell him which religion to look for in each:

> "The Partridge Project" (in *No Mind of Man,* Hawthorne)—Hindu; "After the Dreamtime" and "Sail the Tide of Mourning" (in *New Dimensions IV* and *V,* respectively)—Australian; "With the Bentfin Boomer Boys on Little Old New Alabama" (in *Again, Dangerous Visions*)—Voodoo; "Demons" (forthcoming novel from Harper & Row)—Shinto; "Dr. Anubis" (forthcoming novel from G.P. Putnam)—Judaism; "Fool's Hill" (forthcoming novel from Dell)—Christianity; "Musspelsheim" (in *Strange Gods*)—sun worship.

Of course, Mr. Fowler may decide that these other systems of belief are "mere philosophy," or perhaps folklore. After all, what do those stupid Hindus, aborigines, blacks, Nips, Kikes, pagans know? They aren't Christians, are they?

Fowler, it's people like you who have given Christianity a bad name.

SCIENCE-FICTION STUDIES

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#5 March 1975. Special issue on Philip K Dick, with Dick's (unpublished) Foreword to *The Preserving Machine*, checklists of Dick's manuscripts & books by Willis McNelly & R D Mullen, & articles by Brian Aldiss, Peter Fitting, Fredric Jameson, Stanislaw Lem, Carlo Pagetti, D Suvin, & Ian Watson. Also R A Swanson on Nabokov's *Ada* as SF. Notes, Reports, & Correspondence on new SF critical works such as De Camp's biography of Lovecraft, & differences of opinion on various SF matters.

#6 July 1975. A discussion of David Ketterer's *New Worlds for Old* by Robert Galbreath, Ursula K Le Guin, Robert Canary, S C Fredericks, & Mr Ketterer. Also articles on *Frankenstein*, Huxley's *Ape and Essence* & *Island*, Kepler's *Somnium*, & the SF of J H Rosny Aîné. Notes, Reports, & Correspondence with a response by Robert Scholes to Lem's attack in #4 on Todorov.

#7 Nov 1975. Special issue on Le Guin.

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I can't say I agreed with Fred Fowler's letter. He seems to think that literature is divided into "art" and "entertainment," and that if a book really is art, no one will enjoy reading it. This idea probably goes back to those ghastly high school English courses that most of us suffered through in which the only books considered "artistic" enough were things like *Silas Marner,* which few people would read if they didn't have to. But there are works of art which entertain. We know that Shakespeare and Dickens wrote to entertain, and yet their books are studied as art. (Of course, *anything* can be studied as art if you try hard enough. It is even possible to write essays about how John Norman's sexist porn is really Serious Lit, chock full of irony and good stuff like that.) Nor do I understand his attack on "relevant" SF and "disguised essays," as if that were separate from entertainment. Of course, many writers use fiction as a means of conveying their ideas, but the question is whether they do it well, not whether they do it at all. Mr. Fowler praises C.S. Lewis' Narnia books as the kind of entertainment he likes. Doesn't he realize that they were written largely as Christian instruction?

I get the impression from Franz Rottensteiner's letter that he has no sense of humor at all. Faced with Sandra Miesel's irreverent witticism about his hero Lem, he attempts to crush the woman under a mass of elephantine irony, and misses the point completely.

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One has to wonder what appetites John Norman's repulsive fiction is satisfying. Widespread, whatever they are, judging by sales and the prevalence of Gor costumes at the Discon masquerade. Sadism, degradation of women, etc. don't do a thing for *me,* but what can a sheltered Midwestern housewife possibly know about Life? We're just deprived of so many marvelous experiences out here in the Hinterland. (Outside of Haldeman, Kentucky, of course.)

