ALGOL

THE MAGAZINE ABOUT SCIENCE FICTION

WINTER 1976

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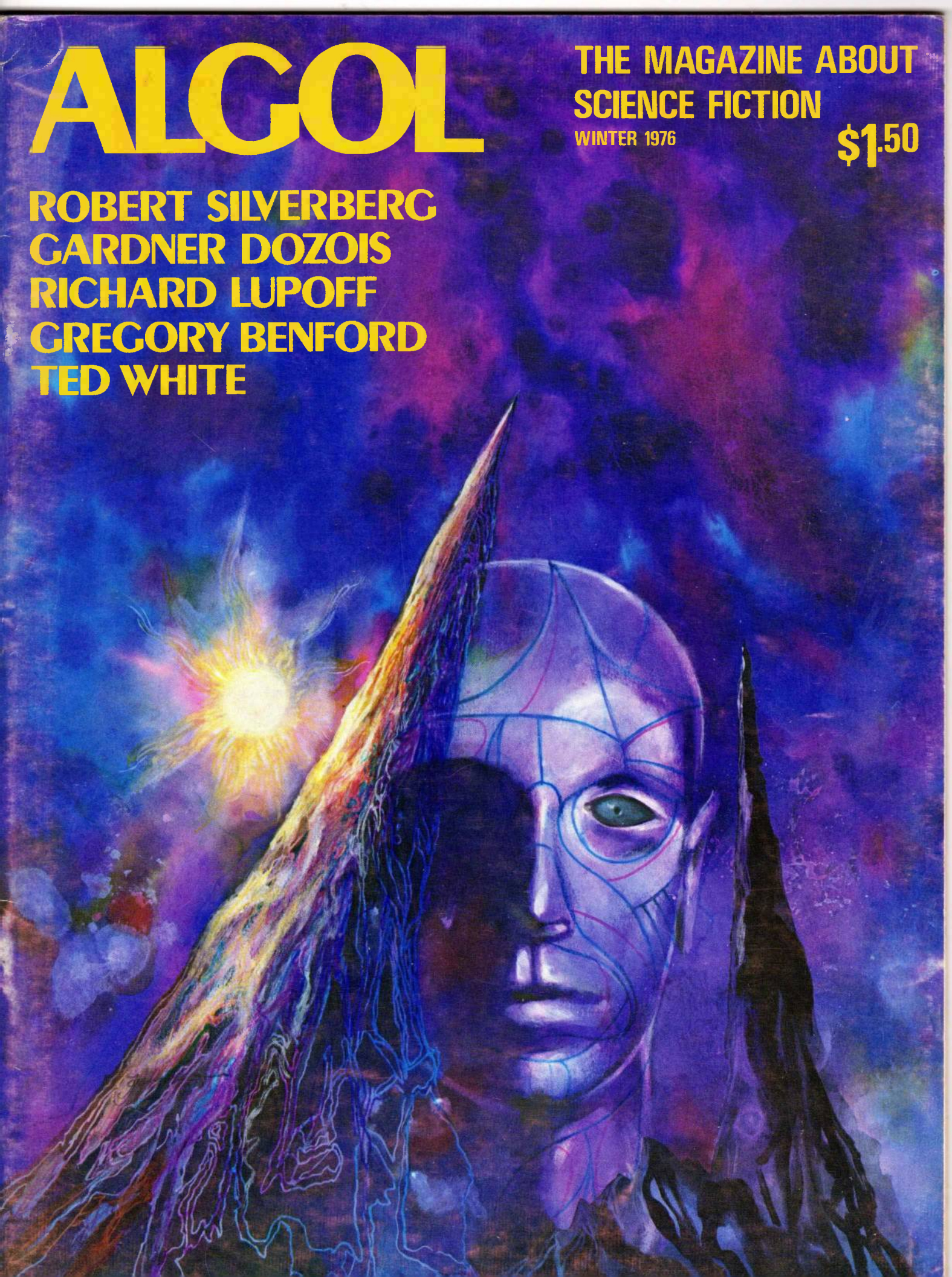

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ALGOL

THE MAGAZINE ABOUT SCIENCE FICTION

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Vincent DiFate — Contributing Editors
Ted White
Susan Wood

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ARTWORK

EDITORIAL

NEXT ISSUE: I'm happy to announce two new contributing editors to ALGOL. Effective next issue ALGOL will have fanzine reviews: the reviewer will be Susan Wood. Susan, as many of you know, was co-editor with Mike Glicksohn of *Energumen*, the fanzine that beat ALGOL for the fanzine Hugo in 1973. Since then Susan has gone on to become one of the best-known writers in fandom, winning the fan-writer Hugo in 1974, finishing her thesis on Canadian Literature (CanLit as the agrarian intelligentsia calls it) and doing a fanzine review column for *Amazing*. She is now esconsed in Vancouver, on the shore of the uttermost West, at the prestigious University of British Columbia.

For you enthusiastic faneditors, a word of warning: make sure you *want* your fanzine reviewed in ALGOL, else you have a printrun of 300 and 500 new subscribers.

Fanzines for review should go to: Ms. Susan Wood, Univ. of British Columbia, Dept. of English, 2075 Wesbrook Place, Vancouver BC CANADA V6T 1W5. If you're currently trading for ALGOL *and* want to be reviewed, you'll have to part with two copies of your erstwhile publishing efforts.

Also beginning next issue will be a column on art and design in SF by noted professional artist Vincent DiFate. Vincent's current work can be found on better paperbacks, *Analog*, and on the cover of the next ALGOL. His credentials are impeccable; his taste is well-known (after all, he married Roseanne Panaro); and the column promises to be another good reason for reading ALGOL. Of course, with the reproduction available, Vincent's column should be striking visually as well.

ALGOL's People will return next issue. With Bob Silverberg's long article this issue, I think you'll pardon its disappearance for one issue. The letter-column, as always, is up to you, the reader. Deadline for letters for next issue is March 15th, 1976.

CIRCULATION AND A LITTLE COMMENTARY: I've gotten a lot of letters and other feedback from the Reader Survey (details of which elsewhere in this issue); one of the things a lot of people asked for was that ALGOL come out more often.

I'd love to publish ALGOL four or six or even twelve times a year; I'm sure the marketplace would support it. Unfortunately, I can't. All the myriad details of production, design, selling advertising, paste-up, promotion, mailing, shipping, etc., are handled by one person—tired old Andy Porter—and I publish ALGOL in my spare time, when I'm not earning my living. ALGOL doesn't support me: at best it breaks even. The cold equations of time and money and the amount of energy and work I put into every issue dictate that the magazine simply can't come out more frequently and maintain the high standards I've set for myself. (You'll notice, incidentally, that Ian Andrews is no longer listed as Art Director. He was a fictional persona I am now absorbing back into myself.) I alone am responsible for the appearance of ALGOL, and those who've been complaining that ALGOL's "staff" gave it an unfair edge against the other magazines in the field can ponder the fact.

Some letters have talked about my "catching up with Richard Geis' *Science Fiction Review*." While *SFR* once had many more readers than ALGOL, this is no longer the case. ALGOL's circulation is greater than *SFR*'s and the gap continues to widen. Pressrun this issue is 5,000, and it should be sold out in 6 to 9 months. Geis notes when he talks of expanding his pressrun that he has "lots of room for storing back issues." Unlike Geis, I have little room. But back issues of ALGOL sell out rapidly (#22, 23 and 24 will be sold out by the end of 1975) and the only problem I have is printing enough copies to satisfy the demand.

EDITORIAL RESPONSIBILITIES. . .: One of the responsibilities that comes with a large circulation is the responsibility to readers and contributors to tell the truth without shading over into libel and slander. ALGOL has never crossed that line, and I hope it never will. But how else to explain the editorial in *SFR* #24? Would that it had been someone other than Roger Elwood, whose name itself stirs controversies, who was the one to chastise Richard Geis. There are other professionals who have had cause for action, in my opinion, but they haven't taken it, perhaps in fear that the balance between professional and fannish matters might have been irreparably shattered. Feuds are okay in most circles but lawsuits are always frowned on.

. . . AND PERSONALITIES: I've heard it said that ALGOL has no editorial personality and that *SFR* is wallowing in the stuff. Geis himself said it in his column in *Galaxy* (which no one bothered to send me a copy of: I heard of it third-hand). Let's look at the facts: *SFR* has Dick Geis, surely one of the more charismatic personalities in fandom, who can make almost *anything* interesting, including second-rate sex books. The magazine is laid out in a sort of stream-of-consciousness method, with rows of asterisks and black dots separating articles, editorial matters and reviews. The occasional piece of artwork has no relationship to the words around it. Anyone could be doing the layout of *SFR*, and no one would notice the difference. Geis does put lots of commentary throughout *SFR*, and his presence is felt nearly everywhere—including the middle of articles and letters, where he puts cute little continuity-destroying comments like: ((*choke*))—from the middle of Jon Gustafson's column in *SFR* #24.

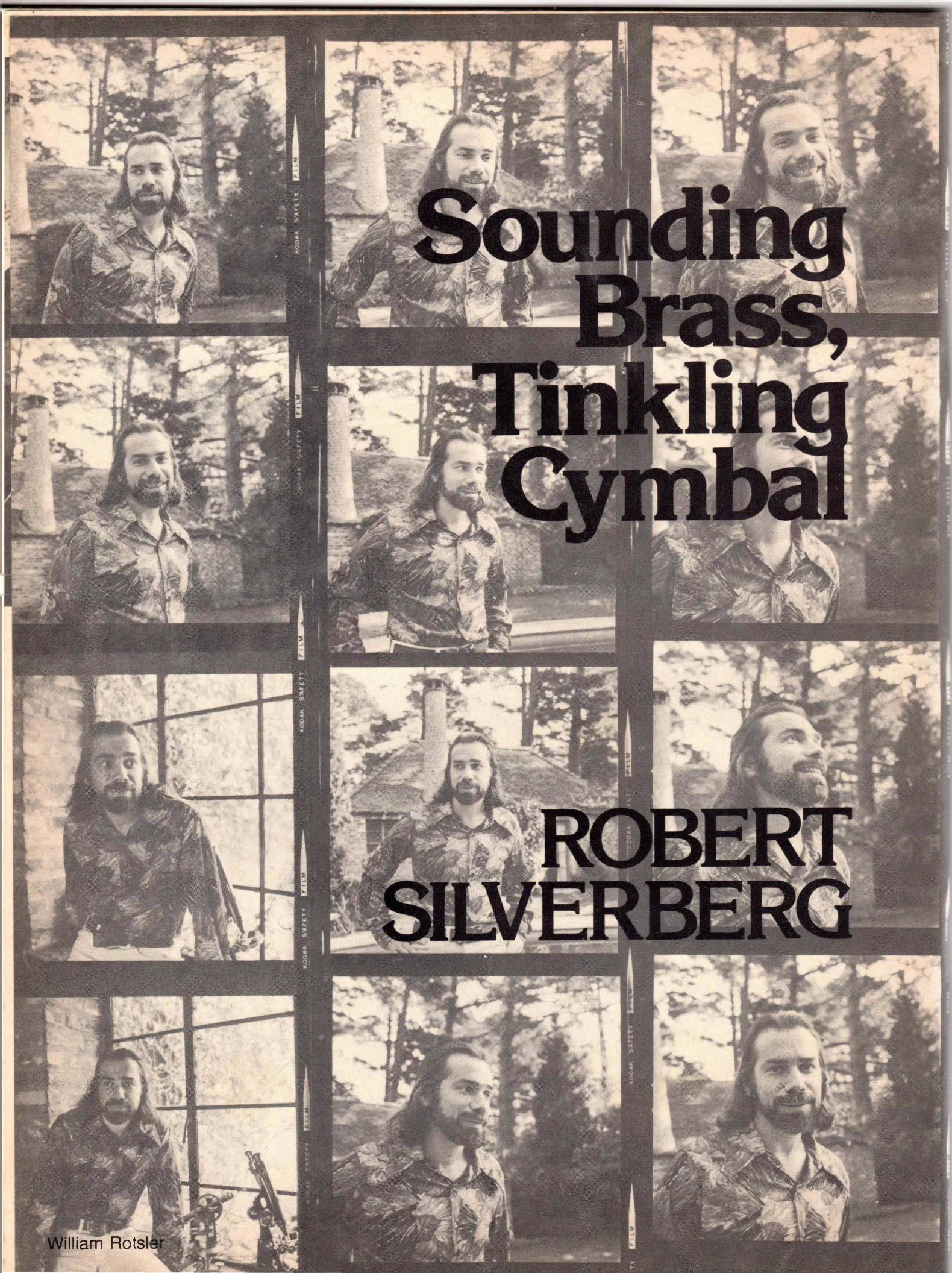
On the other hand, I limit my print personality to the editorial and comments on the letters, plus the occasional ALGOL's People biography. However, you can see my personality on every page: I alone layout every page of ALGOL as if my life depended on it. Some layouts percolate through my mind for several months before I commit them to headlines and type. Heading artwork is chosen to suit both the article and the writer; the same with type styles. Type for a Thomas Burnett Swann article (in ALGOL #18) couldn't possibly be used for Ted White's "My Column": it just wouldn't look right on the page. The letters are edited, then copy-edited; then comments are written, the letters are broken down into subjects and then juggled so they lead into one another. Art, which fits the surrounding letters, is used to break up general areas of discussion.

Every page of ALGOL reflects my opinions and knowledge of artwork, type, overall design and the creation of a graphic whole, from the front cover to the back. When you read these words, and this issue, remember that you're holding in your hands six months of my blood, sweat and creative anxieties. Without Andy Porter, ALGOL wouldn't be the same magazine in any way. And the next time you talk about editorial personality, remember these words.

TRUTH IN ADVERTISING: I take strong exception to one thing Richard Geis said in *SFR* #24. He said, "And yet—*SFR* has twice as many words as ALGOL, and is probably more interesting and valuable for reference and information and entertainment." On September 4th I wrote to Geis saying, ". . . I ask you to prove [your claim] by stating how many words you ran in this issue. If you're wrong, I'd appreciate your retraction in the next issue. I'll be able to get an exact word-count from my typesetter. If I'm wrong, I'll apologize for this letter in your issue, too."

As this issue goes to press two months later, Geis has not replied.●

Andrew Porter, Editor & Publisher


Sounding Brass, Tinkling Cymbal
ROBERT SILVERBERG
William Rotsler

. . . and even Silverberg, who sometimes, with all his skill and knowledge and sophistication, does tend to the androidal. . . .'
John Clute in *New Worlds 5*

Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.

And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing.
I Corinthians, 13

At last to speak of one's self. An odd temptation, which mostly I have resisted, in the past, maintaining that I'm not yet ready to undertake a summing up, or that I'm in the midst of some intricate new transition still not fully understood, or that I'm bored with myself and talking about myself. Yet I have granted all sorts of interviews, and spoken quite explicitly, all the while protesting my love of privacy; the one thing I've never attempted is explicit written autobiography. I manage to hold all poses at once, modest and exhibitionistic, esthete and man of commerce, puritan and libertine: probably the truth is that I have no consistent positions at all. We'll see.

Autobiography. Apparently one should not name the names of those one has been to bed with, or give explicit figures on the amount of money one has earned, those being the two data most eagerly sought by readers; all the rest is legitimate to reveal. Very well. The essential starting point, for me, is the confession (and boast) that I am a man who is living his own adolescent fantasies. When I was sixteen or so I yearned to win fame as a writer of science fiction, to become wealthy enough to indulge in whatever amusements I chose, to know the love of fair women, to travel widely, to live free from the pressures and perils of ordinary life. All these things have come to me, and more; I have fewer complaints to make about the hand destiny has dealt me than anyone I know. Here at what I assume is my midpoint I feel a certain inner security, a self-satisfaction, which I suppose borders occasionally on smugness. (But not on complacency. The past is unchangeable and the present delightful, yet the future still must be regarded warily. I live in California, a land where the earth might literally open beneath my feet this afternoon; and I've already once had, in my pre-California incarnation, the experience of awakening before dawn to find my world in flames.)

Because my life has been so generally satisfactory, and because I'm a literary enough man to know the dangers of *hubris*, I sometimes affect a kind of self-deprecatory shyness, a who-*me?* kind of attitude, whenever I am singled out for special attention. This pose gets more and more difficult to maintain as the years go on and the accomplishments and money and awards pile up; by now certain objective measures of achievement exist, for me, and there's an element of hypocrisy in trying to deny them purely for the sake of trying to avoid the fate that chops down the boastful. Ten years ago, or even five, I probably would have refused the opportunity to contribute to this book, claiming that I was unworthy (and privately fearing that others would say so if I did not). To hell with that now.

I am the youngest of the six contributors here: the youngest by nearly a decade, I suspect, since as I write this I'm still more than a year short of my fortieth birthday, and my companions, I know, all cluster around the half-century mark. A familiar feeling, that one. I was always the youngest in any group, owlishly precocious, a nastily bright little boy who was reading at three, writing little stories at six, spouting learned stuff about European dynasties and the sexual habits of plants at seven or eight, publishing illegible magazines at thirteen, and selling novels at eighteen. I was too unruly and too clever to remain in the same class at school with my contemporaries, so I grew up two years younger than all my friends, thinking of myself as small and weak and incomplete. Eventually, by surviving, I caught up with everyone. I am the oldest in my immediate circle of friends, with a beard alas now tinged with grey, and I am as tall as most and taller than many, and within the tiny world of science fiction I have become something of an elder statesman, and the wounds I received by being fourteen years old in a universe of sixteen-year-olds are so well sheathed in scar-tissue now that I might as well consider them healed. And yet it still is strange to be included as an equal in this particular group of writers, since three of them—Alfred Bester, Damon Knight, Frederik Pohl—were among my own literary idols when I was indulging in those adolescent fantasies of a writer's career twenty-odd years ago. A fourth, Harry Harrison, had not yet begun writing seriously then himself, but he was the editor who first paid me for writing anything, in 1953; and only Brian Aldiss, the originator of this project, played no part in shaping me in my teens, for I had never heard his name until I myself was an established writer. Yet I make no apologies for being here among my elders. Here we all are: professional writers, diligent craftsmen, successful creators—artists, if you will. And good friends as well.

I am an only child, born halfway through the Great Depression. (There would have been a sibling, I think, when I was about seven, but it miscarried; I often wonder what pattern my life would have taken had I not grown up alone, pampered, self-indulgent.) My ancestors were Jews from Eastern Europe, and my grandparents, three of whom survived well into my adulthood, were reared in Poland or Russia in villages beyond my easy comprehension. My father was born in London in the first year of this century, and came to the United States a few years thereafter. My mother was born in Brooklyn, New York, and so was I.

I have no very fond recollections of my childhood. I was puny, sickly, plagued with allergies and freckles, and (I thought) quite ugly. I was too clever by at least half, which made for troubles with my playmates. My parents were remote figures; my father was a certified public accountant, spending his days and many of his evenings adding up endless columns of red figures on long yellow sheets, and my mother taught school, so that I was raised mainly by Lottie, our mulatto housekeeper, and by my loving and amiable maternal grandmother. It was a painful time, lonely and embittering; I did make friends but, growing up in isolation and learning none of the social graces, I usually managed to alienate them quickly, striking at them with my sharp tongue if not my feeble fists. On the other hand, there were compensations: intelligence is prized in Jewish households, and my parents saw to it that mine was permitted to develop freely. I was taken to museums, given all the books I wanted, and allowed money for my hobbies. I took refuge from loneliness in these things; I collected stamps and coins, harpooned hapless butterflies and grasshoppers, raided the neighbors' gardens for specimens of leaves and flowers, stayed up late secretly reading, hammered out crude stories on an ancient typewriter, all with my father's strong encouragement and frequent enthusiastic participation, and it mattered less and less that I was a troubled misfit in the classroom if I could come home to my large private room in the afternoon and, quickly zipping through the too-easy homework, get down to the serious business of the current obsessional hobby.

Children who find the world about them distasteful turn readily to the distant and the alien. The lure of the

exotic seized me early. These were the years of World War II and real travel was impossible, but in 1943 a friend of my father's gave me a subscription to the *National Geographic Magazine,* and I was off to Zanzibar and Surinam and Jamaica in my imagination decades before I ever reached those places in actuality. (Typically, I began buying old *National Geographics* with lunatic persistence, and didn't rest until I had them all, from the 1880's on. I still have them.) Then, an hour's journey from home on the subway, there was the American Museum of Natural History, with its mummies and arrowheads, its mastodons and glyptodons, above all its brontosaurs and tyrannosaurs; Sunday after Sunday my father and I made the pilgrimage, and I revelled in the wonders of prehistory, soberly lecturing him on the relative chronological positions of Neanderthal and Peking and Piltdown Man. (Yes, Piltdown, this was 1944, remember.) From dinosaurs and other such fantastic fossils to science fiction was but a short journey: the romantic, exotic distant past is closely tied to the romantic, exotic distant future in my imagination.

So there was Jules Verne when I was nine—I must have taken that voyage with Captain Nemo a hundred times—and H.G. Wells when I was ten, most notably *The Time Machine* (which promised to show me all the incredible eons I would never live to know) but also *The Island of Dr. Moreau* and *War of the Worlds,* the myriad short stories, and even an obscure satire called *Mr. Blettsworthy on Rampole Island,* to which I often returned because Mr. Blettsworthy encountered living ground-sloths. There was Twain's *Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court,* which also I read repeatedly. (How early my fascination with time travel emerged!) I dabbled in comic books, too, and I have gaudy memories of Buck Rogers and *Planet Comics.* But somehow I missed Edgar Rice Burroughs altogether; and it was not until early 1948, when I was already a veteran of scores of hardbound science fiction books, that I even knew such things as science fiction magazines existed.

The magazines mostly repelled me by their covers and their titles. I did buy *Weird Tales*—my first one had an Edmond Hamilton novelette about the Norse gods, which delighted me since I had gone through whole libraries of Norse mythology in early boyhood. I bought *Amazing Stories,* then the sleaziest representative of the genre, because it happened to publish an uncharacteristically respectable-looking issue about then. I bought John Campbell's dignified little *Astounding Science Fiction,* but found the stories opaque and unrewarding to my thirteen-year-old mind. Because I was rather a snob, I would not even open magazines with names like *Thrilling Wonder Stories* and *Famous Fantastic Mysteries* and *Startling Stories,* especially since their covers were bright with paintings of hideous monsters and scantily clad damsels. (Sex was very frightening to me just then, and I had sworn never to have anything to do with women.) More than a year passed before I approached those magazines in what was by then an unquenchable thirst for science fiction, and discovered they were publishing some of the best material of the day.

Then there were the books: the wondrous Healy-McComas *Adventures in Time and Space,* the big Groff Conklin titles, Wollheim's *Pocket Book of Science Fiction,* and the other pioneering anthologies. My father was more than a little baffled by my increasing obsession with all this trash, when previously I occupied myself with decent books on botany and geology and astronomy, but he saw to it that I bought whatever I wanted. One collection in particular had enormous impact on me: Wollheim's *Portable Novels of Science,* published in 1945 and discovered by me three years later. It contained Wells' *First Men in the Moon,* which amused me; Taine's *Before the Dawn,* which fed my always passionate interest in dinosaurs; Lovecraft's *Shadow Out of Time,* which gave me that peep into unattainable futures that originally led me to science fiction; and above all Stapledon's *Odd John,* which spoke personally to me as I suppose it must to any child who is too bright for his own good. I was up almost till dawn reading that book, and those novels marked me.

I was at that time still talking of some sort of career in the sciences, perhaps in botany, perhaps in paleontology, perhaps astronomy. But some flaws in my intelligence were making themselves apparent, to me and to my teachers if not to my parents: I had a superb memory and a quick wit, but I lacked depth, originality, and consistency; my mind was like a hummingbird, darting erratically over surfaces. I wanted to encompass too much, and mastered nothing, and though I always got high marks in any subject that caught my interest, I noticed, by the time I was thirteen, that some of my classmates were better than I at grasping fundamental principles and drawing new conclusions from them. I doubt that I would have been of much value as a scientist. But already I was writing, and writing with precocious skill—for school newspapers and magazines, for my own abominably mimeographed magazine, and, without success, for professional science fiction magazines. Off went stories, double-spaced and bearing accurate word-counts (612, 1814, 2705). They were dreadful, naturally, and they came back, usually with printed rejection slips but sometimes—when the editors realized they were dealing with a bright child of thirteen or fourteen and not with a demented adult—with gentle letters suggesting ways I might improve my style or my sense of plot. And I spoke openly of a career in writing, perhaps earning my living as a journalist while writing science fiction as a sideline.

Why science fiction? Because it was science fiction that I preferred to read, though I had been through Cervantes and Shakespeare and that crowd too. And because writing science fiction allowed me to give free play to those fantasies of space and time and dinosaurs and supermen that were so gratifying to me. And because I had stumbled into the world of science fiction fandom, a world much more comfortable than the real world of bullies and athletes and sex, and I knew that my name on the contents page of *Astounding* or *Startling* would win me much prestige in fandom, prestige that I could hardly hope to gain among my classmates.

So, then, the stories went forth, awkward imitations on a miniature scale of my favorite moments out of Lovecraft or Stapledon or Taine or Wells, and the stories came back, and I read textbooks on the narrative art and learned a good deal, and began also to read the stories in the science fiction magazines with a close analytical eye, measuring the ratio of dialogue to exposition, the length of paragraphs, and other technical matters that, I suppose, few fifteen-year-olds study as carefully as I did. Nothing got published, or even came close, but I was growing in skill.