Mike Glyer is right about the sudden inflation of Worldcon memberships rendering the fan Hugos meaningless. But I've been assured by Wise Old Fans that these awards were a faltering vehicle from the very beginning. My distress at the nomination of the trekkies for best fanwriter reflects an admitted personal bias. (They subsequently claimed to be "more than just trekkies." But what did they publish and where in the year 1973?) Yet were these candidates any less worthy than Charlie Brown, whose wife actually wrote most of *Locus*? Was the bloc voting which nominated them so much more objectionable than that which put Tom Digby on the ballot? Which leads me to suggest that the three fan Hugo categories be abolished. This is a drastic remedy but the only one feasible. Moshe Feder's ingenious proposal for "pure" fan awards, to be decided by participating fans only has merit but would be a nightmare to administer, given the anarchic nature of fandom.

As the author of *Myth, Symbol, and Religion in the Lord of the Rings* (T-K Graphics, 1973), it is my considered opinion that Lin Carter is a wholly inadequate critic. His efforts in this area have been unperceptive, inaccurate, and filled with excessive puffery for his own books and the whole Ballantine adult fantasy series. Dick Lupoff's review of *Imaginary Worlds* was mild in comparison with the denunciation it received from Ian Myles Slater in *Fantasiae.* Carter's criteria for religion, "an established canon of inspired writings, an organized priesthood, a system of temples and shrines" would in practice exclude whole sectors of historical religious expression. (For example, the early Jews perceived and believed in God centuries before they had Scripture, priesthood, or Temple.) I would prefer a very broad Eliadean definition such as: religion is man's response to the sacred. This avoids the concentration on externals which blinds Carter and his defender Fred Fowler to the *implicit* religiosity of Tolkien's works.

And it is implicit to avoid the necessity of creating a pagan pantheon or contradicting the history of Judeo-Christian revelation. Tolkien has given his Secondary World a salvation history different from our own. It is one presided over by a *deus otiosus* and demiurges. LoTR characters have numinous experiences (generally connected with "height" and "center": mountains, trees, water sources) and respond to the sacredness of time and place. History rather than myth serves to explain the conditions prevailing in Middle-earth and provides models for the correct response to these conditions. That is to say, there is no distinction between secular and sacred history. LoTR presents religious realities symbolically via "quest," "initiation," "light," "fertility," "kingship," "hierogamy" etc. To this end Tolkien ransacked the Bible and most mythologies of the western world. The values and attitudes of the Speaking Peoples are not "simply the general moral principles that are recognized in any civilized culture." Their natural law morality has been subtly augmented by what the elves carried into exile and the prophetic influence of the wizards, who are emissaries of the Valar and akin to them. The views expressed on the nature of good and evil, free will, providence, victory and defeat are cast in the Judeo-Christian mold—not the Stoic, Taoist, Hindu or any other. I cite in support of the foregoing opinions Paul Kocher's *Master of Middle-earth,* Richard Purtill's *Lord of Elves and Eldils,* and Clyde Kilby's essay in *Gospel, Myth, and Allegory.*

But, Mr. Fowler, if you scorn Lupoff's comments on grounds of his presumed non-belief, why praise Carter's when the latter is no believer either? (And you'll certainly want to avoid de Camp's discussion of religion in LoTR in his forthcoming *Literary Swordsmen and Sorcerers.*) Knowledge *about* religion is not contingent upon belief *in* religion—as any number of contemporary theologians, priests, ministers, and rabbis amply demonstrate. (My irritation with an agnostic rabbi's sermon last Saturday remains keen.)

You also put entirely too much emphasis on codified morality and systematic theology. No, we don't hear any characters rattling off a list of commandments nor does Gondor boast a Divinity School. But we do see the Speaking Peoples *living* their values and distinguishing these from the works of the Enemy (e.g. Gandalf condemns Denethor's suicide as a "heathen" act). There are reflective races in Middle-earth (the elves, ents and Edain) but no speculative philosophers.

The principal drive in hobbit nature is toward homey comfort but the principal hobbit characters behave contrary to the usual tendencies of their race by seeking adventure. The agonizing ethical choices demanded of them are not to be dismissed as automatic responses.

Since the Valar are not gods but self-incarnated "angels," they are not worshipped. However their power is invoked and their aid implored. What silliness to complain that Eru, the One, is mentioned only in an appendix! Many vital matters such as Sam's passage to the Undying Lands are mentioned only in an appendix. The appendices are an important part of the whole work—which is *not* properly referred to as a "trilogy." Data from LoTR should be supplemented from those in other books, especially Tolkien's notes in *The Road Goes Ever On—he* thought LoTR incorporated religion but what does the author know, eh?

And if the word "God" appears anywhere in the seven Chronicles of Narnia, it has escaped my notice. Is Narnia, too, a world devoid of religion because it lacks scriptures, priests, temples,

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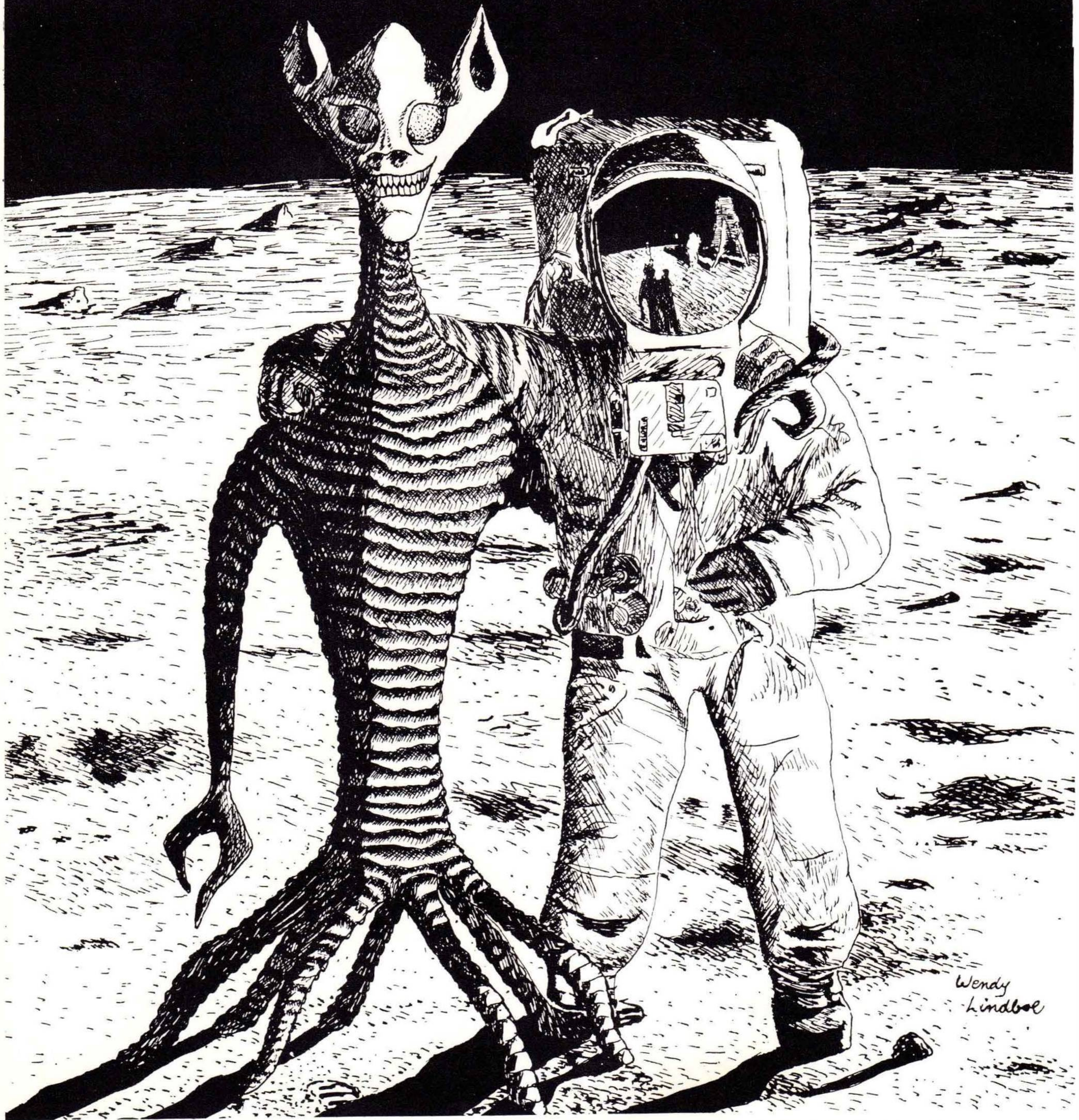