I was growing in other ways, too. When I was about fourteen I went off, for the first time, to summer camp, where I lived among boys (and girls) of my own age and no longer had to contend with being the youngest and puniest in my peer-group. I had always been known as 'Robert,' but at camp I was speedily dubbed 'Bob,' and it seemed to me that I was taking on a new identity. *Robert* was that spindly misfit, that maladjusted, isolated little boy; *Bob* was a healthy, outgoing, normal young man. To this day I wince when some stranger presumes on my public persona and addresses me as Robert—it sends me rocketing backward in time to the horrors of being ten again. Although I sign my stories *Robert* for reasons of formality, my friends know me as *Bob,* and my parents managed the transition fairly gracefully at my request (although my father sometimes slips a quarter of a century

after the change), and when I occasionally encounter some childhood friend I let him know, rapidly, the name I prefer and the reason I prefer it.

This new Bob was able to cope. He grew to a reasonable height, halting just a bit short of six feet; he became a passable athlete; he discovered how to sustain friendships and how to manage conversations. For a few years I led a split life, introverted and lonely and secretive at home, open and lighthearted and confident during the summers; and by the time I was about seventeen, some integration of the two lives had begun. I had finished high school (where I had become editor of the high-school newspaper and was respected for my skill as a writer) and, by way of surrendering some of my precocity, had declined to go immediately into college. Instead I spent a few months reading and writing, and a few months working in a furniture warehouse on the Brooklyn waterfront, among rough, tough illiterates who found my cultivated manner a charming novelty rather than a threatening intrusion, and then I went off to the summer camp, not as a camper but as an employee. In the autumn I entered Columbia University with old slates wiped clean: I was no longer morbidly too young. I was free of the local playmates who could never forget the maladjustments of my childhood, I was able to begin in the *Bob* persona, without hauling the burden of my past problems.

I lived away from home, in a little apartment of my own. I manifested previously knknown skills for drinking and carousing. I discovered that women were not really very frightening after all. I plunged myself into new worlds of the mind: into Aquinas and Plato, into Bartok and Schoenberg, into Kafka, Joyce, Mann, Faulkner, Sartre. I continued to read science fiction, but dispassionately, with the eye of one who was soon to be a professional; I was less interested in visions of ultimate tomorrows and more in seeing how Messrs Bester, Pohl, Knight, Sheckley, Dick etc., carried off their tricks. One of my stories was published—for a fee of $5, I think—by an amateur magazine called *Different,* operated by a poetess named Lilith Lorraine. Harry Harrison asked me to do an article about fandom for a science fiction magazine he was editing, and I turned in a competent journalistic job and was paid $30. That was in September 1953. I sent a short story called "Gorgon Planet" off to a magazine called *Nebula,* published in Scotland by Peter Hamilton, and in January 1954 he notified me that he would use it, and sent me his check for $12.60.

That same month I sold a novel to a major American publisher. The earlier sales could be brushed aside as inconsequential—two weak short stories accepted by obscure magazines, and one specimen of mere journalism—but the novel was something else. I was not yet nineteen years old, and I was a professional writer. I had crossed the threshold.

That novel! Its genesis went back almost three years. When I was editor of my high-school newspaper in 1951 a book appeared for review, a science-fiction novel for boys, published by the Thomas Y. Crowell Company, an old-line New York firm. Steeped as I was in Wells and Heinlein and Stapledon and such, I reviewed this clumsy, naive book scornfully, demolishing it so effectively that in the summer of 1953 the publishing company invited me to examine and criticize, prior to publication, the latest manuscript by that author. I read it and demolished it too, with such thoroughness that the book was never published. This time the Crowell editor asked me to the office and said, in effect, "If you know so much about science fiction, why don't you try a novel for us yourself?" I accepted the challenge.

I had attempted a novel once before, at the age of thirteen. It began as two short stories, but I subsequently combined them elaborated, padded most shamefully, and ended up with an inch-thick manuscript that must have been one of the least coherent hodgepodges ever committed to paper. The outline of the book I suggested to Crowell in September 1953 was better, but not much. It concerned the trip of four young space cadets to Alpha Centauri on a sort of training cruise. No plot, not much action. The cadets are chosen, leave for space, stop at Mars and Pluto, reach Alpha Centauri, become vaguely entangled in a revolution going on there, become disentangled and go home. Some novel.

Every weekend that autumn I wrote two or three chapters, working swiftly despite the pressures of college. When eight chapters were done I submitted them and received an encouraging note urging me to complete the book. It was done by mid-November: nineteen chapters, 145 pages of typescript. I sent it in, heard nothing for two months, and on a Sunday in January 1954, received a stunning telephone call from the Crowell editor: they were sending me a contract for my novel. Of course, some changes would be required before it could be published.

In March I was sent a severe four-page letter of analysis. Anticlimax after anticlimax, they said; first part of book fine, last half terrible. Though immensely discouraged, I set to work rewriting, trying to build complications and a resolution into my rudimentary story. On 5 June this revision came back to me: I had allowed my main protagonist to achieve his goal by default rather than by positive action, and the publishers wouldn't let me get away with that. I promised to spend the summer considering ways to restructure the book; meanwhile Crowell would consult an outside reader for suggestions and evaluations.

The summer passed. I did no writing, though I began vaguely to hatch a completely new plot turning on my hero's climactic conversion to the revolutionary party. At the end of October the long-awaited reader's report on the manuscript landed in the mailbox of my campus apartment. It made the job I had done on that unpublished book the year before look like praise. What was wrong, I learned, was that I really didn't know how to write. I had no idea of characterization or plotting, my technique was faulty, virtually everything except my typing was badly done. If possible, the reader said, I should enroll in a writing course at New York University.

A year earlier, I might have been crushed; but by the autumn of 1954 I had sold a couple of competent if uninspired short stories, I had written five or six more that seemed quite publishable to me (ultimately, I sold them all), and I felt that I had a fairly firm technical grasp on the art of fiction, however faulty the execution of my novel might be at the moment. Instead of abandoning the project, I spent three hours considering what I could do to save it, and in the afternoon I telephoned my editor to tell her that I proposed a total rewrite based on the conversion-to-revolution theme. By this time she must have come to doubt her original faith in my promise and talent, but she told me to go ahead.

I knew this was my last chance. The first step was to throw out the first nine chapters, which had survived intact through all the earlier drafts. They were good, solid chapters—it was the end of the story that was weak, not the beginning—but they had little relevance to my new theme. I compressed them into two pages and got my characters off to the Alpha Centauri system as fast as I could. In six weekends of desperate work the new novel, wholly transformed, was done. And on 2 January 1955—one year almost to the hour since I had been notified that a contract would be offered me—I received a telegram: CONGRATULATIONS ON A WONDERFUL REVISION JOB ALL SET TO GO.

Revolt on Alpha C was published in August 1955, to generally indifferent reviews. ("inept and unreal . . . a series of old-hat adventures," said the *New York Times.*) Perhaps that was too harsh a verdict: the book is short,

innocent, a little foolish, but not contemptible. It remained in print, in its Crowell edition, for seventeen years, earning modest but steady royalties until the printing was exhausted. A paperback edition published in 1959 still seems to enjoy a healthy life, having been through seven or eight printings so far, and in 1972 the book was reissued on two microfiche cards as part of the Xerox Micromedia Classroom Libraries series. This strange persistence of a very young author's very unimportant first novel does not delude me into thinking I must have created a classic unrecognized in its own day, nor do I believe it has much to do with my latter-day prominence in science fiction. That *Revolt on Alpha C* remains in print after nearly twenty years is no more than an odd accident of publishing, but one that I find charming as well as profitable. My father never ceases to ask if the book still brings in royalties, and he is as wonderstruck as I that it does.

I was launched. On the strength of having sold a novel and a few short stories, I was able to get an agent, Scott Meredith, and he has represented me now for two decades. (There are writers and publishers who will tell you that drawing and quartering is too gentle a fate for him, and there are other writers who have been with him longer than I, with every intention of continuing the relationship until time's end. I think every agent evokes a similarly wide spectrum of responses.) I sent my agent all the unsold short stories in my file, and, assuming that manuscripts bearing his sponsorship would sell far more readily than ones coming in unsolicited from an unknown writer, I awaited a flow of publishers' checks. The flow was a bit sluggish, though. Two trifling stories sold to minor magazines in June 1954 and February 1955 for a total of $40.50; in May 1955 came $49.50 for a rather more elaborate piece. But several quite ambitious stories, which I thought worthy of the leading magazines of the time, failed to sell at all, from which I began to draw a sinister conclusion: that if I intended to earn a livelihood writing fiction, it would be wiser to use my rapidly developing technical skills to turn out mass-produced formularized stories at high speed, rather than to lavish passion and energy on more individual works that would be difficult to sell.

In the summer of 1955, just as that sombre insight was crystallizing in me, Randall Garrett appeared in New York and rented a room in the hotel near Columbia University where I was living. Garrett was about eight years older than I, and had had some two dozen stories published, including several in *Astounding*, the premiere magazine of the era. Alone in a strange city, down on his luck, he struck up a curious friendship with me. We were markedly different in personal habits and rhythms, in philosophy, in background; but somehow these differences were a source of vitality rather than disharmony in the collaborative partnership that swiftly evolved. We complemented one another. Garrett was an established professional writer, but his discipline had collapsed and he was writing very little; I was unknown but ambitious, and could force an entire short story out of myself at a single sitting. Garrett had had a scientific education; mine was literary. Garrett was an efficient storyteller, but his prose was mechanical; I had trouble constructing internally consistent plots, but I wrote smoothly and with some grace. Garrett's stories rarely delved into character; I was already concerned, as much as I could be at the age of twenty, with emotional and psychological depth. We began to work together.

Until then, I had submitted all my stories by mail or else through my agent. Garrett took me to editorial offices. I met John Campbell of *Astounding*, Bob Lowndes of the esteemed but impoverished *Science Fiction Stories*, Howard Browne of *Amazing*, Larry Shaw of the newly founded *Infinity*. Editors, Garrett said, bought more readily from writers they had met than from strangers who had only postal contact with them, and lo! it was so. I sold five stories in August 1955, three in September, three in October, six in November, nine in December. Many of these were collaborations with Garrett, but quite a few were stories I did on my own, capitalizing on contacts I had made with his help. Suddenly I was something more than a beginner, here in my final year of college: I was actually earning a living, and quite a good living, by writing. I think the partnership with Garrett accelerated the progress of my career by several years.

Unfortunately there were negative aspects. Once I had assumed, naively, that if I merely wrote the best stories that were in me, editors would recognize their merits and seek my work. Now I was coming to see that there was a quicker road to success—to live in New York, to visit editors regularly, learn of their issue-by-issue needs and manufacture fiction to fit them. I developed a deadly facility; if an editor needed a 7500-word story of alien conquest in three days to balance an issue about to go to press, he need only phone me and I would produce it. Occasionally I took my time and tried to write the sort of science fiction I respected as a reader, but usually I had trouble selling such stories to the better markets, which reinforced my growing cynicism. By the summer of 1956—by which time I had graduated from college and had married—I was the complete writing machine, turning out stories in all lengths at whatever quality the editor desired, from slam-bang adventure to cerebral pseudo-philosophy. No longer willing to agonize over the gulf between my literary ambitions and my actual productions, I wrote with astonishing swiftness, selling fifteen stories in June of 1956, twenty the following month, fourteen (including a three-part serial, done with Garrett, for *Astounding*) the month after that.

This hectic productivity was crowned at the World Science Fiction Convention in September 1956, when I was voted a special Hugo as the most promising new writer of the year. The basis for the award could only have been my ubiquity, since most of what I had published was carefully-carpentered but mediocre, and much was wholly opportunistic trash. It is interesting to note that the writers I defeated for the trophy were Harlan Ellison, who at the time had had only one or two dismal stories published, and Frank Herbert, whose impressive *Under Pressure* had appeared in *Astounding* the year before. A week after the convention I went with my bride, Barbara, to the first Milford Science Fiction Writers' Workshop, an awesome assembly of titans—Theodore Sturgeon, Fritz Leiber, Cyril Kornbluth, Lester del Rey, Damon Knight, Frederik Pohl, James Blish, William Tenn, and a dozen more of equal stature. Ellison and I were the only neophytes present. Harlan had not yet begun to show a shadow of his future abilities, and he made an easy whipping-boy for the patriarchs, but I was a different matter: self-contained, confident, quite sure of what I was doing and why.

Del Rey and a few others tried to shake my cynicism and persuade me to aim higher than sure-thing potboilers, but it was clear that potboilers were what I wanted to write, and no one could argue with my success at hammering out penny-a-word dreadfuls. I was only a boy, yet already my annual income was beyond that of anyone in the field except Asimov, Heinlein, Clarke, and Bradbury, those long-enshrined demigods. What I dared not say was that I had opted to write mechanical junk because I had no faith, any longer, in my ability to write anything better. It had been my experience that whenever I assayed the kind of fiction that Sturgeon or Leiber or Kornbluth wrote, I had trouble getting it published. My craftsmanship was improving steadily, in the narrow sense of craft as knowing how to construct a story and make it move; possibly some fatal defect of the soul, some missing quality, marred my serious work, so that it was idle of me, I

thought, to try to compete with the Sturgeons and Leibers. I will leave art to the artists, I said quietly, and earn a decent living doing what I do best.

By the end of 1956 I had more than a million published words behind me. I lived in a large, handsome apartment in what was then a desirable neighborhood on Manhattan's Upper West Side. I was learning about fine wines and exotic foods and planning a trip to Europe. The collaboration with Garrett had long since ended, but the impetus he had given me was sufficient and reliable. (A few, notably Horace Gold of *Galaxy*, swore at me for ruining a potentially important talent, but Horace bought my artfully aimed *Galaxy*-type potboilers all the same.) My fellow writers viewed me with alarm, seeing me as some sort of berserk robot that would fill every page of every magazine with its output; they deplored my utter lack of literary ambition, yet accepted me as one of their number, and I formed strong friendships within the close-knit science fiction fraternity. And I wrote, and I sold, and I prospered, and with rare exceptions abandoned any pretense at literary achievement. I wanted to win economic security—to get enough money into the bank so that I would be insulated against the financial storms that had buffeted most of the writers I knew, some of the greatest in the field among them. Lester del Rey pointed out to me that simply on the money-making level I was going about things the wrong way. The stuff I was writing earned me a cent or two a word and then dropped into oblivion, while stories written with more care, with greater intensity of purpose, were reprinted again and again, earning their authors fees far beyond the original sale. I knew that this was so, but I preferred to take the immediate dollar rather than the hypothetical future anthology glory.

So it went through 1957 and 1958. I grew a beard and acquired other, less superficial, stigmata of sophistication. I journeyed to London and Paris, to Arizona and California, treating myself at last to the travels I had not had in boyhood. I learned the lore of the investment world and made some cautious and quite successful forays into the stock market, seeking always the financial independence that I believed would free me from the karmic wheel of high-volume hackmanship.

Not everything I wrote was touched by corruption. I still loved science fiction for its soaring visionary expansiveness, for its mind-liberating power, and however dollar-oriented I became I still yearned to make some valuable contribution to the field, and felt guilty that the stuff I was churning out was the sort of thing I had openly scorned in my fan-magazine critical essays seven or eight years before. I recall in particular a Sunday afternoon party at Harlan Ellison's Manhattan apartment in 1957 where I talked shop with Cyril Kornbluth, Algis Budrys, James Blish, and one or two other sf writers of their level, and went home in an abyss of self-contempt because these men, my friends, were trying always to publish only their best while I was content to do my worst. Whenever I felt the sting, I put aside hackwork and tried to write honest fiction.

Scattered through my vast output of the late 1950's, then, are a good many quite respectable stories, not masterpieces—I was still very young, and much more callow than most people suspected—but decently done jobs. Occasionally even now they find their way into anthologies. They were my comfort in those guilt-ridden days, those stories and the novels. In longer lengths I was not so commercially-minded, and I genuinely hoped to achieve in books what was beyond me in the magazines. There were few publishers of science fiction novels then, however: the market consisted, essentially, of three houses, Doubleday, Ballantine, and Ace. With the leading writers of the day keeping the first two well supplied with books, I found no niche for myself, and turned of necessity to Donald Wollheim's Ace Books. This small company published scores of novels a year in a rather squalid format, and was constantly searching for new writers to meet its hunger for copy. The shrewd and experienced Wollheim worked miracles on a tiny budget and produced an extraordinarily broad list, ranging from juvenile action stories to superb novels by Philip K. Dick, A. E. van Vogt, Clifford D. Simak, Isaac Asimov, and other luminaries. Wollheim saw potential in me, perhaps as a mass-producer of action fiction and perhaps as something more than that, and encouraged me to offer him novels. He purchased the first, *The Thirteenth Immortal*, late in 1956, and I wrote nine more for him, I think, in the next seven years.

My Ace novels would be fruitful material for somebody's thesis. The first was melodramatic, overblown, a little absurd, yet sincerely conceived; its faults are those of its author's youth, not his cynical approach toward his trade. The second, *Master of Life and Death* (1957), was something of a *tour de force*, a maze of plot and sub-plot handled, I think, with some dexterity. *Invaders from Earth* (1958), the third, attempts a sophisticated depiction of psychological and political realities. I liked those two well enough to allow them to be reprinted a decade later. *Stepsons of Terra* (1958) was an intricate time-paradox novel with a certain van Vogtian intensity. On the evidence of these four books alone I would seem an earnest and ambitious young writer striving constantly to improve. But the rest of the novels I wrote for Wollheim were slapdash adventure stories, aiming no higher than the least of his line; I had learned there was little money and less prestige in doing books for Ace, and without those rewards I was content to do the minimum acceptable job. (A few of my later Ace books were better than that, but they were aimed at better markets and went to Wollheim only after others had rejected them.) I know that Wollheim was disappointed in the trend my work for him had taken, but I was too far gone in materialism to care.

During the high-volume years I wrote a good deal that was not science fiction—crime stories, a few westerns, profiles of movie stars, and other odds and ends. Some of this work came to me on assignment from my agent, and some I sought because my rate of productivity was now so high that the science fiction field could not absorb all the wordage I was capable of turning out. I had the conviction, though—shared by a surprisingly large number of science fiction writers—that to write SF was the One True Task, and any other kind of writing was mere hack-work done to pay the bills. This was a legitimate enough attitude when held by people like James Blish or William Tenn, who in their early days were forced to write sports fiction and other trivia because the SF market was so tiny; but it was a bit odd for me to feel that way when virtually everything I wrote, SF or not, was pounded out in the same cold-blooded high-velocity manner. Still, I did feel that way, and whatever my private feelings about the quality of most of my science fiction at that time, I still saw it as a higher endeavor than my westerns and crime stories.

Then, late in 1958, the science fiction world collapsed. Most of the magazines for which I was writing regularly went out of business as a result of upheavals in distribution patterns, and those that survived became far more discriminating about what they would publish. My kind of mass production became obsolete. To sustain what had become a comfortable standard of living I found it necessary to leave the cozy, incestuous science fiction family and look for work in the general New York publishing scene.

The transition was quick and relatively painless. I was facile, I was confident, and my friends had friends. I hired out to any editor who would undertake to pay on time; and, though I continued to write some science fiction in 1959 and 1960, my records for those

years show all sorts of strange pseudonymous stories and articles: "Cures for Sleepless Nights," "Horror Rides the Freeway," "I Was a Tangier Smuggler," "Hot Rod Challenge," "Buried Billions Lie in Wait," and so many others that it strains my own credulity. I recall writing one whole piece before lunch and one after lunch, day in, day out; my annual output climbed well above a million words in 1959 and went even higher in 1960 and 1961.

These were years of wandering in the wilderness. I was earning more money than I had in science fiction, and I had no problems of guilt, for in pouring out this grotesque miscellany I did not need to flagellate myself with the knowledge that I was traducing a literature I loved. On the other hand, I had no particular identity as a writer. In the past, when people asked me what I did, I had answered that I wrote science fiction; now, working anonymously in twenty different sub-literate markets, I had no ready reply, so I went on saying I was a science fiction writer. In truth I did have the occasional story in *Galaxy* or *Astounding,* and an Ace book now and then, to make the claim legitimate. I was mainly a manufacturer of utilitarian prose, though, churned out by the yard. It was stupefyingly boring, and, as the money piled up, I invested it shrewdly and talked of retiring by the time I was thirty, living on my dividend income, and spending my days travelling, reading, and studying. Already I was doing a good bit of that. In the winters my wife and I fell into the habit of going to the West Indies, where we became skin-divers and explored coral reefs. In the summers we made other journeys—Canada in 1959, Italy in 1960, the American Northwest in 1961. I was working only four or five hours a day, five days a week, when at home, which left me ample leisure for my private interests—contemporary literature and music, art, ancient history. There was an almost total split between my conscienceless commercialized working-hours self and the civilized and fastidious man who replaced him in early afternoon. I was still only about twenty-five years old.

Unexpectedly the seeds of a new writing career began to sprout. One of my few science fiction pieces of 1959 was a little novel for children, *Lost Race of Mars,* published by the notable house of Holt, Rinehart and Winston. (My earlier connection with Crowell had fallen apart in 1956, after their rejection of my proposed successor to *Revolt on Alpha C,* and this was my first contact with a major publishing house since then.) *Lost Race of Mars* was short and simple, but it was an appealing book; the *New York Times* chose it as one of the hundred best children's books of the year, and the publisher expressed eagerness to do more of my work. (*Lost Race* is still in print and selling well, both in hardcover and a paperback edition.) I had visited Pompeii while in Italy in 1960, and now I saw a way of capitalizing on my interest, strong since childhood, in antiquity and its remains: I suggested a book for young readers on the excavation of Pompeii.

The people at Holt, Rinehart and Winston considered the idea for quite a while but ultimately declined it. Henry Morrison, who then was handling my affairs at the Scott Meredith agency and who since has become an important agent in his own right, told me he thought the project would fare better if I wrote not about one ancient site but several—say, Chichén Itzá and Angkor and Babylon as well as Pompeii—and he even offered me a title for the expanded book, *Lost Cities and Vanished Civilizations.* When I agreed he sold the book, on the basis of a brief outline, to a Philadelphia house of which I knew nothing, Chilton Books.

With my agent's help I began to emerge from that wilderness of anonymous potboilerei. I began to work in book-length non-fiction, and displayed gifts for quick, comprehensive research and orderly uncluttered exposition. For a minor paperback company called Monarch, now defunct, I did books on the American space program, the Rockefeller family, and the life of Sir Winston Churchill; and for Chilton, in the summer of 1961, I wrote my lost-cities book. None of this was art, but it was far from despicable work. I used secondary sources and wrote with journalistic speed, but what I produced was clear, generally accurate, an honest kind of popularized history. Chilton liked *Lost Cities* and hastened to accept my next proposal, for a book on underwater archaeology. Early in 1962 a suggestion for a young readers' book on great battles found favor at the old-line house of G. P. Putnam's Sons. In April of that year *Lost Cities and Vanished Civilizations* was published and—to my amazement, for I thought of it as no more than a competent rehash of other writers' books—was chosen as one of the year's five best books for young people by an annual awards committee in the field of juvenile publishing, and was selected by the Junior Literary Guild, an important book club. Once again I found myself launched.

Many of New York's leading hardcover publishing houses were willing, on the strength of the success of *Lost Cities,* to give me contracts for non-fiction juvenile books on whatever subject happened to interest me. As rapidly as I dared I severed my connections with my sleazy magazine outlets and ascended into this new, astoundingly respectable and rewarding career. Chilton took another general archaeology book, *Empires in the Dust.* Holt, Rinehart and Winston accepted a biography of the great Assyriologist, Austen Henry Layard. The New York Graphic Society commissioned a book on American Indians, and Putnam one on the history of medicine.

The rhythm of my life changed dramatically. I still wrote in the mornings and early afternoons—wrote at almost the same incredible velocity as when I had been doing tales of Tangier smugglers—but now I spent the after-hours time taking notes in libraries and museums, and I began to assemble a vast private reference library at home. Although my early non-fiction books had been hasty compilations out of other popularizations, I swiftly became more conscientious, as though to live up to the high opinion others had formed of those early books; I went to primary sources whenever possible, I visited actual sites, I did intensive research in many ways. The results were visible. Within a year or two I was considered one of the most skilled popularizers of the sciences in the United States, with publishers eagerly standing in line as my changing interests took me from books on Antarctica and ancient Egypt to investigations of scientific hoaxes and living fossils. For the first time since I had become a professional writer, nearly a decade earlier, I won my own respect.

I maintained a tenuous link with science fiction, largely social, since then as now my closest friends were science fiction writers. I attended parties and conventions, and kept up with what was being published. But of actual science fiction writing I was doing very little. There seemed no commercial reason to get back into SF, even though it had recovered considerably from its 1958 swoon; I had more work than I could handle in the lucrative juvenile non-fiction hardcover field. Only the old shame remained to tweak me: I had served science fiction badly in my 1955-8 days, and I wanted to atone. When Frederik Pohl became editor of *Galaxy* he suggested that I do short stories for him and offered me absolute creative freedom: I could write what I pleased and, within reason, he undertook to buy it. In such an arrangement I could blame neither editorial shortsightedness nor constricting editorial policies for the quality of what I wrote: I was my own master. In the summer of 1962 I offered Pohl a short story, "To See the Invisible Man," inspired by Borges, which was out of an entirely different artistic universe from anything I had written in my first go-around in science fiction—a mature, complex story. He published it and, over the next couple of years, half

a dozen more of similar ambitious nature, and, bit by bit, I found myself drawn back into science fiction, this time not as a producer of commodities but as a serious, dedicated artist who turned away from more profitable work to indulge in SF out of love.