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doctrines, formal worship, aside from those pertaining to the false god Tash in *The Last Battle*? Or does Lewis like Tolkien operate via symbolic images and actions? I rest my case.

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Richard Lupoff's reviews are excellent: free-flowing, informative, and fair. Like the rest of us he sometimes drops the ball: "Religion is the *presence* of an actual god or gods." (emphasis supplied) "Academics are very impressed by literary awards, perhaps because they don't understand them very well. " Literary awards bring promotion and increases in stipends, and are very well understood. Almost all universities have fellowships and "name" visiting lecturerships which are awards, and allow time for research. Publication of a scholarly work by a university press is an award, as are federal grants as well as grants from learned societies. The field of literary grants is perhaps the best tilled in the groves of academe. Admittedly it is a far smaller field than that of the sciences, but it is exhaustively cultivated and thoroughly comprehended. The academic knows quite well which side of his Starrzelius Verily oat-bread is margarined.

In the major, reviewers have the obligation to be descriptive and journalistic: who, what, when, where, why. LoC critics tend to become very excited over black marks on white paper, and to indulge in whack-and-thwack writing, the snide quip and the stinging retort, with lots of gut-spilling on both sides. Such commentators are inclined to beat their matched sets of drums, with emphasis on the "I, personally. . ." bass.

Ted White is among the best editorialists and columniators in the business and should be left free to go his own way. It is unfortunate that he seems to need someone to hate, as in the unpleasant reference to Stephen Pickering.

It is difficult to escape the suspicion that William Lanahan's "Slave Girls and Strategies" is a hoax, occasioned by the disparity between the actuality of the Gor series and what he reads into it. As a piece of writing it is of superior quality, but it does not by any means fit what it is written about. It reads as if it were an assigned chore, on which Mr. Lanahan gave of his best irrespective of the quality of the subject and on which he got an A+, well deserved.

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Lupoff was obviously drawn into *The Dispossessed* by something very strong. He can't praise it enough. It activated his sense-of-wonder, but left mine *dead.* The central virtue of *Dispossessed* was for me the concept of having to add the "philosophy" back into "science" before any major breakthroughs in interstellar communications can be made. The book, for me, has thousands of virtues I can admire, but only one of the two indispensable qualities—it has IDEA but falls down on *character-interest* (the characters are technically well executed, but lack sparkle, almost as if they were ground and polished in rewrite to force them to do and say what the author needed to have done and said rather than what they truly needed to do and say for themselves). Or perhaps it's just *me.* Obviously, many readers found the characters interesting enough. What I don't understand is how come Lupoff LIKED *The Dispossessed,* but not *Beyond the Tomorrow Mountains,* by Sylvia Louise Engdahl. For me, the similarities make it a dead cinch that a reader who likes one will like the other. Of course, the authors' philosophies are almost diametrically opposed in certain areas, but the method of expression is so similar. The one single difference I can hit on is that while I found *Dispossessed* a drag to read, *Tomorrow Mountains* is *interesting,* gripping, sparkling and beautiful, as well as executed with crystal clarity of thought. One must remember that *Tomorrow Mountains* is a juvenile while *Dispossessed* most definitely is not. However, *Tomorrow Mountains* has characters who are portrayed with such emotional immediacy that even if the ideas are "old hat" to you or if the author's philosophy is at odds with your own, you still ought to enjoy the book (unless it hits one of your prejudices and causes you pain). At least, I think so. Obviously Lupoff doesn't, which is what makes the critic's profession interesting.

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I must confess to being disturbed by Wm. Lanahan's analysis of the woman's role in John Norman's Gor books. The attitude that it's nice 'n' healthy for women to be beaten, enslaved, dominated and otherwise forced into submission so that she "discovers womanliness by accepting herself as a woman" ranks slightly of the same old pap-feeding women have been getting for centuries to convince them not only to keep "in their place," but to be satisfied that they belong there. I've heard those lines about how "only in male domination of the female can the woman create her own identity and. . . paradoxically claim equality with the man"; "subjugation equals equality" deserves to go down in the history books with the rest of Orwell's double-speak. It really *doesn't* make sense, if you stop and think about it; it's just an excuse for the physically capable male to protect himself against the female's potential for superiority. Heroic fantasy has been exploiting the male's domination and the female's submissiveness since time immemorial; there is nothing novel or socially significant about the concept, and I think the article could have done without it.

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I had mixed reactions to the Clarke section. It was pleasant reading, but when I had finished I did not feel I knew any more about him. The interview by Turner was the only one that was about the man and the writer. It suffered from being too short. A glimpse was given of the man but before much was seen of the writer it was "end of factoids." Clareson and Gillings talked about the writings, not the writer. And neither one went into enough depth to offer any insights that would lead me to re-read one of Clarke's books with a different eye.

Lanahan's apologia for Norman's Gor series made a nice contrast to the Clarke section, and it is the kind of article I enjoy most. I ended up feeling the same way about the books after the article as I did before, but I had to run to stay in that same spot. There seem to me to be two basic flaws in Mr. Lanahan's development. First, the question "Why are these books popular?" is not answered by saying they are "a masterful exercise in irony." If subtle irony (so subtle that Mr. Lanahan has to work this hard to show it) were enough to sell books, then Cabell and not Burroughs would be on top of the heap. Ironical or not, it's a lot easier to believe that "the abundance of complacent and accessible slavegirls" make this series popular.

The second problem with Mr. Lanahan's argument is this: the hero-who-isn't is a very thin joke for even one novel; it's hard to accept that Mr. Norman believes he has anything more to say about it after *seven* of them, and yet here comes number eight. On the

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other hand, sex is something that some people never get tired of writing about. And now that *Imaginative Sex* by guess-who is here, probably even Mr. Lanahan would agree that Mr. Norman was doing it for the slavegirls all along.

I continue to be amazed at how perceptive Richard Lupoff is—i.e., how often I agree with him. In particular I also find Ms. Engdahl's books very dull and trite, and worry that people will give up after trying her and miss finding such fine "children-oriented" fantasists as Mary Norton, Alan Garner and Lloyd Alexander. I do think however he was unfair (but accurate) about Brunner's *Web of Everywhere.* Virtually all of Brunner's books, including *Stand on Zanzibar* and *The Jagged Orbit,* collapse eventually into thriller mode. I don't think people who have enjoyed other books by Brunner would object to this one (Mr. Lupoff excepted of course).

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Whatever your reviewer may think, *Web of Everywhere* did not have its tail end chopped off and another 20,000 words added! On the contrary, despite my best efforts to keep it down to the 20,000 words Bob Silverberg had asked for, it kept getting longer and longer. . . and by the third draft I gave up in despair, and wrote the thing as a full sized book.

Jack Wodhams
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Australia

Writing a book is like a woman working to make herself beautiful. She uses make-up, dress, jewelry, scent, all in what *she* thinks is the most suitable, the most tasteful, combination to show her at her best. And then she hopefully throws herself upon the mercy of her public, full knowing her own effort and intent but, at the last, no matter what, never to be certain that her new hairdo *will* be a success, or that her new shade of lipstick *does* complement her eye-shadow in the way that she thinks it might. And the public reaction to her may range; from indifference—if she is timid and of muted low-risk conservative preferences; to resigned acceptance—if she merely possesses commonly recognised pretensions; to sparked interest—if she has managed to achieve some agreeably venturesome or pleasant blend; right on and up to great expectations—if she is a loud and over-indulgent female who employs every known artifice with small restraint, to so win instant identification as a tart.