During those years—1962 to 1965—when I dabbled in science fiction for sheer diversion only, science fiction was undergoing radical changes. The old pulp-magazine rigidities were dissolving. New writers were everywhere: Brian Aldiss, J. G. Ballard, Roger Zelazny, Samuel R. Delany, R. A. Lafferty, Michael Moorcock, and a dozen more. In the bad old days one had to be an established writer of mighty stature, a Bester or a Blish or a Sturgeon, to 'get away' with any sort of literary adventurousness; most editors rightly thought that their readers were hostile to unusual modes of narrative, and nearly everyone wrote in an interchangeable manner, unquestioningly adopting universal conventions of style and construction. Suddenly the *way* of telling stories was released from convention. The familiar old robots and starships were being put through strange and fascinating new paces. Pulp-magazine requirements for neat plots and 'upbeat' positive resolutions were abandoned. I had been only too willing, in 1957 and thereabouts, to conform to the prevailing modes, for it seemed quixotic to try to do otherwise. Now an army of younger, or at any rate newer, writers had boldly overthrown the traditional rules, and, a trifle belatedly, I joined the revolution.

Even after I returned to science fiction, the non-fiction books remained my chief preoccupation. For one thing, to go back to the mass production of SF would be to defeat the purpose of returning; for another, I was so overwhelmed with non-fiction contracts stretching two and three years into the future, that there was no question of a full-time resumption of SF. The non-fiction was becoming ever more ambitious and the books took longer; in the summer of 1965 I spent months working on one title alone, which I had never done before. (It was a book on the Great Wall of China—no mere cut-and-paste job, but an elaborate and unique synthesis of all available knowledge about the Wall.) Then, too, science fiction had become more permissive but there was still not much money to be had in writing it, and I was continuing to pursue my goal of economic independence, which mandated my centering my career in other fields.

One gigantic item of overhead had entered my life. Early in 1962 I had purchased an imposing house—a mansion, in fact—in a lovely, almost rural enclave near the northwest corner of New York City. I had always lived in apartments; now I joined the landed classes, and had my own lawn and garden, my own giant oak trees, my own wild raccoons wandering about at night (in New York!). There was room for all my books and all I was likely to acquire for many years to come. The third floor of the house, a separate four-room suite, became my working area, and we filled the rest of the place with books and paintings and *objets d'art.* It was a magnificent house, beautiful and stately, and not at all costly in terms of my income at the time. What *was* costly was the upkeep, taxes and cleaning and heat and all, running to many thousands of dollars a year; though I still intended to retire from full-time high-volume writing as soon as possible, I recognized that by buying the house I had postponed that retirement by at least five years.

The non-fiction books grew ever more demanding as—driven by vanity, I suppose, or by intellectual pride, or merely by the feeling that it was time for my reach to begin exceeding my grasp—I tackled bigger and bigger projects. Though I still was doing books for readers in their teens, a biography of Kublai Khan and one of Socrates, a book on bridges and one on coral reefs, I was aiming primarily for older readers in much of what I did, and endeavoring now to deal with subjects that had had no serious examinations in recent times. The Great Wall book was the first of these; and early in 1966 I embarked on a far more arduous task, a book called *The Golden Dream,* a study of the obsessive quest for the mythical land of El Dorado. Working an impossible, brutal schedule, pouring out thousands of words a week, I knew more than a little about the psychology of obsession, and the book, 120,000 words long, was surely the finest thing I had ever done. It was published in an appropriately handsome edition by the Bobbs-Merrill Company, was treated with respect by reviewers, and, I grieve to report, dropped into oblivion as fast as any of my hackwork. The book earned me no income beyond the small initial advance in the United States, was never published at all in Great Britain, and achieved only one translation, in France. I was disappointed but not discouraged; it would have been agreeable to grow rich on the book, but this was secondary to the joy and challenge of having written it. I was learning to love my work for its own sake, regardless of its fate in the marketplace. Growing up, that is.

About the time of *The Golden Dream* I inaugurated still another aspect of my career by asking the publisher of some of my non-fiction juveniles to let me edit a science fiction anthology. Here at last I could put to some practical use all those years of collecting and reading SF; I had built a superb science fiction library, with literally every magazine ever published and most of the books. The anthology, *Earthmen and Strangers,* was released in the autumn of 1966. I found editing so much to my taste that I sought other anthology contracts and ultimately was devoting as much time to editing as to my own writing.

In that same period—1965-66—I built close associations with the two major science fiction houses of the era, Ballantine and Doubleday. When I first became a professional writer these houses were the exclusive preserves of the Clarkes and Heinleins and Sturgeons and Asimovs and Bradburys, and seemed unattainable to the likes of me; now, still having not much of a reputation in science fiction but solidly established outside the field and confident of my skills, I found no difficulty convincing Betty Ballantine of Ballantine and Larry Ashmead of Doubleday to publish my SF. (Even though I considered myself a very part-time science fiction writer in those days, I was still prolific enough to require two regular publishers.) To Ballantine I gave *To Open the Sky,* a pseudo-novel constructed from five novelettes I had written for Fred Pohl's *Galaxy.* To Doubleday I offered *The Time Hoppers,* an expansion of one of those ambitious short stories of my youth that I had had so much trouble placing in 1954. They were both good, middle-of-the-road science fiction, not exactly of Hugo quality but several notches above anything I had published in the field before.

Ballantine also agreed to do a collection of my short stories; and, in January 1966, I proposed a new novel, a book called *Thorns,* telling Mrs. Ballantine, "Much of the texture of the story will rely on background details that can't be sketched in advance. I hope you can gather enough of my intentions from the outline to go ahead with it. What I have in mind is a psychological SF novel, somewhat adventurous in style and approach and characterization, and I think I can bring it off. It's worth trying, at any rate." She agreed to the gamble.

I spent the next few months writing the El Dorado book, and in June I fell into a mysterious illness. All energy went from me and I lost close to twenty pounds—though I was slender to begin with—in a few weeks. I had not been ill since finishing with the standard childhood maladies, indeed was not even prone to minor upsets, and this was a startling event to me. The symptoms answered well to leukemia and other dire things, but turned out to

be only a metabolic change, a sudden hyperactivity of the thyroid gland. Such thyroid outbreaks, I learned, are often caused by the stress of prolonged overwork, and I think the forced marches of El Dorado had much to do with this one. I took it as a warning: I was past thirty and it was time to think realistically about slowing down. Though I had enough book contracts to keep me busy for two or three years, I resolved to reduce my output and gradually to make drastic reductions in the time I devoted to work.

Though greatly weakened, I wrote steadily—but at a slower pace—through the infernally hot summer of 1966, while at the same time planning *Thorns* and doing preliminary research for another major non-fiction work, a study of the prehistoric Mound Builder cultures of the central United States. I was still gaunt and haggard when I attended the annual science fiction convention in Cleveland at the beginning of September, but the drug therapy for my thyroid condition was beginning to take hold, and immediately after the convention I felt strong enough to begin *Thorns.* The title describes the book: prickly, rough in texture, a sharp book. I worked quickly, often managing twenty pages or more a day, yet making no concessions to the conventions of standard science fiction. The prose was often oblique and elliptical (and sometimes shamefully opaque in a way I'd love to fix retroactively); the action was fragmented in the telling; the characters were angular, troubled souls. Midway in the job I journeyed out to Pennsylvania to attend a party at Damon Knight's Milford Workshop. I knew nearly all the writers there, and they knew me. They all knew how prosperous I was, and some were aware that I had achieved worthwhile things with my non-fiction, but they couldn't have had much respect for me as a writer of science fiction. They might admire my professionalism, my productivity, my craftsmanship—but to them I was still that fellow who had written all that zap-zap space-opera in the 1950's. Their gentle and not-so-gentle comments hardly troubled me, though, for I knew I was no longer that mass-producer of garbage, and sooner or later they would all know it too. While at Milford I glanced at an Italian science fiction magazine and found a harsh review of one of my early Ace novels, recently published in Italy. Badly done and wordy, the critic said—*malcondotto e prolisse.* Perhaps it was. The next day, when I went home to finish *Thorns,* Malcondotto and Prolisse joined the cast of characters.

I regained my health by the end of the year and eventually made a full and permanent recovery. I withdrew, bit by bit, from my lunatic work schedule: having written better than a million and a half words for publication in 1965, I barely exceeded a million in 1966, and have never been anywhere near that insane level of productivity since. Though I still wrote daily except when travelling, I worked less feverishly, content to quit early if I had had a good morning at the typewriter, and I began alternating science fiction and non-fiction books to provide myself with periodic changes of rhythm. I looked forward to 1967 with some eagerness—and with much curiosity, too, for that was the year in which my first really major science fiction, *Thorns* and *The Time Hoppers* and a novella called "Hawksbill Station," would finally be published. Would they be taken as signs of reform and atonement for past literary sins, or would they be ignored as the work of a writer who by his own admission had never been much worth reading?

I began the year by writing a short story, "Passengers," for Damon Knight's new *Orbit* anthology series. He asked for revisions, minor but crucial, five times, and though I grumbled I saw the wisdom of his complaints and did the rewriting. I wrote a novel for Doubleday, *To Live Again,* which surpassed anything I had done in complexity of plot and development of social situation. I expanded "Hawksbill Station" into a novel. I did my vast Mound Builder book, bigger even than El Dorado, a book that was as much a study of the myth-making process as it was an exploration of American Indian culture. (When it appeared in 1968, as *Mound Builders of Ancient America: The Archaeology of a Myth,* many reviewers, even those in the archaeological journals, assumed I was myself an archaeologist, and I received flattering if embarrassing invitations to lecture, to teach, and to write reviews. The book was greeted enthusiastically by professional archaeologists and has become a standard reference item, to be found in most libraries. Having said so many uncomplimentary things about my own writing in these pages, I think I've earned the right to be a bit boastful about this one.) There were three other big projects in this year of supposedly reduced output: the novels *The Masks of Time* and *The Man in the Maze* and another Goliath of a non-fiction work, *The Longest Voyage,* an account of the first six circumnavigations of the world.

I was, in truth, riding an incredible wave of creative energy. Perhaps it was an overcompensation for my period of fatigue and illness in 1966, perhaps just the sense of liberation and excitement that came from knowing I was at last writing only what I wanted to write, as well as I could do it. In any event I look back in wonder and awe at a year that produced *To Live Again, Masks of Time, Man in the Maze,* two 150,000-word works of history, several short stories, and—I have as much trouble believing this as you—no less than seven non-fiction books for young readers, each in the 60,000-word range. No wonder my peers regarded me as some sort of robot: I have no idea myself how I managed it all, working five hours a day five days a week, with time off for holidays in Israel and the West Indies and a week at Montreal's Expo 67.

Thorns was published in August of 1967. All of Ballantine's science fiction titles were then automatically being distributed free to the members of the two-year-old Science Fiction Writers of America, and so all my colleagues had copies in hand at the time of that year's SF convention. Many of them had read it, and—as I hoped—it shook their image of my work. At least a dozen of my friends told me, with the frankness of true friendship, that the book had amazed them: not that they thought me incapable of writing it, but rather that I would be willing to take the trouble. It seemed such a radical break from my formularized science fiction of the 1950's that they thought of it as the work of some entirely new Robert Silverberg. I was pleased, of course, but also a little pained at these open admissions that I had been judged all these years by the basest of what I had written between 1955 and 1958. *Thorns* was not all that much of a breakthrough for me; it represented only a plausible outgrowth of what I had begun to attempt in 1962's short story, "To See the Invisible Man," and in the work that followed it over a period of four years.

Even before the publication of *Thorns* I found my position in the American science fiction world undergoing transformations. In the summer of 1967 I had become President of the Science Fiction Writers of America, succeeding Damon Knight, founder of the organization. The job was not an award for literary merit but rather a tribute to the experience I had had in building a career and dealing with publishers. Certainly I was well qualified for the job, and I felt no hesitation about accepting it, especially since the organization would have collapsed if I had declined—no one else was willing to take it on. Doubtless if I had run against some writer whose work was more highly regarded than mine, James Blish or Poul Anderson or Philip José Farmer, I would have been defeated; but willy-nilly I ran unopposed, gladly letting myself in for a year of drudgery on behalf of my fellow writers. At least *Thorns* soon showed the rank-and-file of the membership that their new President would not disgrace the

organization.

Thorns did not universally give delight. Those who found pleasure in my old straightforward action stories were appalled by this dark, disturbing book. One of my dearest friends, an old-line writer conservative in his tastes, explicitly accused me of a calculated sellout to the "new wave" of science fiction—of writing a deliberately harsh and freaky book to curry favor with the influential leaders of the revolution within science fiction. That charge was particularly painful to me. Having blithely sold out so many times as a young man to any editor with the right price in his hand, I was hurt to find myself blamed for selling out again, this time to the opposite camp, when I finally wrote something that grew from my own creative needs instead of the market's demands. Such criticisms were rare, though. *Thorns* was nominated both for the Hugo and for the Science Fiction Writers' Nebula trophy—the first time anything of mine reached the final ballot in either contest.

They won no awards, nor did "Hawksbill Station," which was also up for a Nebula; but the critics were re-evaluating my place in science fiction, invariably invoking my seamy early work before getting around to saying how much better a writer I was nowadays. 1968 promised to be a rewarding year. It was less than six weeks old, though, when I awakened at half past three one frigid winter morning to the glare of an unaccustomed light in the house. Burglars have broken in, I thought, groping toward wakefulness—but no, there were no burglars. The glare I saw was fire.

So out into the miserable night we went and watched the house burn. Papers stored in the attic, I think, had ignited. My wife and I carried our four cats and a flock of kittens to the dubious safety of the basement, and I seized the manuscript of my current book and a few ancient artifacts and cached them in the garage; then the firemen refused to let us return to the building, and we took refuge in the house across the way. By dawn it was over. The roof was gone; the attic had been gutted; my third-floor office was a wreck; and the lower floors of the house, though unburned, were awash in water rapidly turning to ice. A priest from a nearby Catholic college appeared and, unbidden, took several Volkswagen-loads of our houseplants to safety in his cabin, lest they freeze in the unprotected house. Then he returned and offered consolation, for I was in a bad way. No Catholic I, but I had felt the hand of some supernatural being pressing against me that night, punishing me for real and imagined sins, levelling me for overweening pride as though I had tried to be Agamemnon.

Friends rallied round. Barbara performed prodigies, arranging to have our belongings taken to storage (surprisingly, most of our books and virtually all the works of art had survived, though the structure itself was a ruin) and negotiating with contractors. I was not much good for anything for days—stupefied, God-haunted, broken. We moved to a small, inadequate rented house about a mile away as the immense job of reconstruction began. I bought a new typewriter, reassembled some reference books, and, after a few dreadful weeks, began once more to work in strange surroundings.

In nine months the house was ready to be occupied again, and by the spring of 1969 the last of the rebuilding was done and the place was more beautiful than ever—an exact replica of its former self, except where we had decided on improvements. But I was never the same again. Until the night of the fire I had never, except perhaps at the onset of my illness in 1966, been touched by the real anguish of life. I had not known divorce or the death of loved ones or poverty or unemployment, I had never experienced the challenges and terrors of parenthood, had never been mugged or assaulted or molested, had not been in military service (let alone actual warfare), had never been seriously ill. The only emotional scars I bore were those of a moderately unhappy childhood, hardly an unusual experience. But now I had literally passed through the flames. The fire and certain more personal upheavals some months earlier had marked an end to my apparent immunity to life's pain, and drained from me, evidently forever, much of the bizarre energy that had allowed me to write a dozen or more books of high quality in a single year. Until 1967, I had cockily written everything in one draft, rolling white paper into the machine and typing merrily away, turning out twenty or thirty pages of final copy every day and making only minor corrections by hand afterwards. When I resumed work after the fire I tried to go on that way, but I found the going slow, found myself fumbling for words and losing the thread of narrative, found it necessary in mid-page to halt and start over, pausing often to regain my strength. It has been slower and slower ever since, and I have only rarely, and not for a long time now, felt that dynamic sense of clear vision that enabled me to write even the most taxing of my books in wild joyous spurts. I wasted thousands of sheets of paper over the next three years before I came to see, at last, that I had become as other mortals and would have to do two or three or even ten drafts of every page before I could hope to type final copy.

I hated the place where we settled after the fire—it was cramped, dirty, confused, ugly—but the rebuilding job called for thousands of dollars beyond the insurance settlement, and I had to go on writing regardless of externals. With most of my reference library intact but in storage for the duration, I was forced back into virtual fulltime science fiction, the non-fiction temporarily impossible for me. One of the first things I wrote, in the early days of the aftermath, was a curiously lyrical novella, "Nightwings," to which I added a pair of sequels some months later to constitute a novel. Later in the year came a novel for young readers, *Across a Billion Years*, almost unknown among my recent books—a rich, unusual book that never found an audience. There was a short story, "Sundance," a display of technical virtuosity, my favorite among all my myriad shorter pieces. And, in my despair and fatigue, I managed somehow to write a bawdy comic novel of time travel, *Up the Line*. The fire had shattered me emotionally and for a time physically, but it had pushed me, I realized, into a deeper, more profound expression of feelings. It had been a monstrous tempering of my artistic skills.

In September of 1968 I went to California for the science fiction convention—my third visit to that state, and I was struck once again by its beauty and strangeness. I was toastmaster at the convention's awards banquet, a last-minute replacement for the late Anthony Boucher, and for five hours toiled to keep a vast and restless audience amused—a fascinating, almost psychedelic experience. November saw me back in my restored house, working on the biggest of all my non-fiction books, an immense exploration of the Zionist movement in the United States. The publishers invested a huge sum of money in it, and planned to promote it to best-seller status, but, as usual, nothing came of it but good reviews: I was destined never to win wide attention for my long non-fiction works.

My science fiction, though, was gathering acclaim. *Masks of Time* failed by only a few votes to win a Nebula, as did the novella "Nightwings." But "Nightwings" did take a Hugo at the St. Louis convention in 1969. In the spring of that year I wrote a novel, *Downward to the Earth*, which was in part inspired by a journey to Africa (and in which were embedded certain homages to Joseph Conrad) and in part by my own growing sense of cosmic consciousness: I had never been a religious man, had never belonged to any organized church, but something had been set ticking in me by the fire, a sense of connections and compensating forces, and

Downward to the Earth reflected it. *Galaxy* purchased it for serialization and New American Library for book publication. In the autumn—slowly, with much difficulty—I wrote *Tower of Glass,* for Charles Scribner's Sons, the publishers of Hemingway and Wolfe and Fitzgerald, now experimenting with science fiction. *Galaxy* bought that one too. And at the end of the year I wrote my strangest, most individual book, *Son of Man,* a dream-fantasy of the far future, with overtones of Stapledon and Lindsay's *Voyage to Arcturus* and a dollop of psychedelia that was altogether my own contribution. It was becoming extremely hard for me to get words on paper, despite this long list of 1969's accomplishments, and, with the expenses of the fire behind me, I was again talking of retirement. Not total retirement—writing was a struggle, but *having written* was a delight—but at least a sabbatical of some months, once I had dealt with the contractual obligations I had taken on for the sake of rebuilding my home.

The paradox of this stage of my career manifested itself ever more forcefully in 1970: I felt continual growth of my art, my power, my vision, and simultaneously it became constantly more difficult to work. I tired more easily, I let myself be distracted by trifles, and when I did write I was over-finicky, polishing and polishing so that on a good day I was lucky to get nine or ten pages written. Still an immense output, but not what I had grown accustomed to pulling from myself in the vanished days of indefatigable productivity. Nevertheless it was an active year. I did *The World Inside,* a novel composed of loosely related short stories set within a single great residential tower; I think it and *Tower of Glass* (another story of a giant erection!) are closer to pure science fiction, the exhaustive investigation of an extrapolative idea, than anything else I have written. I did *A Time of Changes,* more emotional than most of my work and heavily pro-psychedelic. I did *The Second Trip,* a rough and brutal novel of double identity, and I wrote the last of my major non-fiction books, *The Realm of Prester John,* which I regard as a genuine contribution to scholarship. (Doubleday published it and no one bought it.)

By now it was clear that the science fiction world had forgiven me for the literary sins of my youth. My short story "Passengers" won a Nebula early in 1970. *Up the Line* and one of the "Nightwings" series were on the ballot also, though they failed to win. In the summer I was American Guest of Honor at the World Science Fiction Convention in Heidelberg, a little to my surprise, for though I was beginning to think I would someday be chosen for this greatest of honors in science fiction, I had assumed it was at least ten years in the future. I was a triple Hugo nominee that year too, but came away, alas, with a bunch of second and third-place finishes. Another quite improbable boyhood fantasy was eerily fulfilled for me in 1970. When I was about sixteen and *Galaxy* was the newest and most controversial of science-fiction magazines, I diverted myself one day with an amiable daydream in which I was the author of three consecutive serials in that magazine—an awesome trick, since the authors of *Galaxy*'s first five novels were Simak, Asimov, Kornbluth and Merril, Heinlein, and Bester. But there I was in 1970 with *Downward to the Earth, Tower of Glass,* and most of *The World Inside* running back-to-back, and *Time of Changes* following them in 1971. I remembered my old daydream and felt a little disbelieving shiver.

My new working habits were entrenching themselves: revise, revise, revise. Projects that might have taken me two weeks in 1965 took three months in 1970. I refused to sign new contracts, knowing that I no longer had much control over the length of time it took me to finish anything, and I could not therefore guarantee to meet delivery dates. Non-fiction in particular I was phasing out; I had had a good run in that career for a decade, but the burden of research now was more than I cared to carry, and the failure of my big books to have much commercial success had eventually had a depressing effect. Now that I was in my full stride in science fiction, working at the top of my form and enjoying public favor, I wanted to devote as much of my dwindling literary energies to that field as I could.

Strangely, it was becoming impossible for me to take the stuff of science fiction seriously any more—all those starships and androids and galactic empires. I had come to believe that the chances that mankind would reach and colonize the planets of other stars were very slight indeed, and the stories set on such worlds now seemed idle fantasy to me, not serious projection. So too with many of the other great themes of science fiction: one by one they became unreal, though they continued to have powerful metaphorical and symbolic value for me. I discovered that much of what I was writing in 1971 was either barely SF at all (*The Book of Skulls*) or was a kind of parody of science fiction ("Good News from the Vatican," "Caliban," and other short stories) or borrowed a genuine science fiction theme for use in an otherwise 'straight' mainstream novel (*Dying Inside*). This realization inspired flickers of new guilt in me. I no longer had to apologize, certainly not, for shortcomings of literary quality; but was this new Silverberg really serving the needs of the hard-core science fiction audience? Was he providing the kind of sincerely felt fiction about the future that the readers still seemed to prefer, or was he doing fancy dancing for his own amusement and that of a jaded elite?

The pattern of awards in the field reinforced these doubts. I was getting nominated by twos and threes every year now for the Hugo and the Nebula; indeed, I have by now amassed more final-ballot nominations than any other writer. In 1972 the Science Fiction Writers of America favored me with two Nebulas, an unusual event, for my novel *A Time of Changes* and my short story "Good News from the Vatican"—but the writers have relatively sophisticated tastes, and I have fared far less well with the Hugos, awarded by a broader cross-section of the SF readership. Though nominated every year, my books and stories have finished well behind more conservative, 'safer' works. This causes me no serious anguish or resentment, for I have hardly been neglected in the passing around of honors in the SF world, but it does lead me to brood a bit in idle hours. Not that it affects what I write: I am bound on my own course and will stay to it. I wish only that I could be my own man and still give pleasure to the mass of science fiction readers.

In 1971 I at last achieved the partial retirement of which I had been dreaming for so many years. The press of contracts abated, and in late spring I simply stopped writing, not to resume until autumn. I had never, not since early college days, gone more than four weeks away from my typewriter; now I was away from it five whole months, and felt no withdrawal symptoms at all. I read, swam, loafed; now and then I would work on anthology editing for an hour or so in the morning, for such editing was becoming increasingly important to me, but essentially I was idle all summer. A more complete break with the old Silverberg could not have been imagined. To underscore the transformation I had spent some weeks just before the holiday revising an early novel of mine, *Recalled to Life,* for a new edition. When I wrote it, in 1957, I had exaggeratedly high regard for it, seeing it as a possible Hugo nominee and hoping it would gain me a place with Ballantine or Doubleday or some other major publishing house. Looking at this masterpiece of my youth fourteen years later, I was appalled at its crudity, and repaired it as best I could before letting it be reissued. That experience gave me a good yardstick to measure my own growth.

Further transformations of my life, unexpected ones, lay in wait for me. My

wife and I were native New Yorkers, and, however extensively we travelled, we always returned to New York, the home base, after a few weeks. We loved the city's vitality, its complexity, the variety of experience it offered, and we had money enough to insulate ourselves from its inconveniences and perils. Our rebuilt house was more than a dwelling to us, it was a system of life, an exoskeleton, and we assumed we would live in it the rest of our lives. But New York's deterioration and decline was driving away our friends. Two by two they trooped away, some to distant suburbs, many to California; and by the autumn of 1971 we found ourselves isolated and lonely in a city of eight million. New York now was dangerous, dirty, ever more expensive; taxes were rising alarmingly and the amenities we prized, the restaurants and galleries and theaters, were beginning to go out of business. We were held fast by pride and pleasure in our house—but did we want to find ourselves marooned in our magnificent fortress while everything dissolved about us? Timidly we began talking about joining the exodus. It still seemed unthinkable; we toyed with the notion of moving to California the way loyal Catholics might toy with the idea of conversion to Buddhism, enjoying the novelty and daring of such an outlandish idea, but never taking it seriously. In October 1971 we flew to San Francisco for a reunion with many of our transplanted Eastern friends; we said we were considering moving, and they urged us to come. It was impossible to give up our house, we said. We went back to California in November, though, still hesitating but now willing to look, however tentatively, at areas where we might find a comparable place to live. And just after the turn of the year we discovered ourselves, to our amazement, boarding a plane for a sudden weekend trip west to see a house that a friend had located for us.

That house turned out not to work—it was too big even for us, and too decayed—but before the weekend was over we had found another, strange and beautiful, an architectural landmark in a park-like setting, and we placed a bid on it and after some haggling the bid was accepted, and, as if in a dream, we put our cherished New York place up for sale and made arrangements to move West. It all happened so swiftly, in retrospect—less than six months from the moment the temptation first struck to the day we arrived, with tons of books and furniture, in golden California, in the new El Dorado.

California, then. A new life at the midpoint. For reasons of climate, my 1971 scheme of working autumn and winter and taking a holiday in spring and summer did not seem desirable, though I still wanted to work only half the time. I hit on a plan of working mornings, normally a cloudy time of day here, and giving myself the afternoons free, with frequent total interruptions of work for short holidays away from home. This has worked well for me. My output continues to decline: 1971 saw me write about a quarter of a million words, 1972 only some 115,000, or about what I would have done in an average month a decade earlier. Since *Dying Inside* in 1971 I have written no novels, though doubtless that datum will be obsolete before this essay is published: my major work in California has been a novella, "Born with the Dead," but a novel soon will be upon me, I think. Mainly I have written short stories, ostensibly science fiction, though the definition has required some stretching; they are strange and playful pieces, qualities evident in the titles of the two story collections I have made of them: *Unfamiliar Territory* and *Capricorn Games.*

Though one good quiver of the San Andreas Fault could destroy all I have built in a moment, I am at present in a comfortable situation, invulnerable to the demands of the marketplace, able to write what I choose and have it published by people I respect. The work comes slowly, partly because I revise so much, partly because the temptations of lovely California are forever calling me from my desk, partly because the old pressures—to prove myself artistically, to make myself secure financially—no longer operate on me. I keep close to nature, regularly visiting the mountains and deserts nearby and, when at home, laboring in my well-stocked and ever-expanding garden; I read a good deal, I edit anthologies of original material that bring me into contact with younger writers, I maintain many friendships both within and outside the science fiction cosmos, and, as the mood takes me, I pursue such old interests—music, archaeology, the cinema, whatever—as still attract me. Though I may eventually write more non-fiction, if only for the sake of learning more about the natural environment here by studying it systematically in preparation for a book, I expect that such writing as I do henceforth will be almost exclusively science fiction, or what passes for science fiction in my consciousness these days. I still respond to it as I did as a child for its capacity to open the gates of the universe, to show me the roots of time. I have little admiration for most of the science fiction I read today, and even less for the bulk of what I wrote myself before 1965, but I do go on reading it however short it falls of my ideal vision of it, and I do go on writing it in my fashion, pursuing an ideal vision there too and always falling short, but coming closer, coming closer now and then, close enough to lead me to continue.

Postscript, October 1975:

"To continue," I said—I wrote the piece you have just read in the summer of 1973—and continue I did, for a while: two short stories that autumn, and a novel, *The Stochastic Man,* during the winter of 1973-74. But late in 1974 I began to discover depressing things about the state of my career: books were going out of print, my publishers were in no hurry to reissue them, readers seemed baffled and even hostile, critics seemed to be paying no attention. Suddenly I was neither commercially viable nor acclaimed as an artist; Mammon alone might have kept me going, and so might a steady diet of praise, but the simultaneous disappearance of both robbed me of any desire to go on with science fiction. I didn't need to do it for a living; I wasn't getting much creative joy out of it; the public response was not encouraging. Worst of all, the strain of these perplexities was affecting my health: a whole assortment of psychosomatic troubles began plaguing me. I began a long and ambitious novel, *Shadrach in the Furnace,* in the autumn of 1974, and, before I was fifty pages into it, I decided that it would be my last. Science fiction was damaging me, that was clear. Editors who I believed were friends told me, quite sincerely, that there was no room in commercial publishing for such books as *Dying Inside* or *Son of Man.* To produce, at a rate of a page or two a day, books that angered the science-fiction community (because they were too much like literature) and were ignored by the readers of mainstream literature (because they were science fiction), was too frustrating, too depressing. Although my work was in demand in Europe, suddenly commanding not only critical attention but also royalties greater than I had known in the United States, it seemed folly to go on. My motivation was undermined. It seemed simplest and best to give it up.

And so I have. I have no science fiction books under contract now and have refused all offers; I have written no short stories for two years; *Shadrach* will appear in 1976 and that will be the end, at least for a long while. I intend to continue editing *New Dimensions* and the reprint anthologies, and, by so doing, to help writers more courageous or more durable than I; I'll continue also to accept speaking engagements and

to make convention appearances, so that I can put forth my views on what science fiction ought to be. But I have no desire to jump back into the crucible myself. When I think of how my career in science fiction ended, I feel sad, bitter, and confused; I still find it hard to accept the idea that I ceased to be of value to the general science fiction audience just as I reached my creative peak, but that's what seems to have happened. (As witness the 1975 Hugo results.) So I am out of it, and well out of it, puzzled but slowly healing, sadder but wiser. Evidently modern American commercial science fiction is no place for a serious writer. I have learned my lesson; the seriousness has been burned out of me by it; I am off to Hollywood for a period of rest and rehabilitation as a screenwriter. I feel no sense of unfinished business in science fiction, for I did, after all, manage to write *Tower of Glass, Downward to the Earth, Son of Man, Dying Inside, The Book of Skulls, To Live Again, Hawksbill Station, Nightwings,* and *A Time of Changes,* books which helped in some measure to shape current American SF. If you think it's cowardly of me to throw in the towel, consider those nine titles for a moment—and then consider that not one of them is in print in the United States as I write this epilog today.●

—Robert Silverberg

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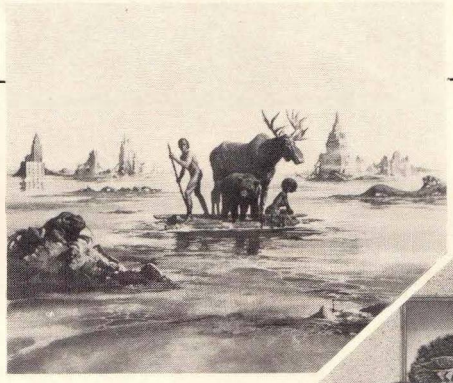

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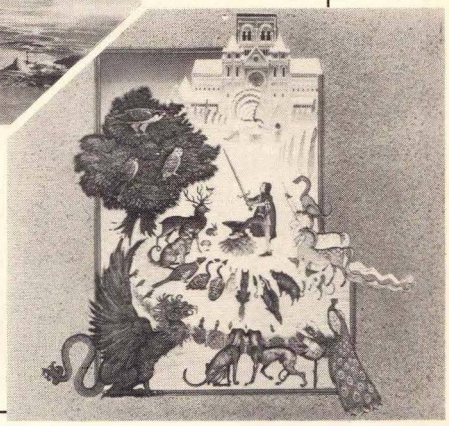

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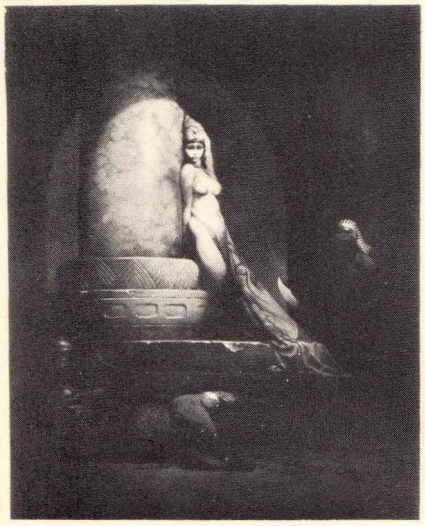

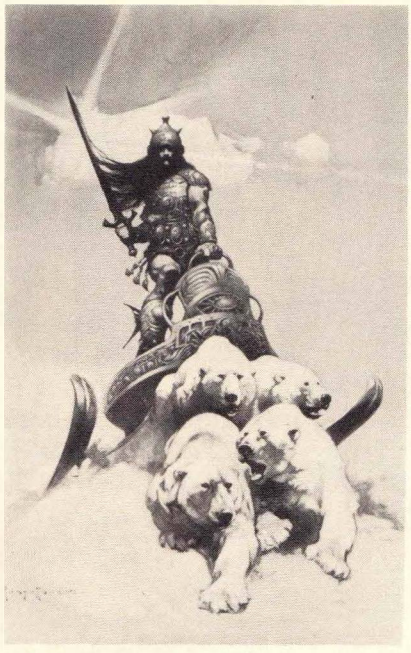

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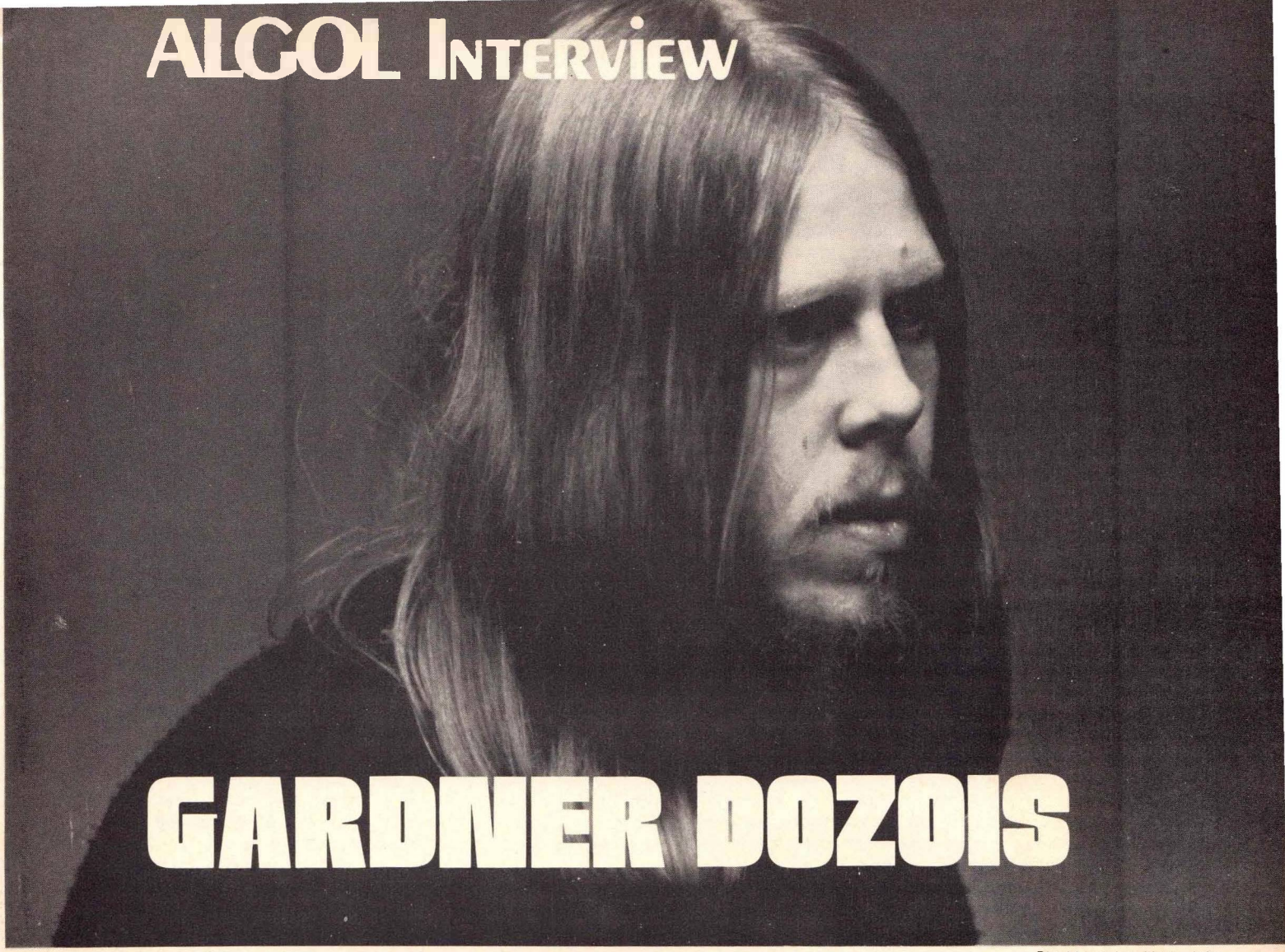


GARDNER DOZOIS

Photo by Jay Kay Klein

INTERVIEWED BY

Darrell Schweitzer

Gardner Raymond Dozois sold one story to *If* in 1966, then joined the army and wasn't heard from for several years. But when he did reappear, his stories turned up in rapid succession in just about every anthology in the field. Gardner started at the top, with six stories in *Orbit*, one in each of the three *New Dimensions* books, plus others in *Quark*, *Universe*, and *Generation*. He has edited his own anthology, *A Day in the Life* (Perennial Library paperback) and sold a novel to Harper and Row. He has been nominated for the Nebula Award five times, and the Hugo another three. His novella, "Chains of the Sea" (in the collection of that name, edited by Robert Silverberg for Thomas Nelson Inc.) was a Nebula finalist, and on the ballot for the Hugo. Gardner is only 29 years old.

Interviewer: Why did you become a writer?

Dozois: I became a writer because I'm lazy: I hate nine to five jobs. They grind me down with boredom. I'd rather live in relative poverty on my own time than try working for somebody else. Writers can sit around with their eyes closed pretending they're plotting stories, and as long as the snores coming out aren't too loud, people will usually let you get away with it. So there is a certain amount of laziness in one respect involved in being a writer. In another respect just about every straight job I've had has bored me eventually. So maybe it's not as interesting after you've been a writer, especially a writer of something as wild as science fiction, where there's a lot of intellectual and creative excitement involved in doing what you're doing. Regular jobs seem rather pale by comparison.

Interviewer: Why did you turn to science fiction?

Dozois: I got into SF when I was a kid, because SF was such a despised, underdog type of literature and I was such a despised, underdog type of kid that there was sort of a natural affinity. This has changed a lot, and today SF is more respectable. On the college campuses and in high schools it's very in

to read SF. But when I was a kid things were different. If people found out you read science fiction they looked at you in horror as if you had lice or ringworm or the clap. The school librarian at my high school used to frown menacingly at me every time I took out a new Robert Heinlein juvenile, and shake her head.

Today people do masters theses on science fiction. I tried to do a paper in high school on science fiction, and I got a flat flunking grade and a nasty remark that science fiction was not a fit topic for literary evaluation. My parents forbad me to read science fiction; I used to smuggle it into the house and hide it the way people hide grass today.

That definitely had an effect, but what I said about working applies as well. I found most other forms of literature to be boring. I think the magic, the lure of mystery and distance and far horizons was what originally drew me to science fiction.

Interviewer: Where is science fiction going to take you as a writer?

Dozois: As a writer, probably to the poorhouse. SF is still a very low paying field. This is because the genre ducked into the pulp magazines back in the 1930's and became ghettoized as a sort of substandard literature for morons and perverts, and as a result there has been a tradition of paying rock bottom prices to science fiction writers.

Interviewer: Will this improve in the future?

Dozois: It'll gradually get better, because everything is getting more expensive. I think that for the next few years science fiction writers as a group will remain at the bottom of the pay scale.

Interviewer: Where is science fiction, as a literature, going?

Dozois: This gets into a very blurry area. There are quite a few mainstream writers who are starting to dabble in science fiction. *The Throne of Saturn* by Allan Drury, a novel about the first flight to Mars, five or six hundred pages long. This would have been a joke within genre science fiction because the material has been worked over so many times, everything said so concisely before. Yet Drury was probably paid ten times as much for his book as most science fiction writers will ever get for theirs. I don't know whether this will end up earning more money for genre science fiction writers or not. This depends on how well science fiction continues to sell. It's selling very well among young people and "counter culture" people right now. The college market is the big plum the publishers are snapping after, and if it continues to sell well for the next five or six years, there will be a general rise in prices and distribution and all the things that hold it down.

Interviewer: How does science fiction compare to the mainstream today in respect to quality?

Dozois: It's hard to compare them: in some ways they're doing two different things. First, I think most straight mainstream literature, about 70% of the fiction books that come out, doesn't do much at all. They haven't much relevance to the world we live in, the way it's changing, or the things that affect us as people and as human beings.

There is a branch of mainstream fiction, the avant-garde you find in *New American Review* and the little magazines, that gives insight into what the world is like, where we're going and how we're changing, but it does so in a very poetic way. It gives you the emotional side, how it *feels* where we're going, how it's going to feel when we get there, but it usually doesn't tell us in hard practical intellectual terms what is going to happen or what it will be like when we get there.

This is what much of SF does. It tells us what is going to happen in the intellectual sense, rather than in the emotional sense. Now hopefully the best of science fiction is combining the two processes: a story that not only tells you what is going to happen in the future but how it feels, how it's going to feel and how it's going to affect us. That's the potential strength of science fiction, the ability to mold magic and the intellect, a synthesis between emotion and the mind.

Interviewer: Where are we going as a race?

Dozois: Sometimes I think the future will be called on account of rain. I see several futures for humanity; it's hard to say where we're going to go. The future wherein we either blow ourselves to bits or strangle in our own excreta—that's one. There's the future where natural disaster or inevitable system failures drop us back several hundred years to a less industrialized level and we start the whole shebang over again. Then, if we manage to avoid those two, there's the future where we somehow manage to survive without strangling ourselves to death; technology keeps on increasing at the same breakneck pace that it has been for the last 50 years, and things just get stranger and stranger.

Most SF deals with these three general futures; the third is the most interesting from the fictional standpoint. There's not really much to a future once you've said everybody is going to die of pollution. But if we get by the crunch that's coming in the next 30 years and technology does keep on advancing, there are lots of weird things coming up.

There's the possibility that the government may control people more and more efficiently: maybe control emotions at a distance. It may be possible to make a person sane or insane at the flick of a switch. Biological functions may be monitored at a distance. We already have pacemakers; it's not much of a step from there to a device which would shut off the biological functions of some transgressor or political malcontent. Then you get into even weirder areas where through surgery and genetic manipulation we change the entire concept of what a human being is. We may create races of new kinds of humans to specification, turn them out to somebody's blueprint. Of course the interesting question here is to *whose* blueprint, and what the specifications are going to be.

In two or three hundred years this increasingly complex third future society will look nothing at all like it now does. Even human beings may be nothing like human beings are today. A lot of this is pretty grim, but at least there is some hope in that third future. There is little hope if we all end up killing ourselves. Live three or four hundred years and maybe you'll find out.

Interviewer: A lot of the things you've written, especially the pieces in *Orbit,* have had very drab, decaying urban settings. Is this the influence of living in Philadelphia?

Dozois: No, I can't say it's because of living in Philadelphia. Actually I've lived in worse circumstances. I lived in the Lower East Side of Manhattan near 10th Street and Avenue A for a good many years, and probably my stories have these decaying urban atmospheres because I've existed inside decaying urban atmospheres for so long. Another point is that many people, if not the majority in this country do live in decaying urban settings, and it's likely that there'll be more people living in such places in the future. So it certainly seems appropriate to explore what these kinds of environments do, the kind of pressures they put on people, and the way they shape people.

Interviewer: What is the future of cities?

Dozois: Again this depends on which of the three general futures you're going to hold as valid. In the first future they end up being destroyed either by atomic bomb or just general overkill of environmental systems, so you have masses of rubble, everybody dead, etc. In the second future where civilization is knocked back three or four hundred years you probably have a semi-decayed situation with areas still occupied, and other areas in ruins, and adaptation to the fact that you no longer have modern technology. You'd have to carry water up to the top flights of buildings that people are living in, instead of having electricity and running water, but I suspect that in that "return-to-barbarism" or at least a "lower-level-of-civilization" type

scenario, some of the city would continue to be used and it would still be a population center. Certainly a large majority of the city would fall into ruin and be a battleground for parties competing for survival.

In the third future any number of things could happen. It depends on how technology advances and who's using it, and how rapidly advances are disseminated across the population. To date they haven't been disseminated very well at all. However, given sufficient technology there's no reason for cities to exist any more. They've reached the end as far as social evolution is concerned. Given the right equipment there's no reason why people have to congregate together in one big huddle of masonry and stone and flesh. With computer terminals to deliver things to your house or print out books, and dependable three dimensional communications, plus independent and reliable sources of power which can be easily and cheaply manufactured, there's no reason why people couldn't be spread out over a vast area with a lot more elbow room and still have their settlements fulfill the basic purposes of a city.

Interviewer: Will people abandon the city? Won't sheer inertia make them stick around?

Dozois: Again, it depends. If you're just talking about the third future, you'll get a mixture of both. What will probably happen is that at first when these advances become available the rich people will move out and have their villas in the middle of Canada; the poor people will end up staying in the city out of inertia. The cities will fall apart even more, and they won't be viable any more even for poor people. Whether it's a humanistic- or a Big Brother- or a Brave New World pie-in-the-sky-government, there'll probably be a lot of reshuffling, breaking down of cities into smaller units.

Either that or we'll just end up with the usual mess. That depends on how optimistic or pessimistic you're willing to be about what's going to happen in the future, whether things are going to be completely screwed up or whether they're going to proceed with any kind of order and grace. I personally doubt that there's going to be that much order and grace, judging from the record of humanity for the last few thousand years.

Interviewer: What kind of background do you need to write science fiction?

Dozois: Absolutely none, if you're talking about a scientific or technological background. I barely made it through high school, squeaking my way through on the basis of good grades in English and Social Studies. I flunked every Math course I ever took. I even flunked typing in high school. So I'm hardly a renaissance man, knowledgeable in all fields of science and technology. But I don't think you really need that much knowledge. My basic qualification is that I have read and enjoyed science fiction ever since I was a kid. As long as I can remember I've been reading science fiction in one form or another. You pick up enough knowledge along the way to know what is generally possible, what is impossible. I don't think that you need a degree in nuclear engineering to write SF. You no longer see SF stories that have pages of mathematical equations appearing as part of the narrative. The day of that kind of specialization is over. What you must know as a science fiction writer is something about what people *are*, which is what you need to be any kind of writer; you have to have perception of what *things* do to people, what processes do to people, what good simple ideas do to people. What do machines do to us? What do cities do to us? What does the societal process as a whole do to us and how do we react to it? That's what you need. That type of perception is the touchstone of writing science fiction. If you don't have that kind of perception then you're going to end up writing adventure pap about spaceships and galactic empires; it won't be real, it'll just be hollow. Writing for entertainment is all very well and every writer does a little bit of that, but you have to know what happens to people in our world today and what's likely to happen to people in the future, and indeed what happened to people in the past before you can write any kind of a statement with any kind of validity.

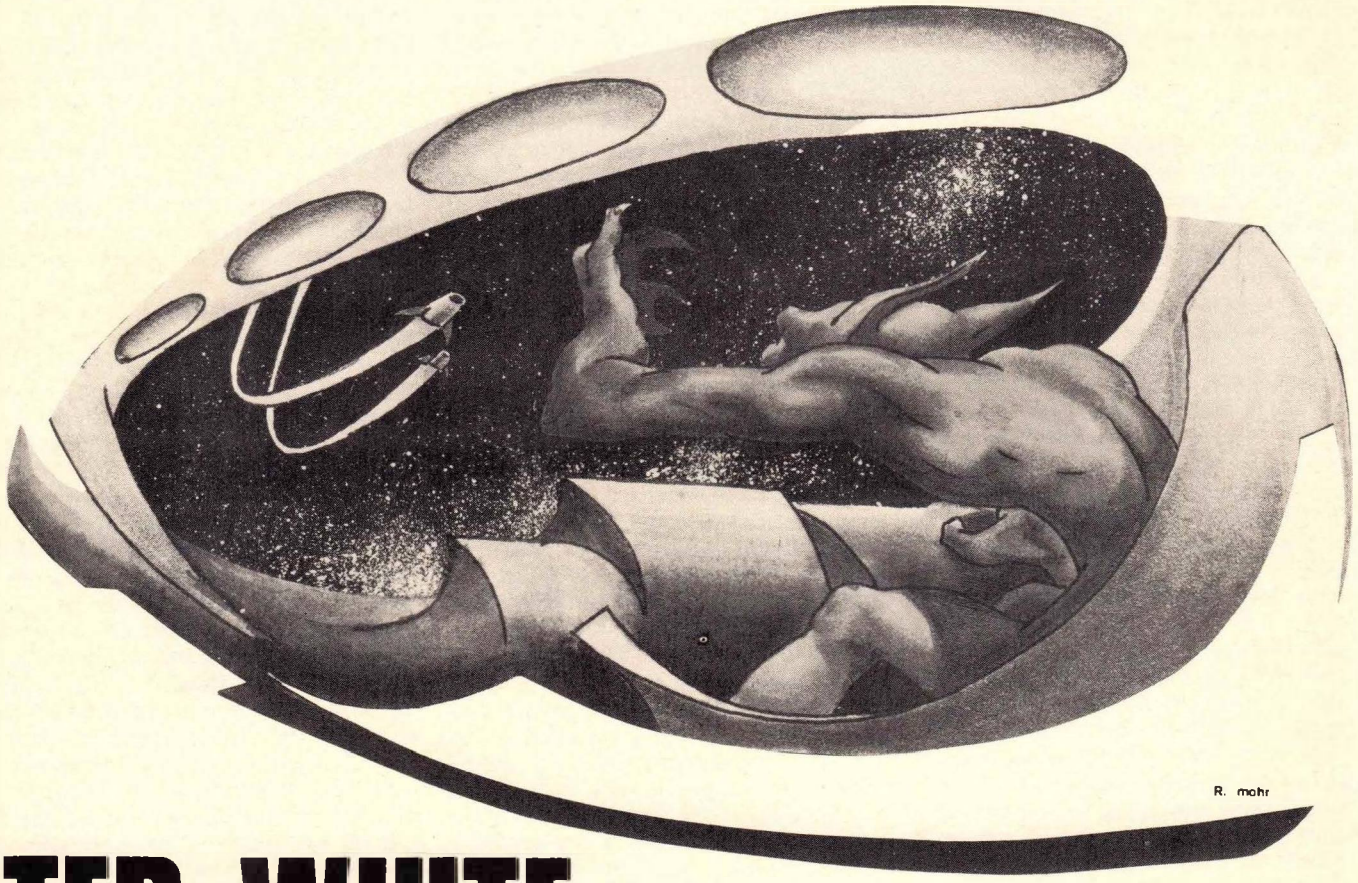
Interviewer: What writers have influenced you and what writers do you admire?