In literature, as in beauty, a sense of proper balance is vital—too little flair is coyness, while too much is prostitution.

—An excerpt from
Things Pamela Sergant Never Told Me

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Hagerstown, Maryland 21740

I've been reading some of the Clarke novels I'd missed when they were new, so Thomas Clareson's essay on the early novels was particularly welcome. His writing is a model for serious criticism of science fiction, too: neither an imitation of the excesses of higher criticism nor patronizing description that makes the reader feel as if he's back in high school. I'd like to see a sequel dealing with the later books. Those early novels came very close to giving me the same kind of special delight that I used to find when I was in my early teens, reading *Astounding* and the Gernsback *Wonder* and the Sloane *Amazing.* Not many writers, old or new, can do that these days.

I also liked Wally Gillings' biographical material. It told me a few things I didn't realize. If it didn't go far enough into the trivial things about the writer's life, maybe that's just as well. I've already read *Rendezvous with Rama*; I hope Dick Lupoff is wrong with his prediction of a sequel. The book is perfect as it is and creation of a sequel would damage that perfection, no matter how interesting the sequel might be.

I've bought one or two of the Gor books but I've been unable to force myself to read one from start to finish. William Lanahan put more work into this essay than the caliber of the books deserves, but I admire his diligence. I don't doubt that he will be hailed decades from now as a pioneer prophet, when those books have become nostalgia jewels as brightly glittering for middle-aged people as the Burroughs novels are for many older fans today.

Mentioning Burroughs reminds me of the discussion in the letter section about fanzine Hugos, which mentioned once or twice the allegations of bloc voting in the fan writer Hugos. It's curious that nobody who got wrought up last year over two Star Trek-oriented fan writers being nominated remembered the time *ERBdom* won the fanzine Hugo. That was a more remarkable feat by a subfandom's publication than the Star Trek nominees, since ERB's enthusiasts have never been as numerous as the Star Trek fans. As I recall, it didn't create as much soul-searching over whither Hugos, either.

In any event, I hope that creation of the new fan achievement awards will quiet most of the controversy over the fan Hugo awards. I hope my participation on the planning of the new awards won't be misinterpreted. I felt the need for a fannish equivalent of the Nebulas, awards to be voted on by the people eligible to receive them, as something which should co-exist with the fan Hugos, not supplant or upstage them.

Ross Chamberlain's heading was the art highlight in this issue for me. Terry Austin's full-pager was nearly as fine. I feel grateful to the Robbins Radio Corporation for using that particular photograph to advertise the miniature radio. But I can't help thinking about several fans whose ears would probably have made the gadget look only about one-third the size that it appears in this picture.

[Although by the rules of the new Fan Achievement Awards ALGOL is ineligible for judgment, since it pays its contributors, I do support the new awards. They serve as a long-overdue, fannish form of the Nebula, in that they're a peer award rather than a popularity award. Perhaps they'll take some of the pressure off the fan Hugos, which despite some confusion have never really been a measure of quality.

For a long time fannish fans thought they were a measure of fanzine quality, but now with the rapid expansion of worldcon membership and Hugo voting, fannish fans are in the minority, and the disparity between what the fan Hugos should be and what they are has grown.]

Fernando Quadros Gouvea
Largo da Batalha, 92
04031 Sao Paulo
Sao Paulo, Brasil

The one thing I think is missing in ALGOL is a column about fandom itself (this could include fanzine reviews, notes on conventions, fan history, etc.). A fanzine review column would be specially useful to me, since I am a newcomer and it's hard to know which I should get and from whom. The fact that I live in Brazil, away from fan clubs (at least I don't know of any), helps to make it difficult for me to find my way around.