Dozois: When I was a kid I ate up in ton lots writers like Edgar Rice Burroughs, A. Merritt and H. Rider Haggard, and all this glorious crew of shlockmeisters, who wrote glorious junk about far worlds with beautiful alien princesses and six armed green monsters and people fighting it out with rayguns and swords. That's all very well, but you can't read a lot of this stuff as an adult. If you go back and reread Burroughs' Martian novels as an adult you probably won't make it through because they are written awfully and riddled with cliches. But they were influences. They led me into the Heinlein and Andre Norton juveniles, which led me on to more mature types of SF like Poul Anderson and Arthur C. Clarke, and eventually to the writing I like now.

There are many writers working in SF that I admire. I still admire Heinlein in spite of the mediocrity of his last several novels. I admire Gene Wolfe, Ursula K. Le Guin, Kate Wilhelm, and James Tiptree.

This brings us to one of the biggest questions in SF today: getting the books visible to the people. It's a very difficult process. Some of the best writers in SF today are unknown to the general public, even that portion of the general public which still reads books for pleasure. This is because SF was so ghettoized and fell into such disrepute that it's only within the last ten years that it has started to come out of the shadows and get any kind of recognition. But the problem is still acute. SF books rarely sell in hardcover: I think the biggest best seller in hardcover was 12,000 copies for *Stranger in a Strange Land*. They rarely sell more than 100,000 copies in paperback. You'd have to get up to those levels even to *begin* to get onto the ladder of best sellerdom by mainstream standards. The problem is that the organized readers of science fiction, science fiction fandom, are a relatively small group of people compared with the readership as a whole, and they're the only ones who buy SF with any systematic schedule. Most readers of SF are people who pick it up in the bus stand on their way to Podunk or who just happen to be browsing through the bookstore and hit on something with an interesting cover. Many of these people aren't aware that they're reading SF and don't consider themselves SF fans, and the vast majority aren't even aware of fandom as an institution. The problem is whether or not we can get the much larger segment of readers who read SF without thinking of themselves as SF readers to actually seek out SF on a systematic basis. If we can, I think SF could become one of the biggest forms of literature in the next few years. If not, then it will remain the sort of ghettoized literature that it is.●

MY COLUMN



TED WHITE

Recently an odd thing happened to me. For various reasons I don't want to name names, but I'd like to describe what happened as prologue to my topic for this Column.

Early in 1975 an editor phoned me and asked me to do a book for him. It was something of a formula job, and it wasn't precisely my cup of tea, but the money was to be prompt (although it wasn't) and I needed some money about then, so I said yes. Chalk that up as my first mistake.

My second was to sign a contract which specified delivery of the book within (from the date on the contract) three months. I hoped that would give me enough time. There was once a time when I could write a book in a matter of a few weeks—but I lived alone then and I didn't edit two bimonthly magazines. Now I have a young daughter to look after, and those big hunks of free time to devote to writing books just aren't there.

My third mistake was not, by my lights, a mistake at all—although that's what it turned out to be, nonetheless: realizing that I wasn't going to be able to finish the book—that, in fact, I was bored with it—I turned to a friend and asked him to collaborate on the book. I'd supply detailed chapter-by-chapter outlines and my friend would do a first-draft which I'd edit closely and give back to him for a final draft. My friend liked the idea, and since he'd recently done a book for the same editor, I assumed the editor would too.

Boy, was I wrong! The editor not only did not like the idea, he cancelled the contract (on the grounds that the delivery date was now past) and demanded the return of that portion of the advance which I had already received. (The money had come a month and a half after I signed the contract, which was about a month later than I'd expected it, but I'd managed to spend it without difficulty.)

I was stunned by this turn of events. The editor in question was adamant: a book in collaboration was not, as far as he was concerned, the book he'd contracted for—despite the fact that as far as I was concerned it would be the same book I'd envisioned all along, and would not deviate from the outline which he had found acceptable. In the process of a some-

what acrimonious discussion with the editor I was chastised first for going outside the contract, and then, when I quoted the contract back to him, for immorality. When I pointed out that such things had been known to happen before, I was contradicted and given to feel that I had in fact done something akin to raping the Virgin Mary, something inexplicably loathesome.

It goes without saying that I Learned My Lesson there—it'll be a cold day in hell before I consider doing another book for that editor.

Being told I was the equivalent of a moral leper for bringing in a collaborator brought me up short. It made me think. Was I, in fact, unique in choosing such a course of action? I didn't think so, and the more I thought about it, the more I recalled other, similar situations. I propose to recount some of them here. But this creates a second problem: how free am I to discuss situations which involve others? To what extent can I discuss these situations openly, naming names? In some cases even the editors and publishers concerned may be ignorant of the true facts.

Well, I can at least mention a few names. Others must go unnamed. As you'll see.

One case involves me directly, was handled openly with all concerned, and, I believe, can be discussed openly.

I met Philip K. Dick in 1964, shortly before the Pacificon. I had been an admirer of his work since my early teens when he first began to appear in the SF magazines. By 1964 I was a staunch fan of his, having in fact actually written him a fan letter after reading his *Martian Time Slip.* (Soon after I met him I asked him if he'd received my letter, sent c/o his agent earlier that year. He had not. So much for fan letters . . .) We got along well enough, considering the difference in our ages and status. He introduced me to the *I Ching,* doing a reading for me from it which was uncannily accurate in its assessment of my situation then. He was a generous host, and played godfather to the romance I was then involved in.

In 1965 Ace published my first solo novel, *Android Avenger.* In it were several affectionate references to Phil's novels of the period, including a talking briefcase which I'd taken from his *Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch,* a book I continue to admire intensely to this day. I was on the west coast again that year and gave Phil a copy. He mentioned a novel he'd not finished and wondered if I could, but it remained idle conversation for then.

In 1966 I was again on the west coast and visited Phil for an afternoon. At that point he hauled out a manuscript and asked me to look it over and see what I thought about completing it. I took it back east with me and examined it when I got home.

Its title was *Deus Irae,* and it was a blockbuster. Phil had written the first fifty pages and they were mangificent. He also included the "outline" for the novel, which had already been sold, through his agent, Scott Meredith, to Doubleday.

I say "outline" in quotes like that, because what Phil had written was not a skeleton of the plot, but an essay on the direction and point of the novel, revealing its ending, yes, but not its structure—not how it *reached* its ending. As an essay it was brilliant. Indeed, the entire conception of the novel, its fantastic imagery, was brilliant. Perhaps too much so: Phil couldn't go any further with it.

It was audacity in itself for me to consider finishing the novel, but I called up his agent and received an okay, I think also from Doubleday, to go ahead.

I knew that I wasn't ready to tackle such a demanding task immediately, so I set it aside. I also stopped reading Phil's novels (then coming out at a steady pace), stockpiling them instead on my shelf. It was my intention to steep myself in Phil's work when I began working on the novel: to read his books whenever I was not writing, and thus absorb his style.

Alas, I never felt myself quite ready. To this day, I don't think I could do justice to the novel. And, unfortunately, putting off reading those many Philip K. Dick novels got me out of the habit of reading them.

By 1968 I had become friends with Roger Zelazny, and the thought occurred to me that inasmuch as I was unlikely ever to be "ready" to work on Phil's novel, I should pass it on. I queried Phil: would he object if I gave the novel to Zelazny? And I asked Roger if he wanted to have a look at it. Both seemed happy at the thought, and I felt like a matchmaker at a brilliant wedding. Phil was an established master in the field, Roger an up-and-coming major writer. Both had won Hugos for Best Novel. It seemed an ideal collaboration. I gave the manuscript to Roger.

I asked Roger about it a year or two later. He'd had some correspondence with Phil about it and he'd written some 10,000 words or so for it. But the last I heard, *Deus Irae* remains unfinished. It was, perhaps, too fine an opening and too ambitious a book.

I did end up "collaborating" with Phil, though, although I wonder how he really felt about it. Scott Meredith sent me an unpublished novel of Phil's, soon after I took over *Amazing.* The novel was called *The First In Your Family,* and had been written very early in the sixties—the first of Phil's works after he 'returned' to SF (after writing his mainstream novel, *Confessions of a Crap Artist*). I could see why it remained unsold. Phil often had problems with his endings—and almost none of his early-sixties SF novels were published with the same endings he'd written. (In most cases the last bit or so was cut.) To my eye, *The First In Your Family* didn't end at all: it had no real resolution. I called Phil up and said I wanted to use it in *Amazing,* but I wanted to change the title to "A. Lincoln, Simulacrum," and I needed an ending. I suggested that I draft an ending and send it out to him to elaborate upon as he saw fit. He agreed on both points. I wrote a short final chapter and sent it to him. He returned it with three words changed, praising it as economical and unimprovable-upon. Thus the novel appeared in *Amazing.* After publication in *Amazing* I sent the manuscript to Terry Carr, at Ace, to see if he wanted it as an Ace Science Fiction Special, at his request. He didn't like it, with or without my ending. I returned the manuscript to Phil.

Some years later the novel was published by DAW Books. I'd tell you the title but my complete set of DAW Books was destroyed in a recent fire which consumed half the upper floor of my house. It may have been *A. Lincoln* or it may have been a variant upon either that title or the original one. *[The title is* We Can Build You; *DAW UY 1164. $1.25 —ed.]* In any case, I scanned a copy and saw that my ending had been removed. When I queried Don Wollheim, he said that was the way Phil wanted it. When I saw Phil, in 1972 at the LACon, I asked him about it, and Phil changed the subject, so I didn't pursue it. I have no idea whether Phil accepted my ending originally because he saw it as the politic thing to do, or whether he changed his mind later. I'm disturbed, though, that he may have hated it all along but feared to tell me so in my guise as "editor." In retrospect I think it was hurried and overly melodramatic—to say nothing of too tricky in its implications—but I'd never intended it as more than a skeletal suggestion for an ending.

So much for the situations in which I can name names.

In the mid-sixties Dave Van Arnam was one of my best friends. We put on the 1967 World SF Convention (NyCon

3) together and we had by then collaborated on a number of projects, one of them the novel, *Sideslip*, for Pyramid. I had introduced Dave to my agent, Henry Morrison, and he was now embarking upon a solo career. But one of his first solo projects was a book upon which his name never appeared. I can't tell you the name of the book, nor the name of its ostensible author, but I can tell you a little about the circumstances.

In the early 1950's the author in question had published, in one of the better SF magazines of the day, a 30,000-word novella. I recall reading it during that brief period which marked my own "Golden Era" of science fiction—the first two years or so in which I devoured every SF mag published, from cover to cover. The story impressed me a lot then. It was, in fact, the one story I thought of when the author's name was mentioned; he was predominantly an author of stories in other genres. Years later I was to encounter him in another guise, as the editor of a magazine to which I was then selling jazz articles. His terse comment upon rejecting an already-commissioned (by the editor he replaced) article of mine: "If we want pieces on jazz we'll get Nat Hentoff."

By some coincidence, this author had taken on the same agent who represented both Van Arnam and myself, and that agent undertook to sell the early-50's novella to a paperback publisher with the understanding that it would be expanded to 60,000 words. Not long after the sale, Van Arnam was asked if he'd like the job. He needed both the money and the experience and he felt he could learn a lot in the process, so he agreed. He was given a manuscript represented to be 45,000 words, requiring only another 15,000. In fact, it was a new typescript of the original 30,000-word novella, apparently typed up by a secretary from a magazine version. Its size had to be doubled.

Dave worked hard on the book. He had to use the original novella as an outline, rewriting whole scenes. He discovered that the story was by no means as good as I'd remembered it: the protagonist had no background, and although he had, supposedly, a job, he was never shown performing it. Other aspects of the novella were equally without foundation or substance. It was thin stuff, requiring a lot of fleshing out.

To Dave's credit he did a good job on the book. He added substance. He became a full collaborator on the book, and nearly every word of the published version was his. For his pains he received a modest flat fee (negotiated when he'd thought he had only to lengthen the novel by 15,000 words) and absolutely no published credit. But I think he regarded it as a good experience. Taking apart a novella and reconstructing it as a novel can be a valuable learning experience.

One day when I was having lunch with an editor at a house which published one of my juvenile SF books she asked me about another major author in the field whose books her company had published. "I was astonished," she said. "I was reading the book"—I don't remember now whether she was copyediting the manuscript or reading a published copy to familiarize herself with the line; she'd only recently joined that company—"and there was this sequence set on the moon and there was a helicopter! I couldn't believe it! Do they make mistakes like that often, do you know?" I was astonished; I knew very well that he did not. Subsequently I had occasion to mention the conversation to him, and he told me what had happened: he hadn't written the book.

What had happened was something that can happen to any author, as I know too well. He'd sold the book on an outline and, due to personal problems which kept him from writing for some time, he'd been unable to write it. So his agent had found someone else—he wasn't sure who—to write the book from his outline. If I remember correctly, there had been problems with the manuscript which had prevented him from seeing it before publication; he'd not even been allowed to edit it for style or errors (such as the helicopter on the moon). His agent had handled the whole affair. But it was published with his name on it, nonetheless, and no doubt a number of his readers spotted the error and credited it to him. I had the opportunity, later, to introduce him to the editor and he explained the situation to her. While I see no point in elaborating on this incident further, I can say that more than one book was published with his name on it which he did not write, but provided only the plot for.

There are other instances of books contracted to one person and written by others. In at least one case I should assume it is done with the publisher's knowledge and tacit approval. I'm referring to the Lyle Kenyon Engle productions. These include the Nick Carter paperback series which began in the sixties, a recent quasi-stf/heroic fantasy series (the name of which escapes me, since I rarely buy such books and must rely on my memory from times spent scanning paperback racks in stores), and, I'm sure more than half a dozen other series of books. These books are written under a house name and subcontracted out, usually at a flat fee (no royalty) or a percentage never over 50% of the royalty, to a variety of authors. The practice has been common throughout this century —most of the boys' series books of this century, Tom Swift, the Hardy Boys and the Rover Boys among them, were the product of one fiction factory which assigned detailed plots to individual writers. Engle is doing something of the same, and his books can be identified as Lyle Kenyon Engle Productions in the fine print surrounding the copyright information.

A couple of years ago a young SF author whose work under his own name I highly respect showed me a manuscript. He was offering it for possible use in *Amazing*, since he had serial rights. It was a young-adult SF novel, the protagonist of which was adapted to live under the sea. He was engaged upon an espionage mission in the portion I read. It was well-enough written, but too simple and too much a straightforward action story for *Amazing's* present readership.

The manuscript had been written for Engle; it was to be the first of a hardcover series aimed at teenagers. I believe the author had fairly generous royalties, and he retained, as I mentioned, all serial rights. That may illustrate the diversity of both publishing endeavors and payment which the Engle factory offers.

Is then the sort of deal I offered my editor common practice? Hardly. But neither is it unheard of. In some cases such deals are not spoken of and are kept closely guarded secrets. I'm sure there are a number of such cases of which I am totally unaware. But, with my experience in the field I've heard of the above cases and others like them, each of which illustrates a different facet of the basic situation.

Oddly enough, my experience led another friend of mine to describe to me his own problems with that editor. It seems he'd submitted a book, already-written, and was told that while the first third was fine and could stand as written, the last two-thirds required considerable revision. My friend did that, and turned the book in once more. Back came the news that the last two-thirds was now fine, bu the first third had to be rewritten.

"Hey, wait a minute now!" my friend protested. "You wanted the last

two-thirds changed and that's what you got. You already accepted the first third." To which the editor—the same editor who browbeat me for my immorality in asking someone to step in on my book, that editor:—said that if my friend would not revise the first third of the book he'd have it done by another author of his acquaintance.

My friend refused and withdrew the book. And sold it elsewhere, unchanged.

End of topic.

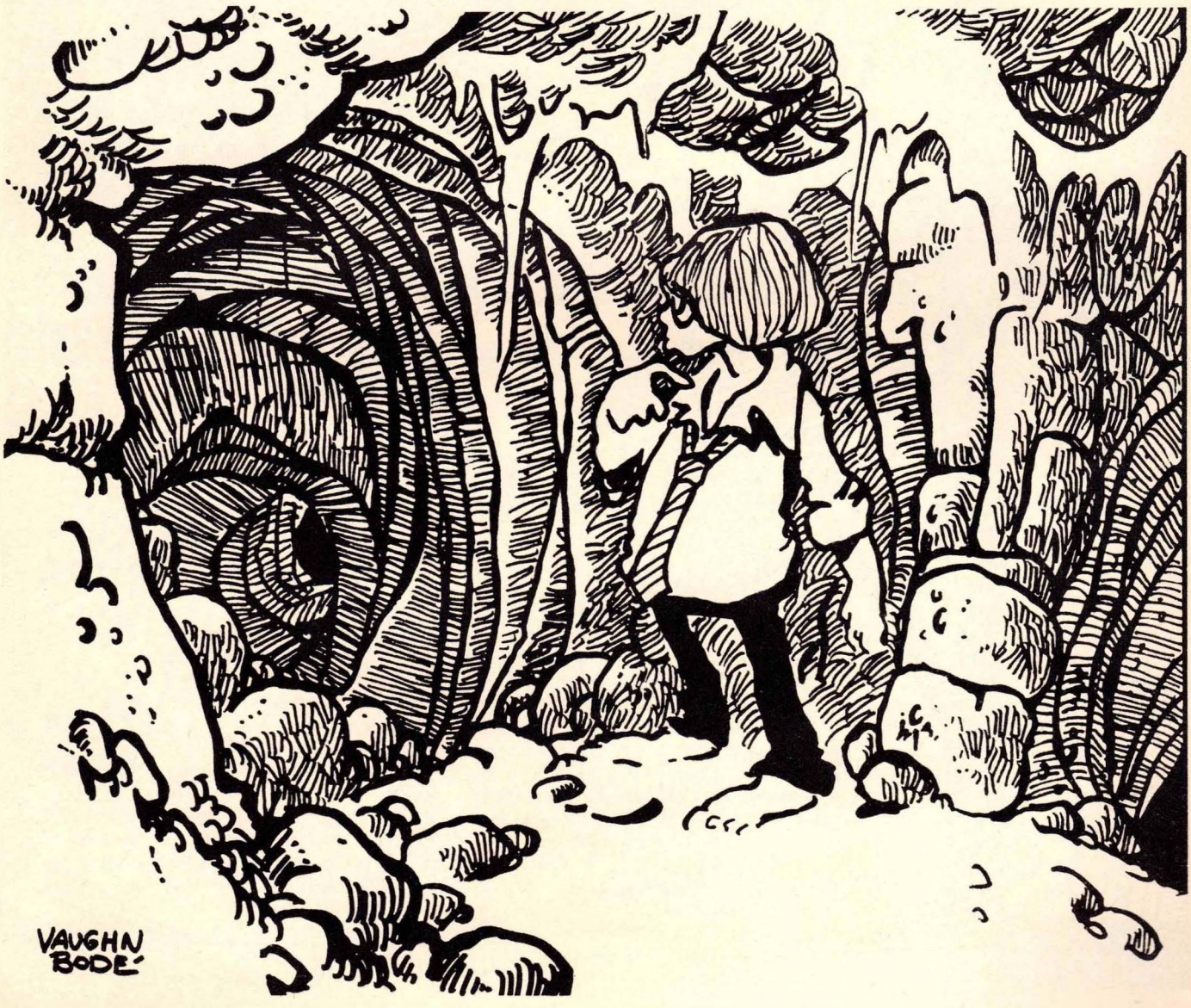
I am distressed at the thought of this Column turning into an obituary—distressed because once more I must comment upon a death in our field. I'm referring to James Blish, who died in England this summer after deteriorating health.

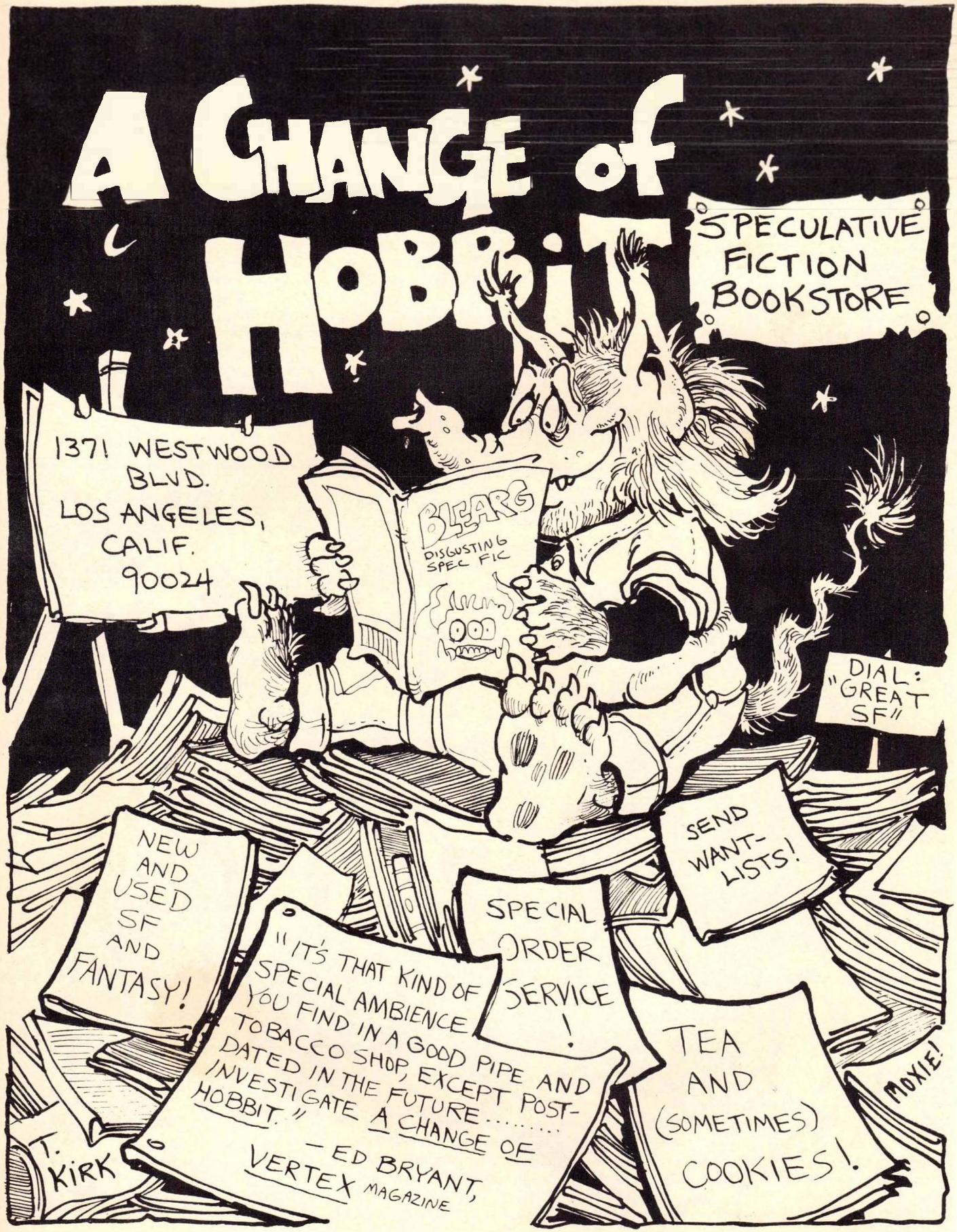
Blish was a genuine giant in our field. His career spanned three and a half decades. He was an intellectual giant, as at home in discussing music or poetry as he was science fiction, a field to which he gave much in both fiction and critical essays.

I can't say that I knew Jim well, but I did know him well enough to gain the benefit of his advice, on earlier occasions, and his annoyance, more recently (on the occasion of my review of *Black Easter* in *Amazing*; it provoked a short but somewhat heated exchange in the letters column of that magazine). I regret that our last communication was acrimonious. Like many people who had not seen him since his move to England, I had not known of his failing health and had expected him to remain active for many years yet—assuming that in time I'd see him again or regain the communication we'd once enjoyed. He was a prolific contributor to the better English fanzines and gave a number of fine speeches at British conventions, many of which subsequently appeared in fanzines. And he was earning handsome royalties for his *Star Trek* books; it is to be regretted that these were his last work.

My favorite among Blish's fiction was *Jack of Eagles*. It wasn't the book Blish liked best, I'm sure (I should imagine that honor fell to *Case of Conscience*), but I enjoyed it for the same reason I enjoyed Lester del Ray's *Pstalemate* more recently: it's of a certain genre of SF which pushes my buttons.

I remember James Blish looking almost prim, sitting across a restaurant table from me, his eyes alive with his formidable intellect, discoursing on the ethics of the professional SF world—a lecture it had been agreed I required (this was 1960), delivered with a gentleman's tact, humor, and insight, and loaded with home truths, none of them tipped with stingers. I think that's the way I shall continue to remember the man.●

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Science, Science Fiction And All That...

Gregory Benford

I imagine there are few indeed who would still agree with the original Gernsback thesis—that a, or *the* major role of science fiction is to teach readers science. People don't read SF to learn about thermodynamics or quantum field theory, anymore than people read historical novels to learn history. On the other hand, one of the great strengths of this field is its ability to incorporate the landscape of modern science, with all its grandeur and philosophical import, in a way conventional fiction cannot.

SF isn't unique in its use of science as an important background element. Sinclair Lewis's *Arrowsmith*, C. P. Snow's novels, and the entire naturalistic school of writing stress science as a vital element—but they are not science fiction. As Cy Chauvin has put it, SF uses imaginative elements loosely derived (by extrapolation or speculation) from the physical and social sciences, to create a new objective reality within a fictional matrix. Brunner's *Stand on Zanzibar* extrapolates social customs and political matters and is just as much science fiction as Heinlein's *Starman Jones*, which depends heavily upon the theory of relativity.

I think science has traditionally been important in SF because today science appears a more valid way of explaining our perception of agreed-upon reality than does, say, religion or myth—two elements which, when used in fiction, typically yield fantasy. SF takes us to Brunner's "limbo of unrealizable possibilities"; most SF writers perceive that to study such possibilities one must know something of the science that shapes man's surroundings and world-view. Poul Anderson (in Nebula Volume 7) constructs an elaborate scheme to classify SF stories regarding their scientific content and attitude toward science. He finds that hard science fiction, and stories which have a pro-technology viewpoint, are doing well and may even dominate the field.

He may be right. Certainly, the biggest sellers in SF by far are the hard science-type writers. This may be an artifact of how SF was several decades ago, when most of the writers now so popular began establishing their

audience. Or it may mean that the popular mind always perceives SF as mostly concerned with the nuts and bolts of science.

Yet few major hard science SF works are rigorously correct scientifically; fictional imperatives often make this impossible. A reasonable standard, then, would not fault a story unless the scientific or technical errors were visible to the lay reader—remembering, though, that the typical science fiction reader is relatively sophisticated in scientific matters and not easily fooled.

Though absolute scientific accuracy isn't necessary, an understanding of science and its world view is. Fred Hoyle's *The Black Cloud* is an awkward, wooden novel, but it's unusual in its intimate "feel" for the processes and attitudes of science. Much SF uses astronomy more than other sciences, probably because it is obviously the largest canvas available. Man occupies a cozy niche formed by awesome forces, and any alteration of these physical circumstances can radically change human society. Unlike much SF, which uses astronomy as a backdrop for an otherwise conventional human drama, *The Black Cloud* focuses on science as a process, not a collection of facts. As Hoyle's intelligent dust cloud enters the solar system, we see scientists dealing with the resulting problems in an analytical, relatively dispassionate manner that contrasts strongly with the panic of the outside world.

In the literary sense, I think science in SF plays three major roles: as vehicle for versimilitude, as symbol and as constraint. One of SF's great stumbling blocks is that it must deal with the fantastic, and thus is forced to work very hard to achieve the reader's willing suspension of disbelief. The other side of this coin is the special complexity of invention the field affords. This piling on of well-thought-out detail gives textures unattainable otherwise, a quality used to major effect visually in the film *2001.* Science fiction must labor so hard to achieve versimilitude that when it does, its density becomes a major asset.

In *An Experiment in Criticism* C. S. Lewis describes "realism of presentation" more or less as the heaping on of homey details—and specifically, the kind of small, telling facts that you wouldn't know unless you'd been there. There's a dull-witted way to do this, of course: just mention a lot of specific names, places, the arrangement of streets, the titles of nobility, etc. A far better method, which avoids a lot of plot-slowing description, is to fix on a few surprising but logical *consequences* of a society or world. Think through the environment of a low-gravity planet, for example, the way Poul Anderson has done, complete to the size of birds, height of trees, methods of hunting, slower water erosion rates, and so on. The more unexpected the implication is, the better it works. Heinlein used the simple fact that Mars is sandy to "prove" that it was profitable to import bicycles from the earth's moon, and thus motivated part of *The Rolling Stones,* for example.

This kind of implied complexity is a useful shorthand, and takes up much less space than a mere laying-out of detail. The essential ingredient is that the small fact-work in a story must seem to fit, to be of a piece.

Typically, a writer creates far more background material in his notes and plans than finally appears on the printed page. I do this constantly; I enjoy it. The world-building which takes place offstage appears as the tip of an iceberg in the final story, and often gives the author a confidence of voice he otherwise could not attain. Many of Heinlein's novels, whether adult or juvenile (publishers categories, both) convey this feeling of implied complexity in the background. (I've always found it interesting that though Heinlein is well known as a hard science writer, his most popular novel is *Stranger in a Strange Land,* which has little scientific background.)

Probably the best example of the opposite case—not implying detail, but overtly displaying it—is an elaborate, invented world which figures in essentially every fictional aspect: Frank Herbert's *Dune.* This long novel, with its appendices and maps, wraps the reader in a welter of detail that convinces by its sheer density. All the physical sciences are employed, but the book's vision is ecological and it remains the classic science fiction treatment of the theme. On a smaller scale, writers such as Jack Vance, Ursula K. Le Guin, and Harry Harrison have deepened their imaginative vocabulary by constructing worlds in which biological and physical sciences are well integrated and this integration dictates much of the plot and characterization in subtle fashion. Background merges imperceptibly into foreground.

Science is one of the most pervasive symbols in science fiction. The first example I ever saw of this was Tom Godwin's short story, "The Cold Equations." A girl stowaway adds mass and makes it impossible for a shuttle craft to complete its flight. The male pilot tries to find a solution and fails—the girl must be jettisoned before the shuttle enters a planetary atmosphere and begins deceleration. The story is uncompromising: the girl dies. Science is seen as reality itself here, a reality unforgivingly deterministic. The girl's pleadings and her appeals to other values appear as society's institutionalized illusions, which have no place in the objective world, the absolutely uncaring universe, outside man's limited power. Despite the story's dated techniques—by today's standard it's quite overwritten—it retains impact.

Another example: Poul Anderson's *Tau Zero* depicts a runaway starship within which, because of the theory of relativity, time runs more slowly than in the universe outside. Thus the crew witnesses the evolution of the universe from its present expansion, back into the final collapse and then the rebirth of a new universe. Here science (cosmology) paints for the crew a majestic vision outside the ship and places man as the witness to creation itself. By contrast, inside the craft most of the crew breaks under the strain and retreats into endless rounds of sexual misadventures and self pity. We see the personal weaknesses of man in the face of the infinite—the subject matter of science.

The third role of science in SF—and perhaps the most important—is as a constraint which defines the possible. H. G. Wells admonished us to make one assumption and explore it; a world of infinite possibilities is uninteresting because there can be no suspense. In the same fashion that the conventions of the sonnet can force excellence within a narrow framework, paying attention to scientific accuracy can become a constraint which forces coherence on fiction.

To some extent this role can become a purist's game; it can result in stories about little other than the question of whether a struck match will remain lit in an orbiting spacecraft. It has also led to a host of puzzle stories, for which *Astounding/Analog* has become notorious. But in the hands of an able practitioner the standard of scientific credibility becomes an important fictional tool, as in Hal Clement's *Heavy Planet (Mission of*

Gravity). Clement pays close attention to the intricate features of a strange, massive world. The book transcends its simple plot—an epic odyssey across this planet led by the tiny natives—through its cohesiveness and internal fidelity to scientific fact.

Larry Niven has used this facet of SF to good advantage. Often his work relies upon stating at the very beginning one premise—usually concerning a hitherto undiscovered physical effect, or else making it clear that a particular view of astronomy or physics is valid—and then allowing this assumption to motivate the rest of the plot. Niven's readers know he is playing a clever game, but it is an honest one. When he cheats on his science, he is quite careful to make this failure invisible to all but a few specialist readers. *Ringworld* is not his best novel, I think, but it won awards probably because of its breadth of imagination. It doesn't matter to most that the Ringworld will never work—it is unstable. A slight nudge will cause it to fall into its star within a few days.

Arthur C. Clarke also constructed his own gigantic alien artifact in *Rendezvous with Rama,* a novel dominated by technical points, which seldom loses its pervasive sense of the alienness of extraterrestrial intelligence. I think Clarke and Niven are popular because their books gain great coherence by adhering to one assumption—usually a rather rarified technical or scientific point—no matter what the result.

Using this technique religiously, the physical and biological sciences offer a programmatic way to enlist the imaginative possibilities open to SF. By stressing scientific accuracy as far as considerations of plot and character allow, the writer obtains guidelines—the crucial points which tie his search for radically different perspectives to believable human experience. Thus, science as a fictional element stands at the intersection between Norman Spinrad's "novelistic imperatives of plot, destiny and unity" and the SF imperative of universe creation.

Of course, not all science fiction needs science as an essential element to the reader's suspension of disbelief, particularly SF which deals with the immediate future. Even so, we commonly accept that an SF author should not employ elements which contradict known scientific *facts,* though he may deal as he likes with currently fashionable scientific theory. Time travel or faster than light light travel are probably impossible, but it is impossible to prove so. (I suspect the reason these devices remain in SF so strongly is their ability to convey the immense stretches of time and space that surround us.) A writer who takes care on such points, such as James Blish (*Cities in Flight, The Triumph of Time*), gains some of his strength from his obvious fidelity to this principle. Science fiction writers who are also professional scientists—Isaac Asimov, Robert Richardson ("Phillip Latham"), Vernor Vinge, Fred Hoyle and others—seem to acquire some of their following from their reader's appreciation of this point. As the fiction audience becomes more scientifically sophisticated, perhaps such accuracy will become a more important point for the genre as a whole.

Science is an extra-literary element in SF—but an important one, in much the same way, that the lengthy whaling descriptions are important in *Moby Dick.* But I wonder if that's all there is to it. I've talked about how science is used, and I've deliberately not drawn clear hard lines between science and, say, engineering. In many fictional contexts these blend together. But still we have to ask why this difficult-to-handle stuff is in SF at all—why, in fact, science almost seems to *define* science fiction.

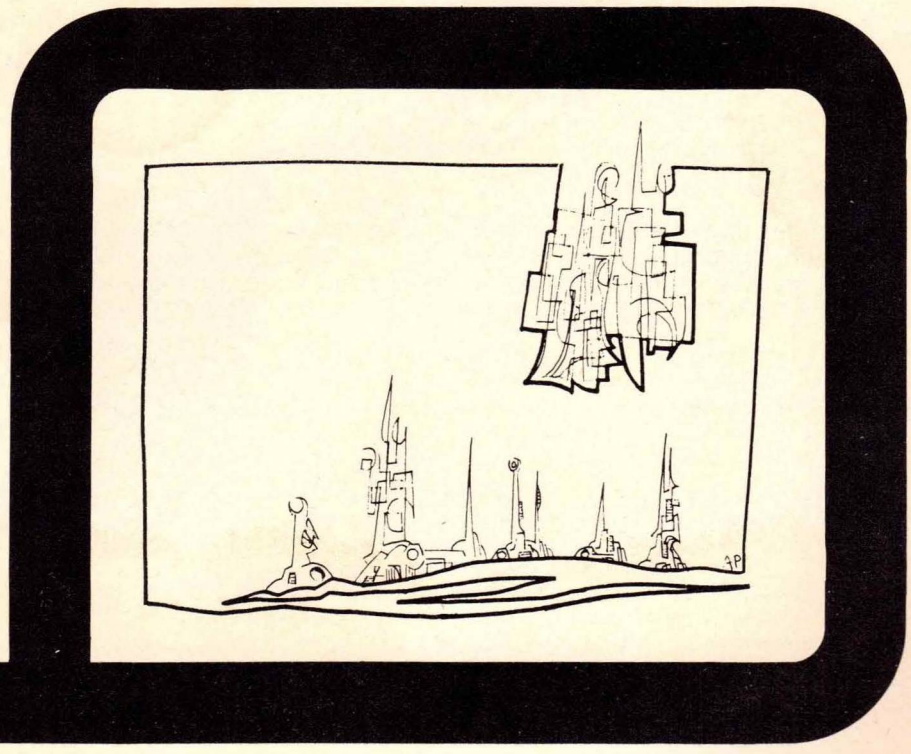
The answer lies in an observation many have made before: new kinds of human experience demand new kinds of fiction. SF is a symptom of our struggles with science as a new world-force. There are many ways of reacting to science, just as there are many ways of *doing* science (try comparing the James Watson of *The Double Helix* with the autobiography of Albert Einstein). And it seems to me that the primary mode in SF can be expressed in one word: *awe.*

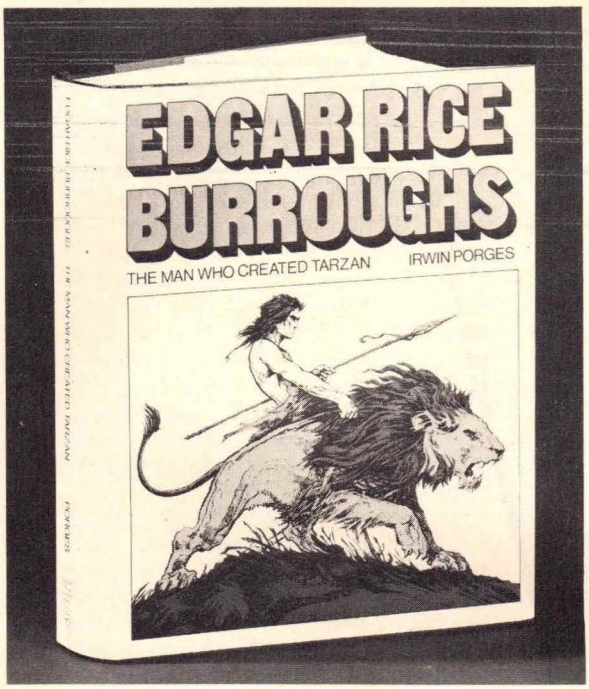
Modern science has given us vast new perspectives, and SF uses the legitimate emotions deriving from that experience. The joy of scientific discovery is a pleasure of the mind, and thus is most readily communicated by a rather intellectual fiction: SF. To be sure, many "mainstream" novels such as C. P. Snow's *The Search* convey the sociology of scientific research, the politics, the personal interaction. But very little of the restrained awe, the thrill of it, comes through.

This is a thing SF does, and does well. Joanna Russ has stressed this point, and I think she's perhaps more correct than she imagines. People read SF for fresh imagination, for intellectual puzzles, for many idiosyncratic reasons. But I think the highest common denominator in our experience, as readers, is the anticipation that somewhere in the course of reading a good novel or short story, we're going to be surprised, intrigued, and—if it's really good—awed.

That's why, in the midst of fast-paced adventure and tricky plotting, science is still an integral part of SF, a *sine qua non.* We believe science because it works, it describes our consensus reality (for the most part), and you must *believe* to be awed.

Adapted from a speech given in 1975 and in part from a paper in the College English Association Chapbook on Science Fiction,





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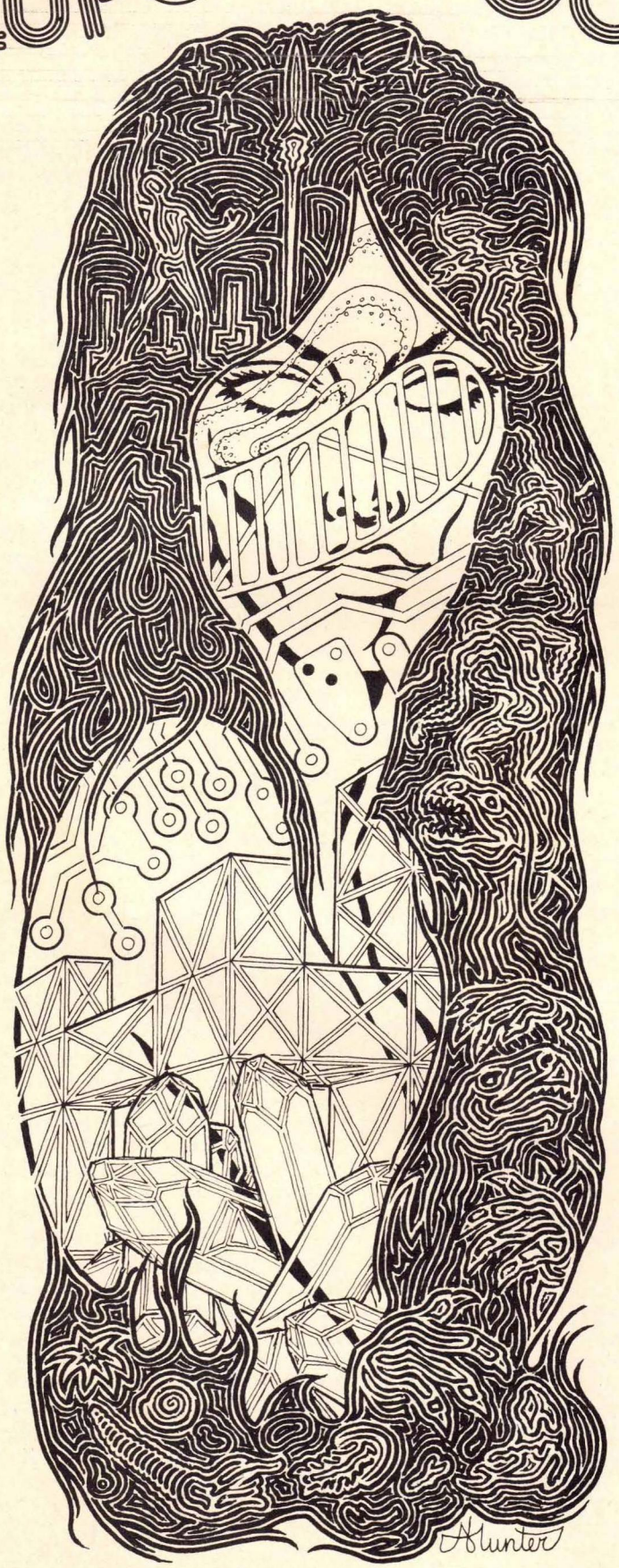


RICHARD LUPOFF

EDGAR RICE BURROUGHS: THE MAN WHO CREATED TARZAN, by Irwin Porges. 819 + xix pp. $14.95. ISBN 0-8425-0079-O. 1975. Brigham Young University Press.

Here at long last, issued on the one hundredth anniversary of the birth of Edgar Rice Burroughs, is the long-promised and eagerly awaited biography, endorsed by Hulbert Burroughs (ERB's son) as "the first and only true and definitive account of the life and work of this remarkably successful author."

It is a huge and luxuriantly produced volume, fully the size of a Manhattan phone book, decked out in a *de luxe* binding and an attractive jacket, and spotted with hundreds of illustrations: sketches and documents in Burroughs' own hand, photographs of and by Burroughs and other members of his family, magazine covers and book jackets of various Burroughs works. And, in this era of inflated book prices, the tag of fourteen-ninety-five on this mammoth, beautiful volume is a fantastic bargain.

Porges, as I will refer to the book, is by no means the first volume to treat of Burroughs at considerable length. There was a time, prior to the 1960s, when *aficionados* mourned the lack of Burroughs literature, but this has long since changed. *Porges* is, in fact, at least the sixth book to deal centrally with Burroughs and/or his works and their adaptations. I will give a rundown of these earlier works; if this seems needlessly discursive, I ask the reader to bear with me.

1. *A Golden Anniversary Bibliography of Edgar Rice Burroughs* by Henry Hardy Heins, 1962, revised and enlarged, 1964. (A brilliant bibliography.)

2. *Edgar Rice Burroughs: Master of Adventure* by Richard A. Lupoff, 1965, revised 1968, second revision 1975. (A literary study.)

3. *The Big Swingers* by Robert W. Fenton, 1967. (A biography.)

4. *Tarzan of the Movies* by Gabe Essoe, 1968. ("A pictorial history of more than fifty years of Edgar Rice Burroughs' legendary hero.") (A similar volume by Vernell Coriell was also issued in slick magazine format.)

5. *Tarzan Alive* by Philip Jose Farmer, 1972. ("A definitive biography of Lord Greystoke.")

Serious and extended treatment of Burroughs is also available within the context of more broadly addressed volumes. I will list a baker's half-dozen.

1. "To Barsoom and Back with Edgar Rice Burroughs" by Sam Moskowitz in *Explorers of the Infinite,* 1963. (A biographical and bibliographic sketch.)

2. "A History of 'The Scientific Romance' in the Munsey Magazines, 1912-1920" by Sam Moskowitz in *Under the Moons of Mars,* 1970. (Literary study of Burroughs and contemporary authors, editors and publishers.)

3. "Tarzan and the Barbarians" by Ron Goulart in *Cheap Thrills,* 1972. ("The amazing thrilling astonishing history of pulp fiction.")

4. "To Barsoom and Beyond: ERB and the Weirdies" by Brian Aldiss in *Billion Year Spree,* 1973. ("The true history of science fiction.")

5. "Extracts from the Memoirs of 'Lord Greystoke'" in *Mother was a Lovely Beast* edited by Philip Jose Farmer, 1974. ("A feral man anthology—fiction and fact about humans raised by animals.")

6. "Lords of the Jungle" by Camille E. Cazedessus, Jr. in *The Comic-Book Book* edited by Thompson and Lupoff, 1973. (A study of Burroughs adaptations and their imitators in comic books and comic strips.)

7. "Tarzan Every Sunday" by Ron Goulart in *The Adventurous Decade,* 1975. (A study of comic strips in the 1930s.)

I mention all of these earlier works in case the reader is unaware of their existence. Surely Irwin Porges is aware of them, certainly he had access to them all (except possibly *Farmer II* and *Goulart II*) in the course of preparing his own book. He makes passing and rather slighting mention of earlier works in a couple of places, including once as early as his preface (p. xiv). He even goes so far as to reproduce (on page 698) the frontispiece of *Edgar Rice Burroughs: Master of Adventure.* He does so without crediting the source and without permission of the copyright holder (myself), crediting all art in his book to ERB Incorporated. ERB Inc. owns the original sketch of the picture in question, but does not hold the copyright!

Porges pointedly omits a bibliography from his book, explaining that he relied entirely upon primary sources (ERB Inc. files and interviews) and by implication suggesting that earlier works are unworthy of even being listed in his "definitive" volume. This is, even by implication, a very ambitious claim.

How well does *Porges* live up to it? What is in the book? There are many frills—an introduction by Ray Bradbury, a foreword by Hulbert Burroughs, assorted appendices and notes—but even so, the main text of *Porges* runs to some 700 pages, and these pages can be sorted out to offer material of three basic types.

First is the straight biographical treatment of Burroughs. This is the area in which there was, paradoxically, both the most and the least information previously available. *Fenton* and others provide basic biographical data—Burroughs' place and date of birth, family relationships, schooling, army service, marriages and divorces, his three children, financial failures before becoming a writer in his middle thirties, and so on.

A picture emerges, largely through the medium of Burroughs' own brief autobiographical sketches, of a bluff, hearty man who never had any literary pretensions, wrote only to entertain and/or to make money, didn't take himself seriously and was amazed any time anyone else did.

Porges had access, as I have mentioned, to vast amounts of primary materials. He mentions that his wife, a trained researcher, devoted three years to examination of files and records in Tarzana. He credits Burroughs files, letters, and taped interviews with surviving members of the Burroughs family, and does manage to provide considerable added detail to the previously existing sketch. Exactly what were the dates of Burroughs' attendance at this or that school, what were the addresses of his homes, etc.

But Porges does not clarify any of the *important* questions about Burroughs: Why and how did he start writing? What were his sources of inspiration? What were the contents, significance, and impact of his lifelong series of nightmares?

Presumably, this information did not turn up in Porges' researches.

What Porges does provide, to ennui-provoking length, are excerpts and summaries of Burroughs' seemingly endless squabbles with editors and publishers over submissions, rejections, revisions, rates of payment for stories, rights, and royalties. A certain amount of this information adds verisimilitude to the narrative, but eighty percent or so of it could just as well have been summarized, or tabulated, or simply omitted, to the benefit of the book.

The long sagas of difficulties in marketing *The Outlaw of Torn* and *The Deputy Sheriff of Comanche County* are of some interest, but the endless recitations of how a story made its way from *Liberty* to *The Saturday Evening Post* to *Red Book* to *Blue Book* to *Argosy* to *Fantastic Adventures* evokes only snores by its fifteenth—if not its fiftieth!—recitation *cum* minor variations.

Porges does clarify two questions on which multiple versions of the facts have appeared in the past. One is the reason for Burroughs' discharge from the cavalry in 1897. Was it the result of a discovered underage enlistment? A medical problem, possibly a heart condition?

The answer: both of those circumstances were true, but the real basis for Burroughs' discharge was that, bored and discouraged with army life, Ed wrote to his father to try and get him out of his enlistment, and his father, through political influence, did so.

The second question: Why and when did Burroughs leave his duties as a World War II correspondent in the Pacific theatre and return to California to live? Answer: he returned only temporarily during the war due to the death of his first wife, then returned to Hawaii and duty until after the war had ended.

But this is precious little wheat to obtain by sifting seventy-odd boxes of records and/or seven hundred pages of biography. Almost never in *Porges* does Burroughs *come alive.* There is some life in the last hundred-fifty pages of the book; presumably this is infused through the reminiscences of Burroughs' surviving children and grandchildren and his second wife, all of whom cooperated with Porges. But even here, there is a certain coyness, a pussyfooting about the domestic situation in the "first" Burroughs household, the alcoholism of Emma Burroughs (and sporadically of Edgar), the bizarre circumstances of the first Burroughs divorce and Edgar's remarriage.

Instead . . . instead of making Edgar Rice Burroughs live and breathe and leap off the page as one would hope a biographer would do—for contrast the reader is referred to L. Sprague de Camp's excellent biography of H. P. Lovecraft—Porges fills page after page and chapter after chapter with the deadly details of Burroughs' quarrels with magazine publishers, book publishers, newspaper syndicates, film producers, and so on. A long digression involving a discussion of sex and social advancement, with a lengthy exchange between W. R. Thurston and George Bernard Shaw, is dragged in by the tail

and stretched to cover still more pages.

As biography, *Porges* is very boring and not very illuminating.

The second aspect of the book is that of literary study, and in this regard there is far less to be said than in that of biography. Basically, Porges provides extended summaries of one Burroughs story after another. At one time such information was useful, perhaps even needful. *Edgar Rice Burroughs: Master of Adventure* contains many such summaries, but if for no other reason than the existence of the earlier book, Porges' repetition of these is wastefully superfluous.