WE ALSO HEARD FROM: Susan Wood, Gary Kimber, Angus Taylor, Frank Halpern, Ronald Salomon, Dainis Bisenieks, Tim Mitchell, Alan Bostick, John Foyster, Eric Lindsay, Andrew Weiner, William Moon, Tom Roberts, Stephen Antell, David Somerville, Donald Robertson, Alan Hunter, Jon Inouye, Kenn Hitchcock, Henry Charles Lewis, Leslie Kay Swigart, Gerry Gianatasio, Warren Johnson, Ronald Andrukitis, Robert Silverberg, Bob Shaw, Joanna Russ, and Jessica Salmonson.

Continued from page 4

known and admired. In the meantime, we hope you enjoy this issue.

WORTHY OF MENTION: We have several books here which, though not generally available, should be in the library of every SF fan. *One Hundred Years Of Science Fiction Illustration* by Anthony Frewin (Jupiter Books, London, 1974, 127pp, Price 4 Pounds) is a lavishly illustrated history of SF magazine cover illustrations. We've seen it for sale at the SF Shop in New York. If you've never been able to afford the magazines illustrated in this book (many in full color) this is your best bet to finally have them in your collection.

Structural Fabulation: An Essay On Fiction Of The Future, by Robert Scholes (Univ. of Notre Dame Press, 1975, 122pp, $6.95) is an excellent, not-at-all stuffily written essay on SF. Scholes takes to task the traditional literary critics who usually say, "If this is good it isn't SF; if it's SF it can't be good," with wit and a precise knowledge of the field. And any author who can say, "[Ursula K. Le Guin] has been compared to C.S. Lewis, with some appropriateness, especially as concerns her juvenile trilogy, but that comparison fails ultimately because she is a better writer than Lewis: her fictions, both juvenile and adult, are richer, deeper, and more beautiful than his. She is probably the best writer of speculative fabulation working in this country today, and she deserves a place among our major contemporary writers of fiction," must surely know his topic thoroughly.

Which statement brings us to *Wild Angels* by Ursula K. Le Guin (Capra Press, 631 State Street, Santa Barbara CA 93101, 1975, 50pp, $2.50 [Two hundred copies, numbered and signed by the poet, available in hardcover for $10.00 each]). This is an excellent example of what small press publishing can do in this nation of Doubledays; a finely printed and bound edition of poetry by Ursula K. Le Guin. That an author is often also poet is widely assumed: this slim volume is proof that a fine author is also an excellent poet. I urge you to buy this volume, so that you too may know the wide range of creation that Ursula K. Le Guin brings to our language.

Also available from Capra Press are other books which will interest you, including *Lila The Werewolf* by Peter Beagle and *Zen & The Art Of Writing* by Ray Bradbury. Would that all publishers gave so much care and attention to publishing as does Noel Young of Capra Press. ■

Andrew Porter, Editor/Publisher

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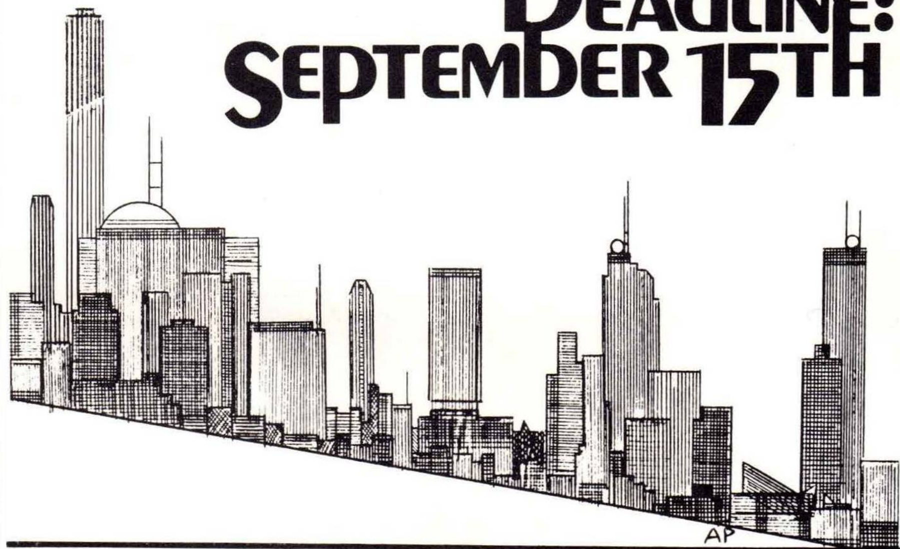
NEXT ISSUE