Further, where the summaries might legitimately serve as a point of departure for some perceptive analysis and evaluation, and for a discussion of other authors to place Burroughs in context, Porges provides very little such material and what he provides is shallow, naive in many cases, and at its best strangely reminiscent of earlier commentaries by other (uncredited) writers.

The third aspect of *Porges* is the coverage of Burroughs material in adaptation—primarily films and comic strips or comic books, and to a lesser degree radio broadcasts and Big Little Books. There is little to be said about Porges' treatment of this aspect of his topic, except to note that the ground has been covered before, more thoroughly and lucidly, by Essoe, Cazedessus, and Goulart.

What, then, is left in *Porges* that is of value? What kind of overall evaluation can be placed on the book?

To return briefly to its physical aspects, one could hardly quarrel with the size, layout and presentation of the volume. One might have hoped to see a more careful keying of artwork to text. Mention is made of a sample Burroughs comic strip drawn by J. Allen St. John, Burroughs' own favorite illustrator—yet this is not shown. Does it not survive? If not, Porges might have said so. If it does, it should have been given. He describes a particular scene from a Weissmuller-O'Sullivan Tarzan film in great and fond detail. The scene is not shown although other film shots are.

But these complaints are relatively minor.

The real question about this big, gorgeous package, is what it *does* contain—and what it contains, unfortunately, is a heavy load of stale good.

At least ninety percent of the book is a tired and tiresome rehash of earlier work accumulated over the years by Heins, Essoe, Fenton, Moskowitz, Farmer, Cazedessus, Goulart, Aldiss and myself. This is not to say that Porges "stole" the work of earlier writers. He claims that he derived all his material from primary sources, and as hard as this is to believe at certain times, I am willing to make the required effort and grant him the benefit of the doubt.

But his work with primary sources *still* led him to almost nothing but a slight amplification of existing work, plus a few—a very few—new facts or insights, and a couple of pleasant reminiscences, mostly on the part of Hulbert Burroughs.

Over seven hundred of the book's eight hundred pages are dross. Well over seven hundred. What remains might have made a nice little semi-popular/semi-scholarly magazine article. It might even have been stretched and padded out to make a slim volume of a hundred or a hundred-fifty pages. Instead, we are offered an over-long, over-dull, and—most seriously—almost entirely redundant tome.

Edgar Rice Burroughs: The Man Who Created Tarzan promised much, claimed much, delivered pitifully little. It must be regarded as the major literary disappointment of 1975. In the specialized context of Burroughs scholarship and commentary, it must be regarded as the major disappointment of all time.●

LOVECRAFT AT LAST, by H. P. Lovecraft and Willis Conover. 273 + xxii pp. $19.75. ISBN 0-915490-02-1. Carrollton-Clark, 9122 Rosslyn, Arlington, Virginia 22209.

Suppose you could spend a long,

long evening engaged in warm and discursive dialog with your favorite author out of the past. Who this would be is strictly up to you: for science fiction enthusiasts it might be H. G. Wells or Hugo Gernsback or John Campbell or Edgar Rice Burroughs, or you might want to go farther back to Poe or even to Shakespeare. (A friend of mine suggests that if the partner of the famous writer were a contemporary pro the conversation would devolve entirely upon royalty rates and contract terms.)

Lovecraft at Last is an unusual book, not quite memoir, not exactly biography, certainly not criticism. It's akin to *Selected Letters* but isn't exactly that either. It's. . . .

During his writing career in the 1920s and 30s, Lovecraft was known as an amazingly prolific correspondent. Living in Providence for all but a few of his years, he did relatively little socializing. He has a reputation as a recluse, but his conduct during his residence in New York, his other travels, and the occasional visits he received in Providence indicate that he was in fact an extremely warm person; behind a facade of formality he was positively gregarious.

But he found no like-minded companions in Providence, and thus channelled his outreaching impulses into thousands of pages of letters that he exchanged with scores or hundreds of fans and colleagues. In fact, this correspondence took up many hours that might otherwise have been spent in increasing his commercial production and thus in alleviation of his perennial genteel poverty. Lovecraft himself was forever vowing to cut back on letters and spend more time on fiction but he never quite lived up to the resolution.

One of his correspondents during the last year of his life was a teen-aged SF and weird-fiction fan named Willis Conover, who later went on to a degree of fame himself as an authority on jazz and somewhat hightone disk jockey for the Voice of America. Conover saved copies of his letters to Lovecraft, and of course of all that Lovecraft sent him. When the call from Arkham House for Lovecraft material to be included in the *Selected Letters* reached Conover, he decided to use his own materials separately. I'm not certain that this made for the best scholarship in the world, but it has led to a book that is unique.

Conover has edited his own and Lovecraft's missives into a dialog format that compresses a correspondence that lasted from July 1936 when Conover initiated the exchange with a request for material for his fanzine until Lovecraft's death the following March, into a format that reads like an evening's—or perhaps a few days'—conversation.

Conover has edited his own half of the exchanges rather heavily; again, a matter of dubious scholarship, but who wouldn't take the opportunity in later years to edit his adolescent gaucheries? He says that Lovecraft's side of the material is edited only very lightly, in order to make the extracts from letters read more like conversation. The purist will doubtless seethe at not seeing the full text but this is not a book for the purist-scholar.

And I must say that even if Conover's editing removes the book from the top shelf of pure scholarship, it serves also to render it far more readable and engrossing than the purer *Selected Letters*, and to reveal the true personality of Lovecraft in glowing contrast to the stereotyped image of the frigid hermit of Providence.

Lovecraft's complex attitudes are effectively revealed in his own words, and those attitudes are a mixture of the sincere craftsman, the frustrated would-be commercial writer, and the crier of sour grapes. Lovecraft hits painfully close to home when he says "I have no skill at all in insincere artificial writing, the sort which produces conventional pulp tripe and succeeds in the cheap magazines. . . . By the standards of real literature, I simply don't exist, and that is equally true of all the routine hacks who fill the pulp magazines. We are the most negligible of small fry, and anyone who mistakes us for real authors is simply wasting his esteem. Pulp fiction is not the product of art, but of a sort of calculative commercial cleverness about on a par with that of a skilled mechanic or small business man. I'd rather be a *good* plumber or bookkeeper or postoffice clerk than a popular scribbler of science-fiction hokum." (p.88)

And again, "Certainly, I could not become a cheap fictional prostitute like the pulp boys—the basic idea of concocting synthetic rabble-ticklers is so nauseous to me that I *couldn't possibly* do it even if I were willing to!" (p.100)

The book is full of little gems from Lovecraft, phrases and sentences and paragraphs that make you sit back and chuckle or nod or mutter a semi-involuntary "Yes!" or if there is someone else in the room with you an urgent "Look at this, look at this!" Lovecraft's comments on a title-change dictated by an editor (p.200) utterly transfixed me. And the following quotation (same page) did the same: "Yes indeed, I have heard from Mr. Henneberger! Cheque? Bless me, no! Such details are so vulgar!" (That was addressed to Edwin Baird, editor of *Weird Tales*; Henneberger was Joseph Henneberger the publisher of the magazine.)

Listen to this: in 1963 at the World Science Fiction Convention in Washington, D.C., I encountered Doc Smith one afternoon in a kind of lobby-milling-space outside the program room. I'd met Doc before at conventions, had dinner with him and his wife Jeannie, and later would become his editor for the last book published in his lifetime, *Subspace Explorers*.

It was always a pleasant and rewarding relationship, but this one afternoon was magic. Somehow Doc got going on his philosophy, various anecdotes and attitudes. His relationship with John W. Campbell and his feelings when Campbell asked for revisions that Doc found unacceptable (" 'Dear John, I am not that hungry,' I told him," said Doc). His experiences in selling his first novel. (More than fifty rejection slips over a period of nearly a decade before Gernsback took *The Skylark of Space*.) And so on and on.

Doc was a living legend in 1963, and I was a little nobody of a fan, but there was no patronising, no talking down. He just sat and talked to me, as friend to friend, and gave me an experience that I will cherish forever.

That's what Lovecraft did for Willis Conover, and in *Lovecraft at Last* Conover offers us the chance to share the experience. If you have any interest in Lovecraft, don't pass up that chance!

I could quit now—I've mostly said what I have to say about *Lovecraft at Last*—but something more needs to be added. This book needs to be viewed in the context of others on Lovecraft. Anyone seriously interested in Lovecraft should not *begin* a scholarly inquiry with *Lovecraft at Last*.

First should come the primary sources. These include Lovecraft's own fiction, of course, collected into two volumes of short stories and one of novels by Arkham House. Beyond these, the volume of "revisions" also published by Arkham House should at least be scanned. These stories are works "revised" by Lovecraft on a fee basis for other aspiring *Weird Tales* authors. In some cases the "revisions" were mere polishings, but in others, as Lovecraft himself declared, they were virtual ghost-writings taking the smallest story-seed from the client and carrying it through to a final manuscript. No wonder so many *WT* authors read like Lovecraft!

Next, and still in the realm of primary sources, come the *Selected Letters*, of which Arkham House has issued three volumes to date and promises still more.

Then the formal biography by L. Sprague de Camp, issued by Doubleday. An admirable job.

Now comes *Lovecraft at Last*. Conover's book, in case I haven't mentioned this before, is published in large format and de luxe production. Many of Lovecraft's documents are reproduced in facsimile, with hand-

Coming Up In F&SF

(a partial list)

Frederik Pohl - *Man Plus,* a three-part serial of the new Pohl novel, ten years in the writing, concerning a cyborg and his desperate mission to Mars

Damon Knight - a special Knight issue, featuring his first fiction in many years, an extraordinary story entitled *I See You*

L. Sprague de Camp - two new stories, *The Coronet* and *Balsamo's Mirror*

John Varley - *In the Hall of the Martian Kings* and *The Funhouse Effect,* two novelets from one of sf's best new writers

Ron Goulart - *Lunatic At Large*

Marion Zimmer Bradley - *Hero's Moon*

Tom Reamy - *The Detwiller Boy* and *Insects in Amber* two novelets (sf this time) from the author of *San Diego Lightfoot Sue* and *Twilla.*

Manly Wade Wellman - *Where the Woodbine Twineth,* macabre fantasy, from a master

Ursula K. LeGuin - *The Barrow*

Robert Bloch - *But First These Words*

Barry N. Malzberg - *Seeking Assistance,* the last sf story from sf's most controversial writer, along with an explanation of why he's getting out of sf

Robert Thurston - two novelets, *The Aliens* and *The Mars Ship*

Robert Aickman - *The Hospice*

Richard Cowper - *Piper at the Gates of Dawn*

Michael Bishop - *The Samurai and the Willows,* a novelet

R. Bretnor - *The Ladies of Beetlegoose Nine,* a new Papa Schimmelhorn story

Edward Wellen - *Goldbrick,* a wild new novella from the author of *Hijack, Mouthpiece* and *Deadpan*

Avram Davidson - *Manatee Gal Ain't You Coming Out Tonight,* something completely different, even for Davidson

Department of fictional authors - *The Volcano* by Rex Stout's **Paul Chapin;** *It's the Queen of Darkness Pal* by Richard Brautigan's **Rod Keen;** *The Doge Whose Barque Was Worse Than His Bite* by Kilgore Trout's **Jonathan Swift Somers III**

Plus, of course, our regular departments: **Isaac Asimov** on Science; **Algis Budrys** on Books; **Baird Searles** on Films and TV; **Gahan Wilson's** cartoons; the F&SF Competition, starring Bob Leman and many other wits, and other odds and ends too numerous to fit on this page...

written entries printed in blue to simulate the original ink. There are a number of drawings, covers of fan magazines to which Lovecraft contributed, and brief period essays or stories by Robert Bloch and E. Hoffman Price, describing the contemporary Lovecraft.

A comparison with Irwin Porges' book about Edgar Rice Burroughs virtually forces itself upon the reviewer. Where Porges' claims were great and his performance lilliputian, Conover's claims are modest and his performance is superior. Further, where Porges goes out of his way to snub predecessors in his field, Conover conscientiously lists *his* including de Camp. It does not in any way demean Conover that he acknowledges his precursors and credits them their achievements. This is something that Lovecraft did as well, and that any gentleman would understand. ●

JOURNEY TO MARS, by Gustavus W. Pope. 543 pp. $5.25 paperbound; hardbound edition also available. ISBN 0-88355-145-4. 1894, Dillingham; 1974, Hyperion

As you're doubtless aware, several series of facsimile editions have been appearing of late, of classic works of and about science fiction. I suppose this is a good thing: the increased academic interest in our field has turned these creaking vehicles from the special interests of a few odd-ball collectors to the vital source materials of innumerable term papers and graduate theses. Having them around again in facsimile makes it a lot easier to track 'em down than they used to be.

Journey to Mars is one of two examples of the "interplanetary romance" by Pope, and the interplanetary romance, in case you just got here, reader, was the forerunner of the space opera. Where the space opera spends a lot of time zipping around the stygian void in space-going behemoths with *beaucoup* battles, much heavy weaponry, often many aliens . . . a sort of transplanted boys book of naval adventure such as Bertram Chandler and the Niven/Pournelle team have learned to produce, to their respective enrichments . . . the earlier interplanetary romance tended to shorten the spaceship sequences (or do without them altogether and transport heroes by astral projection, magic carpet, or similar device). These romances then concentrated on the exploits of their earthly heroes on alien worlds, which usually turned out to be an awful lot like Ruritania, complete with beautiful princesses, scoundrelly plotters, wise old retainers and glittering imperial courts.

Gustavus Pope wrote a Martian and a Venusian adventure; having the Martian volume available once again is a considerable boon. I hope that Hyperion (or someone else) reissues his Venusian volume next.

The major point of interest in Pope, in recent years, has been the debate over possible sources for the material used by Edgar Rice Burroughs in the creation of his Martian ("Barsoomian") cycle, beginning with *A Princess of Mars* (1912).

I'm afraid that I made the opening statement in this debate more than a decade ago, when I suggested in an introduction to a new edition of Edwin Lester Arnold's *Lieut. Gullivar Jones* (1905) that that book had provided the basic background for Barsoom while the same author's *Phra the Phoenician* (1890) had been the prototype of the character John Carter.

That was the start.

Don Wollheim subscribed to the Arnold theory. Sprague de Camp found it unlikely and suggested (along with Fritz Leiber) that the theosophical theories of Madame Blavatsky were a more likely source. Terry Carr turned up an antique called *Zarlah the Martian* (1909) by R. Norman Grisewood, which anticipates Burroughs' use of interplanetary astralism. (Arnold had used a magic carpet and Pope a spaceship.) Sam Moskowitz is a champion of Pope. Even that graybeard Percy Greg stakes a claim with his *Across the Zodiac* (1880) by giving his Martians "sleeping silks and furs"—exactly the term used in Burroughs. Almost too unlikely a coincidence to believe in!

Oddest of all, a radical hardshell element in the Burroughs Bibliophiles (a fan club devoted exclusively to the Great One) tend to fly into a rage at any discussion of sources, interpreting such as an imputation of plagiarism.

Well, the new edition of Pope offers ammunition to the Moskowitz camp, and a good case can be made. The first half of the book is not much like Barsoom—it's a slow, dragging, preachy guided tour rather in the pattern of Jules Verne's worst works—but after things get going there is a *very* Graustarkian/Barsoomian adventure on Mars, complete with beautiful princess, sneering plotter, wise old retainer, glittering imperial courts, duels, betrayals, captures, imprisonments and escapes.

A point for you, Sam, and congratulations!

The problem is ever being able to prove that Burroughs actually read Greg, Arnold, Pope, Grisewood, Blavatsky or any of those folk. I doubt that the matter will ever be settled to universal agreement, but on the face of the books themselves I'd think it most likely that Burroughs picked up some-

thing from one, something from another, stirred 'em around and *voila!* Barsoom!

Well, now I'll be in dutch with the Burroughs Bibliophiles again. Guess I'll have to live with that, I guess, I guess.

One unfortunate aspect of the Hyperion Pope is that in his introduction, Moskowitz says "Pope's Martians ride gigantic birds, instead of the Thoths encountered on Burroughs' Mars. . . ."

Thoths?

Thoths? Off to the faithful Larousse, and as I suspected, the word Thoth is the name of an Egyptian god—you know, those neat guys with the heads of animals and the bodies of men. In fact, Thoth was the god of wisdom and of magic. What could Sam have been thinking? Well, a quick jaunt back to the Burroughs shelf, Barsoomian section, and—ahah! just as I thought! the Barsoomians ride *thoats,* eight-legged "horses" controlled by telepathy!

Is this some new diversionary tactic? A plot? A scheme? Or just a momentary slip that got past editor, copy-editor, proofreader and all? Most likely the last.

Well, sail on, Hyperion. Having these books around again is a public service anyhow.●

THE EARLY WILLIAMSON, by Jack Williamson. 199 pp. $5.95. ISBN 0-385-02722-0. 1975. Doubleday.

I suppose it's some sort of sign of maturity that we're starting to get these series now: the "Earlies" from Doubleday and the "Best ofs" from a number of publishers. Ballantine has done a bunch of the latter but Pocket Books has entered the game with a "Best of" John Collier and I suppose any number can play.

The Early Williamson is Doubleday's third, following on the heels of the hugely successful Asimov volume and the more recent and also successful del Rey. There seem to be only two ground rules for these books: they shall contain all the author's previously uncollected short science fiction (and fantasy), up to a designated cutoff date, and the author is expected to provide a running commentary giving autobiographical data, insights into his professional development, occasional anecdotes and the like.

Since the first of those rules excludes stories included in earlier one-author collections (although not, I think, anthologies), it means that the SF in these books is going to be pretty weak—the better stories went into earlier collections; in Williamson's case, *The Pandora Effect* and *People Machines.* Also, in Williamson's case, it makes for a fairly slim "Early" since as he says himself he has always leaned more toward novels and lengthy novelettes that just don't fit the "Early" format. So we have a volume of 199 pages in contrast to 540 for Asimov and 424 for del Rey.

Still, while I enjoyed all three "Earlies" I must say that I enjoyed Williamson's the most. Perhaps that goes back to a Sunday afternoon many years ago in the sleepy village of Bordentown, New Jersey, when an adolescent Richard Lupoff, fat, pimple-faced and stf-crazed, opened a Galaxy Novels edition of *The Legion of Space.* I was already a steady reader of *Galaxy* and *F&SF*; my favorite authors were Ray Bradbury and Cliff Simak and Edgar Pangborn (ah, Jesus, the first time I read "Angel's Egg"!!) and Isaac Asimov; I'd read and enjoyed Sturgeon and Pohl-&-Kornbluth and Schmitz, but . . .

. . . but I'd never read a space opera before! Isn't that amazing! And there I sat in Corky's Hamburger Joint (isn't this an astonishing recall, and all on a cup of Italian Roast) meeting John Starr and Giles Habibula and reading about the secret of AKKA and . . . .

How many such transcendent moments can a man be privileged to experience in one lifetime? I can recall about three others in mine, and I'm not going to tell you about them. Not

today, anyhow.

But I was hooked, I was in love, I was made mad by *The Legion of Space* and for the past twenty-five years I've been afraid to reread that book lest I see the flaws I didn't see as a boy.

But here is the early Williamson, and the new Doubleday book is very much worth reading, more for the sake of Williamson's modern commentary and the contrasts and illuminations of the eleven stories (all of them dating between 1928 and 1933) than for the sake of the stories themselves. The saga of a penniless ranch boy dazzled and overwhelmed by a vision—a thrilling wonder story. Williamson and Ed Hamilton travelling down the Mississippi together in a little cockleshell, renting a house next door to Ernest Hemingway's (but Hemingway was not in residence) . . . warm, charming, delightful stuff.

One story in the book is a gem. "Dark Star Station" (from *Astounding,* 1933) may creak a little in its characterization and may suffer slightly from an overrunning syrup cup, but the science in it was forty years ahead of its time—an amazing anticipation of the neutron star/black hole cosmogony, a mindblowing hard-science story that Larry Niven might hope to write on the best day of his life.

Brilliant!

For this ex-fifteen-year-old would-be enrollee in the Legion of Space, *The Early Williamson* is a thrill and a delight. May you be blessed to enjoy it half as much as I did!●

THE FORGOTTEN BEASTS OF ELD, by Patricia A. McKillip. 217 pp. $7.25. ISBN 0-689-30434-X. 1974. Atheneum.

Well, here I go playing spoiler again. Everybody seems to love *The Forgotten Beasts of Eld.* People keep telling me how fine the book is, Andy Porter specifically asked me to review it, Avon Books is giving the paperback edition a big push, comparing it to *Watership Down* and *The Hobbit.* The St. Louis *Post-Dispatch* called it "a marvelous experience." *Publishers Weekly* said "magical moonlit fantasy." *Locus* said "The best fantasy novel of the year, and perhaps of the decade." (Better than the Earthsea books? one interrabangs incredulously!)

I don't like it.

The book bored me.

The first time I started it I gave up after forty pages.

The second time I started it I made it through to the end, but only by forcing my eyes to track from line to line. Every time I stopped reading it took an effort to start again. It was the only time in my life that I cared so little about a group of characters and a story that I looked away from the page after I'd read the entire book except the last line—and had to force myself to look back and see how it ended. ("Please take us home." In case you're wondering what the last line is. I hope this is not akin to telling you that the butler did it.)

Yes, the book is a mythical kingdom fantasy cast in the classic mold. And I ought to mention that the Atheneum edition has a positively gorgeous wraparound jacket painted by Peter Schaumann in the Maxfield Parrish-Hannes Bok tradition. (I have not seen the paperback.)

It's the kind of story that in the care of a talented writer, one capable of making her characters live and her language sing, might have made a very fine book. There are a sorceress, a secret princeling, a troop of magical beasts, a second witch (old and dotty and a pretty good comic relief from our frigid, ponderous-minded heroine), a pretty damn good wizard who appears only too briefly, a fine supernatural monster, a hero-in-armor who is one of seven sone of an ancient house. . . .

All of the ingredients are there, but McKillip just can't *write.* It's hard to explain—you pretty much have to read a chapter or so to find out what I mean. Here, try a couple of paragraphs:

> "Tamlorn," she whispered. "Tamlorn. My Tam."
>
> She saw a small house within the trees, its chimney smoking. A gray cat curled asleep on the roof, and a black raven perched on a pair of antlers hanging above the door. Doves, pecking in the yard, fluttered around her as she walked to the door. The raven looked at her sideways out of one eye and gave a cry like a question: *Who?* She ignored it, opened the door. Then she stood motionless in the doorway, for across the threshold there was no floor but mist that moved uneasily, immeasurable at her feet. She looked around, puzzled, and saw the walls of the house looking back at her, with eyes and round dark mouths. The door slipped out of her hand, closed behind her, and the mist moved upward, coiling around the watching eyes, covering them, until it hid even the roof; and the raven flew toward her from somewhere beyond the mists, and gave its question again: *Who?*
>
> Tamlorn wriggled in her arms, wailed a complaint. She kissed him absently. Then she said, standing in the strange, watching house,
>
> "Whose heart am I in? "

Dum, de-dum, de-dum, de-de-dum-de. Dum, de-dum, de-de-dum, de-de-dum-de. Clunk-a-clunk-a-clunk-unk-a-clunk-a. Plonk-ker-plunk-ker-plonk-plunk-a-plonk-a.

It might well be possible, if one has the proper analytical capabilities, to take a piece of prose like something out of McKillip or Norton, and a piece of prose out of Le Guin or Tolkien, and analyze them and see exactly why one is a dreadful, snore-provoking chore to read and the other a soaring pleasure. Something to do with troches and meters, or with the arrangement of hard and soft consonants and long or short vowels, or with . . . with . . . whatever. I don't know. The mix of modifiers with object words or action versus description versus conversation versus introspection.

I don't have that ability. I guess I'm kind of mystical about this, I go by *feel,* and that's unscientific and it's subjective and I know it comes dangerously close to "I don't know anything about litter-uh-choor but I know what I like." (I like Tolkien and Doc Smith and Chip Delany and Edgar Rice Burroughs and Garrett P. Serviss and Thomas M. Disch, among others.)

Gentle reader, I *really* don't like *The Forgotten Beasts of Eld* and if your taste is anything like mine you won't either. I don't recommend the book.●

PEACE, by Gene Wolfe. 264 pp. $8.95. ISBN 0-06-014699-0. 1975. Harper & Row.

This is the only book I can remember laying down with the anguished admiration that only another writer can understand, and so I beg the indulgence of the 90% of the audience who are teachers or librarians or computer programmers or independent book packagers or what-have-you while I say that *Peace* is an "I wish I'd written that book" kind of book.

I loved it.

It's the closest thing I've read to perfection of its type since G. A. England's *The Flying Legion* or Andrew Lang's *Prince Prigio.*

Peace isn't quite science fiction or fantasy. In fact, it isn't quite a novel. It doesn't have a plot. I love it. Figure that out.

I'll give you a couple of cues: The book has *characters.* It has *settings.* It has *life.* It has a sense of time and place, weather and buildings and flesh and emotions, sensations and actions and caring. It has a sense of *caring.*

And that son of a bitch Gene Wolfe can WRITE! Jesus, can he write! Not with the pyrotechnics of an Ellison, but with a quiet warmth and an acuteness of observation and precision of expression that puts you *right there,* surrounded 360° by his world. It's the most poetic prose or the most prosaic poetry I've read in a long while. Look, I'm going to give you a paragraph, a very ordinary, undramatic paragraph. Read this and then I'll be back with you:

> We suppered on the cold biscuits left from dinner, with honey and farm butter, tea, the promised corn relish, homemade vegetable soup, and more doughnuts. My aunt fell into conversation with Margaret, asking her where she went to school, what she studied, what she did to help her mother, and so on. "She's a bright one," Mrs. Lorn said. "She'll be a better cook than me soon's she understands the management of the stove. She can play, too, and sings a bit."