ROGER ZELAZNY features largely in next issue's article by Tom Monteleone. Postponed from this issue, our interview with GARDNER DOZOIS. Plus the usual features by Richard Lupoff and Ted White, and another color cover. Other articles aren't definite, however, at this early point in time.



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SANDRA MIESEL was born in New Orleans in 1941. After childhood in rural Louisiana she moved to the Midwest, where she has lived ever since. After 3 years graduate work in biochemistry, specializing in bioluminescence, she shifted her field of studies to medieval history, a step financed by work as an x-ray crystallographer. At present she does part-time sales and research work for an art gallery in Indianapolis, where she lives with her husband John, a chemist for a major pharmaceuticals company, whom she wed in 1964, and her three children: Marie-Louise, Anne-Louise, and Peter Louis.

Her principal interests center about art, history, mythology and archeology; she also sews exotic gowns for conventions (she has won awards in both the WorldCon art show, for embroidery, and the Costume Ball, as DisCon's "Queen of Air and Darkness"), and bakes good bread. Sandra discovered SF at age 11, and fandom in 1966, via the lettercolumn of *If*. She has done every type of fanwriting ranging from the most academic to the most fannish: she has sold non-fiction to books and magazines, and has garnered two Hugo nominations; she has covered the launch of Apollo 17 and will be covering the July USA/USSR joint space mission for her local newspaper. All in all, just a typical staid Indianapolis housewife.

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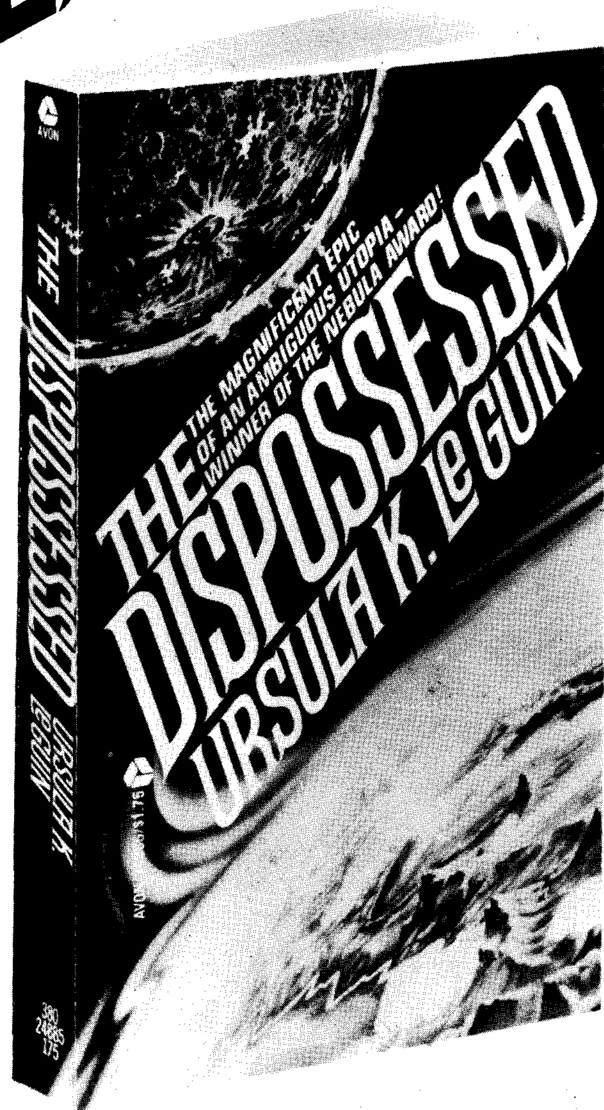

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