Sings a bit, indeed! That's writing that sings, language that's an instrument

which Wolfe plays, syllable by syllable, color, sound, smell, texture by texture, to make his midwestern world of the 1920s (despite the blurb that says turn-of-the-century) displace Berkeley-1975 as completely as can be done.

That paragraph doesn't creak and clank like McKillip's prose, it flows and swirls and pulls the reader along; if you suffered a sudden aphasia and couldn't catch a whit of its meaning you could read that stuff like dada verse.

But of course it's not dada. It's crystalline observation, recollection, evocation. There's a single word in that paragraph that makes more *reality* than McKillip can make in 217 pages. (Poor McKillip! I didn't mean to be so hard on her. She's no axe murderer, she just happened to write a bad book and then had the misfortune to land on my desk alongside of Gene Wolfe. What a fate!)

Anyway, if ya gotta know "what the book is about," it's about this elderly middle-western businessman who's worried about his health, and down at the doctor's office does a few little recollections-of-things-past covering the years from his boyhood to the present.

Hey, there are no murders, wars, rapes, major crimes, big games, wild animal attacks, or any of the other paraphernalia of sensational fiction in this book. There's a subtle contest between a pair of tentative lovers over who will get a minor Chinese curio; there's a narration of a small-town Florida druggist who believes in ghosts and who knows some circus people; there's an attempt to find an old buried treasure (I guess that's about as close as the book comes to sensation, and it does it very quietly); there's a visit to a frozen orange juice factory where a tragic accidental death had occurred years before; there's an underage seduction; there's a marvelous love affair; there's a visit to a charmingly dishonest rare book dealer.

If you *have* to have a science fiction or fantastic element in a book, *Peace* has several: ghosts (or at least a ghost story), leprechauns, even a trifle of Lovecraft.

Oh, what a joy, *Peace!*●

THE BEST FROM ORBIT, edited by Damon Knight. 373 pp. $7.95. SBN 399-11472-6. 1975. Berkley/Putnam.

ORBIT 16, edited by Damon Knight. 271 pp. $8.95. ISBN 0-06-012437-7. 1975. Harper & Row

To back up and review this situation once more, the "original anthology" as a publishing form for science fiction is a surprisingly *non*-recent development. The earliest such volume may be *Adventures to Come* (1937) edited by J. Berg Esenwein, M.A. Litt. D. The only problem is that nobody has ever heard of any of Esenwein's authors (Berger Copeman, Jack Arnold, Russell Kent, Raymond Watson, Nelson Richards, James S. Bradford, Norman Leslie, Burke Franthway). So it's widely suspected that Esenwein wrote the whole book himself (the stories read alike, too) and used the variety of bylines for some reason best known to himself.

This is rather hard to check because nobody seems able to track down J. Berg Esenwein either. And even the publisher, McLaughlin Brothers (of Springfield, Mass.) seems to have vanished with hardly a trace.

If Esenwein's book is really a one-author collection posing as an anthology, then the all-original title seems to belong to *New Tales of Space and Time* (1951) edited by Raymond J. Healy. The first continuing series of the sort were Fred Pohl's *Star SF* books for Ballantine in the 1950s, and the present champ for longevity is Damon Knight's *Orbit* series, formerly published by Berkley, now under the Harper & Row marque.

The Best from Orbit is a retrospective of the Berkley volumes—specifically *Orbits 1* through *10* (1966-72); presumably volumes 11-15 will provide the source material for *The Best from Orbit II*, and in time there could be a kind of *Orbit* meta-anthology, a selection of the best stories from the several volumes of the best stories. Given enough years, enough *Orbits*, enough *Bests*, and finally enough *Best-Bests (Bests-prime? Bests²?)* the possibilities are truly staggering!

At any rate, the *Best* contains some 28 stories, and on the basis of *Orbit's* astonishing track record for Hugo and Nebula award stories, it is not at all surprising that the book is studded with winners and nominees in both groups. To me the most memorable were Richard Wilson's "Mother to the World," Gene Wolfe's "The Changeling" (a sort of dry-run or finger-exercise for *Peace*), Robert Silverberg's "Passengers," Harlan Ellison's "Shattered Like a Glass Goblin," Carol Carr's "Look, You Think You've Got Troubles," Norman Spinrad's "The Big Flash," and R. A. Lafferty's "Continued on Next Rock."

That's a quarter of the book right there, and that's a damned high memorable-story quotient. Nor are the other authors slackers either—Joanna Russ, Philip Jose Farmer, Ursula Le Guin, Avram Davidson and so on . . . .

But of possibly greater interest than the stories themselves are the little interludes provided between them—selections of correspondence accumulated in the *Orbit* files over the years: letters between Knight and his publish-

ers, letters between Knight and his authors. Apparently, Damon had a hell of a time with Putnam before *Orbit* established its identity. Problems over nasty words—if the book was to be peddled to schools and libraries there mustn't be anything in it to upset tender young minds. Problems over honest representation: apparently Tom Dardis (Knight's editor) wanted in 1966 to push *Orbit* as best-of-the-year, in the fashion of the various "best" annuals. Knight, fortunately, shot down the idea but it keeps resurfacing: *Orbit 16* is blurbed "the best all new SF stories."

An exchange between Knight and James Sallis indicates pretty clearly what Knight has always striven for (and frequently attained) in *Orbit*: "literary" science fiction, eschewing "the mock-epic and -dramatic." *Orbit* may well have achieved this objective, working instead for pieces of mood and feeling, subtlety of effect. The result has also been a tendency toward the downbeat and the "lit'ry."

Literary and "lit'ry" are often separated by very thin walls, and an effort to achieve one all too frequently winds up producing the other!

Knight indicates that he wants stories in *Orbit* that can be understood without excessive strain by readers new to science fiction—another objective which he has pretty well attained. Again, this points most often toward stories that take place in the present or very-near future, in the world as it is or with very little difference from as-is.

And—for some reason—Knight finds spaceships utter anathema.

Put this all together and you get a kind of story that is usually marked with a higher degree of literary polish than most SF, but that avoids radical experimentation in technique, and that offers a very conservative image in the sense of postulated-world-as-against-present-world.

Orbit 16 continues the *Orbit* tradition. There are few big names in the volume (Lafferty is here); most of the authors are relatively recent arrivals and some are first-story people. On reviewing the contents page I find that only two of the stories return to my mind, as against seven from the *Best* volume which I read some time ago.

Of the two, "Mother and Child" by Joan Vinge, an 80-page novella, seemed to me cut most faithfully from the pattern dictated by Knight. Up very close to the characters, setting a neo-medieval world. Theme the incredibly hackneyed struggle between the progressive, enlightened king and the treacherous, repressive churchman for power.

I almost quit on the thing, figuring it for one more dreary quasi-historical fantasy. Stuck with it and found, instead, that it *is* science fiction; the "gods" of the churchman are visitors from outer space. . . .

We do not break new ground with this kind of story.

By far the quirkiest and most effective story in the book is Lafferty's "The Skinny People of Leptophlebo Street," which is extremely funny, absolutely fascinating, quite unforgettable, and (to me) completely incomprehensible. I'm not sure it's SF; I'm not sure what it is: just a story that I couldn't put down while I was reading it and that I can't forget now that I've read it.

Flipping through the pages once again, I find that some of the stories do come back to me. (I think that's a pretty good test, by the way—couple weeks after you finish the book, reread chunks of the stories in it. If you draw a blank, they ain't so hot, those stories.)

"Binary Justice" by Richard Bireley is a pretty funny satire on computerized law enforcement and financial dealings—a kind of miniature of the kind of thing Pohl & Kornbluth used to do and that Sheckley still turns out once in a while.

And "Euclid Alone" by William F. Orr, the curtain-closer, is a totally snore-provoking lecture-disguised-as-a-story.

Between *The Best of Orbit* and *Orbit 16,* I have a bit of a sinking sensation in my tum-tum, a distinct feeling that somehow this series has wandered off in a bad direction and is publishing an excessive proportion of dull and impactless stories. But then, *The Best* is refiltered material while *Orbit 16* is only once-through-the-selection-process; in another *Best* volume perhaps only the Lafferty or at most the Lafferty and Bireley stories would survive, and Damon Knight would wind up looking pretty good.

Maybe that's it.

But if it is, it seemingly reduces *Orbit* and others of its ilk to the level and the role formerly played by *Thrilling Wonder Stories, Other Worlds, Science Fiction Plus* and the like. And if that's the case, I have to question whether the material in the book is worthy of the beautiful packaging (*Orbit 16* is gorgeous!) and the price ($8.95 is a lot of money!).

Maybe it was the utterly insane inflation of the anthology market these past few years that so reduced the average quality of the stories available. If so, as that ridiculous wave of books recedes and leaves the field at a more reasonable level, the average quality of stories should rise once more and *Orbit* will be able to give us more than a couple of worthy stories per edition.●

THE LOST VALLEY OF ISKANDER, by Robert E. Howard. 194 pp. $12.95. 1974. FAX Collector's Editions.

FAMOUS FANTASTIC CLASSICS, by various authors. 128 pp. 1974-5. Subscription only, 6 issues for $25. FAX Collector's Editions.

FAX Collector's Editions is the creation of Ted Dikty with strong participation by Darrell C. Richardson —both men having decades of experience as collectors, editors and commenters on the field of fantastic literature. They have announced an ambitious program of pulp collections, reprints and facsimiles, as well as facsimiles of other long-out-of-print volumes, bibliographies and critical volumes. Their early productions speak well for the quality of their product.

The Lost Valley of Iskander is good, if minor, Howard material. I will make no comment on Howard as a writer; by now you almost surely have examined some of his works and decided whether he's to your taste or not. I do wish, however, to comment on this edition. There is a brief introduction by Richardson providing some bibliographic data, and there are several adventure stories about one Francis Xavier Gordon, a sort of cross between King of the Khyber Rifles and Lawrence of Arabia. There is a lovely jacket painting, attractive end papers, numerous interior full-page illustrations and several color plates, all by Mike Kaluta. It's the kind of deluxe collector's edition that you can joy in purely as an example of the book maker's art, quite aside from the value of the Howard stories.

Famous Fantastic Classics is a differently conceived series, a sort of facsimile magazine-anthology emphasizing science fiction and allied genres, culled from the pages of the *non*-SF magazines. An unsigned introduction in the first issue explains the rationale for this pattern, and it is an intriguing notion.

During all the years of the pulp era there were, of course, many "general" pulps in addition to the genre or "category" pulps. The leading general pulps—*Argosy, All-Story, New Story, Adventure, Short Stories*—for the most part enjoyed higher circulation than did the science fiction and fantasy magazines. They were more reliable and higher paying markets than were *Amazing, Astounding* and the other category pulps, and hence tended to get first crack at the best works of the best authors.

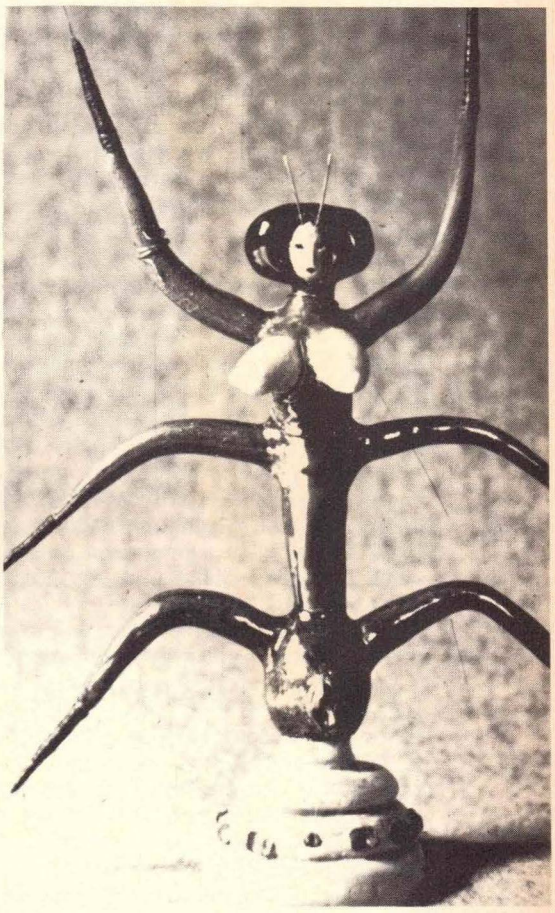
In later years, reprinters have combed the files of the SF magazines for resurrection-worthy stories, to the point where second- and third-rate material has been reprinted—while the science fiction of the general pulps has been largely neglected. *Famous Fantastic Classics* is designed to correct this condition.

The first issue contains *The Snow Girl,* a Ray Cummings novel from 1929, plus several short stories. The second contains *The Radio Flyers,* a sort of Pellucidarian yarn by Ralph Milne Farley, as well as a short story by the prolific H. Bedford-Jones. There are new covers on these issues, while the typography and inside illustrations are reproduced in facsimile from the old magazine pages.

As with the Howard books, a predilliction for this old pulp stuff is something that you either have or don't have; I will not try to sell it to you. But if you *do* like pulp adventure stories, if you are interested in them as the roots (albeit not the *ultimate* roots) of modern SF, or if you are simply curious about the popular fiction of a half-century ago, they're a good value, nicely produced. The old typography and illustrations lend a period flavor and are quite as serviceable as are the new type and illustrations of *Iskander,* and the saving on typography permits the publishers to hold the price of these books down to a level whole orders of magnitude under what it would cost you to buy up the old pulps themselves, if you could find them at all.

The address of FAX is Box E, West Linn, Oregon 97068, and I recommend that you send for their catalog if you have any interest whatever in the pulp era.●

SF: CANADA



NORTH BY 2000: A Collection of Canadian Science Fiction, by H. A. Hargreaves. 160 pp. $7.95. 1975. ISBN 0-88778-119-5. Peter Martin Associates, Ltd., 35 Britain St., Toronto Ontario Canada M5A 1R7.

As a Canadian who is deeply involved in our national literary scene and equally involved in the SF scene, I'm really happy about the publication of *North by 2000,* one of the first Canadian collections of stories in the genre (I am proud that Judith Merril chose to publish *Survival Ship and Other Stories* in Canada, but the stories were written while she was still an American citizen).

Nevertheless, because of my SF interests, I am not the usual Canadian literary nationalist; many of them will not be pleased with a book which extrapolates a continental "Amercanadian" economic, political and resources community joined by a vast computer network. It's a real (if possibly not-too-nice) possibility, however, and provides a unified social context for these stories, all of which are set in various parts of "Old Canada."

H. A. Hargreaves makes interesting and fulsome use of his landscapes and of that overriding socio-economic context, but in the three novellas—the most recent and best stories in the book—he manages to create truly engaging character studies within the solid extrapolative context he has chosen for all his fictions. The shorter stories, more of the ordinary "hard" SF variety, entertain by playing on a theme dear to both Canadian and science fiction: survival. (All these stories, by the way, but one, were first published in Britain, usually in the *SF* books.)

Thus, although a story like "Protected Environment" has its ironic points to make about Northern oil

pipelines and the ways in which even the most sophisticated equipment can still be defeated by a wayward and occasionally hostile Nature, Hargreaves really engages one's interest with a character like the Reverend Scroop. Scroop first appears in the early "Dead to the World," where he is unable to help a man who has been accidentally "killed" by the computer net. The man eventually survives only too well in his "death," but Scroop never learns that. Much later in his life, Scroop, now an expert manipulator of computers and their men as well as a spiritual adviser, finds himself in an Arctic city where his "worldly" wiles help him to gain a true spiritual victory. "Tangled Web" is a moving exploration of personal spiritual regeneration in a man who thinks he has lost his soul to the computer he so wanted to master.

Another novella, "More Things in Heaven and Earth," is a neat and entertaining exploration of group ESP through a carefully worked out "mystery" story concerning a highly talented professor of English who works with an extraordinary group of people to teach Shakespeare to 60,000 students on the TV net (with individual link-ups to each student!). Here, the thematic importance given to working *within* the system, *with* a group, can be seen as typically Canadian, perhaps. It's also absolutely right for the future society Hargreaves presents. There's some fine examples of teaching Shakespeare here, too.

Finally, "Cainn" is a totally engrossing character study of a brilliant young murderer who is sent to a special rehabilitation centre in the foothills of Alberta, which should be made a subject of study to criminologists everywhere. There, in a humane and complex manner that is brilliantly presented as it happens from the kid's point of view—following him through it, through the years of growing up to be himself—he learns to use his intelligence and talents for society. Hargreaves' extrapolations here, both technological and sociological, are superb.

Let me make it clear: this stuff, like all good SF, is damned good entertainment. Just because it's also thoughtful and provocative simply means it *is* good SF. I really enjoyed reading this book. Now if only someone up here would collect Phyllis Gotlieb's shorter fiction. ●

—Douglas Barbour

THE LAST CANADIAN, by William C. Heine. 253 pp. $1.50. ISBN 671-78743-8. 1974. Simon & Schuster of Canada, Ltd., 330 Steelcase Rd, Markham Ontario L3R 2MI

The cover of this book shows the (presumably) last Canadian walking off into the snowy wastes. It's nice, but has little to do with the book. The 'last Canadian' of the title is a U.S. citizen newly granted landed immigrant status in Canada—perhaps the very last one—just before the death of civilization in the western hemisphere.

The premise is a familiar one: a mysterious disease breaks out in rural Colorado and spreads at a catastrophic rate, killing nearly all in its path. Gene Arnprior has a hunch that this is it for civilization As We Know It, and decides to take his wife and two sons out of Montreal to a remote fishing camp hundreds of miles north of Chibougamou.

Arnprior is right: the sickness spreads uncontrollably across north and south America. Planes with refugees heading for Europe and Australia are shot down over the ocean. Within days the hemisphere is completely dead, save for a few thousand immune carriers of the plague. The U.S. vice-president, running the remnants of the government from Hawaii, turns control of the Navy and foreign-based military units over to the British government, and there are some effective scenes of the newly revitalized British lion telling the Russians where to go.

Meanwhile, Arnprior and family are living the life of new pioneers in the most effectively written and convincing part of the book. The background is obviously well-researched, and we learn all sorts of fascinating and useful things about Survival. One day, however, one of the plague-carriers wanders through the camp: Arnprior survives, his family are killed.

From this point *The Last Canadian* turns into an updated and politicized version of M. P. Shiel's *The Purple Cloud.* Arnprior sets out southward, making a grand tour of the devastated Maritime provinces and Quebec, then into the US and down the East Coast. He kills nasty Russians, who've set up a base in the Carolinas prior to an attempted recolonization effort. They try to kill him in return, and from there things get out of hand, with Russian subs, planes, and the military might of Russia in general Out To Get Him. If this makes little sense the last third of the book makes even less: Arnprior freaks out and tries to get to Russia so he can infect the baddies and kill them. In the final scenes a completely unbelievable Last Canadian is overkilled by joint salvoes of Russian, British and Chinese nuclear missiles; the Soviet government is overthrown, and everyone lives happily ever after. Except Gene Arnprior. . .●

—Andrew Porter

KILLING GROUND: The Canadian Civil War, by Bruce Powe. 266 pp. $3.95. ISBN 0-88778-066-0. 1972. Peter Martin Associates, Toronto.

Killing Ground is one of those it-can't-happen-here books, highly improbable before the Quebec Crisis, and now all too possible. It hit me quite hard because I've been in several of the places where the novel's actions take place: Montreal, Ottawa, the small towns north of Montreal, the Lac St. Jean area. Quebec secedes from Canada, Ottawa screws around and ultimately the situation deteriorates when the U.S. gets involved, in order to "protect its interests."

The book is highly believable, but certain elements in the novel break down the continuity. In the third chapter, a perhaps deliberate change in style, to that of the French method of using hyphens rather than quotation marks for speech, interrupts the flow of narrative. The interruption is shortlived, though—no more than a few pages. Of more disruptive influence is the frequency of military terms—so many, in fact, that a glossary is needed—and, in the rear of the book, provided—to make sense of what the military types are saying to each other. A glossary of terms is fine, as for example the indices in *Lord of the Rings.* But when the reader cannot understand what is happening without referring to the glossary, and thus breaking the flow of the narrative, this is a great hindrance.

Despite these shortcomings, this really is an excellent novel, especially for those Americans who thought Angus Taylor's article in *Gegenschein* was either a parody or a poor attempt at humor. And if you've ever been to Montreal, it will be even more gripping. ●

—Andrew Porter

The Social Role of S.F.

BRIAN M. STABLEFORD

A Reply: Douglas Barbour

Brian Stableford's article in ALGOL 24 is intriguingly bothersome and properly provocative, since it provoked me to attempt to respond to some of the foolish components of an otherwise interesting general argument. His conclusions deserve careful consideration, though one could argue quite plausibly that all Stableford is saying is that SF has taken up the imaginative role once assumed by "pure" fantasy. Stableford may be right about SF's social role; his references to Laing's psychology are intriguing. Even if I accept this part of his argument, I find his refusal to come to grips with the literary problems of the genre disheartening.

Jeff Clark, in "The Labors of Stableford," has argued both vehemently and validly that Stableford's arguments in *Amazing* (part of the series which includes the ALGOL piece) totally miss the linguistic point. Even Stableford needs language to communicate; so do SF writers. The better they are able to handle language—at *all* levels of performance—the more likely they are to captivate our imaginations with their imaginings. This is the point of Richard Lupoff's excellent and succinct observation in his review of Robert Silverberg's *Born with the Dead*, also in the last issue. The good SF writers obviously do not agree with Stableford that SF's "stylistic qualities would be unimportant compared to its perspective qualities." They do not agree because they—say Le Guin, Russ, Delany, Disch, Malzberg, Silverberg, Wolfe, Tiptree Jr., Zelazny to name a few of the best ones—recognize that you won't get truly wondrous "perspectives" without the help of a truly wondrous style.

One of the things that bothers me is that Stableford can't really provide a coherent paradigm for his kind of SF. He appears to be backing a kind of SF which "would not necessarily be the kind of SF approved by literary critics." But I don't think the literary critics care that much about "fidelity to known science." Isaac Asimov cares about that, if anyone does. My real disagreement is with Stableford's benign assurances that literary values are not an important aspect of SF because they don't really affect how SF does its job. Let's look at the question of "future shock," and how SF can help us to face it. It can do what John Brunner does in some of his best works: rub our noses in the realistic—cf. "the *pretense* of quasi-realism" Stableford mentions—aspects of certain possible changes. I choose Brunner because he is more serious than a lot of SF writers, i.e., he truly wants us to think about the consequences of our cultural and technological behavior *now*, so endeavors to paint very plausible if downright pessimistic pictures of the results of that behavior a few decades from now. But do Brunner's books truly help us to deal *psychologically* with "future shock"? Perhaps they do. I suspect that they engender a kind of despair precisely because they are so "believable" in their demonstration that the near-future will be a total wipe-out with overcrowding, pollution, race wars, societal self-destruction and cultural stasis. The reader's response to such an overpowering fictional indictment of his own way of life and the future suffering it will cause is to give up hope *while reading* and to ignore the warnings the works contain *after* reading. After all, what's the use of thinking about it? Brunner's a fairly good writer but let me point to one of the very best in the field, Samuel R. Delany. No, I'm not going to refer to *Dhalgren*, but to his justly famous *The Einstein Intersection*. I'm not the only one to think highly of that book, as its Nebula Award indicates. Stephen Scobie and David Samuelson have both published articles on it, discussing its use of myth, its great style and the way it deals with the challenge/prospect of continual change in our lives. All three aspects of the novel are inextricably entwined, for as Delany himself has said, "Put in opposition to 'style,' there is no such thing as 'content.'"

Anyway, let me quote Samuelson: "That science is not all technology, and that reality may not be fully explicable on positivistic principles is as true in our world as in the world of *The Einstein Intersection*." A good place to begin because it allows us to see that novel as doing what Stableford suggests SF does: it "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." OK: Samuelson and Stableford appear to agree on this, and I agree with them. But then Stableford slips again, arguing quite seriously that "scientific infidelity and literary ineptitude are not necessarily deleterious to the *usefulness* of SF." Well, the mind fairly boggles. I'm not even sure what he means by "scientific infidelity," but Delany is true to scientific method even if he transcends what we understand at this point in time as scientifically possible with

contemporary technology and knowledge. I'm also not at all sure about the concept of *usefulness* applied to any kind of art, or even entertainment, without some pages of explanation of how the term is being used, explanation which Stableford fails to provide. At any rate I find that a lot of people who talk about the usefulness of art ignore all the really interesting *artful* aspects of it. And certainly Stableford seems to, for he says "literary ineptitude" is nothing to worry about.

Ah, but it is. *The Einstein Intersection* is great SF because it is such an artful fiction, a surrealistic romance of immense energy and wit, an exciting rush of craftily controlled language. Delany has fashioned a story in which language enacts the encounter with change that is as much a part of our lives as it is of Lobey, his storyteller/musician. See how important the concepts of "difference" and "change" are in the novel: Delany reveals change through the *style* of the novel. He not only manages to casually drop in an incredible amount of information about the deep past of his human-abandoned Earth of some 50,000 years hence, but he also creates through an increasingly wild use of synaesthetic metaphor and speeded-up narration the very *experience* of change (or metamorphosis) which his characters are attempting to live with and through. What is so marvelous about *The Einstein Intersection,* what gives the reader a sense of exhilaration at its "inconclusive" end, is Delany's style. As Samuelson so neatly puts it: "Delany's way of dealing with 'future shock,' with the doom-laden sense of constant change, is to ride it, and to transcend it." And the ways he does this is to *imagine* a character capable of doing precisely that by engaging his changing and often illusory world through his art (and art is "multiplex" in Delany's vision, as his whole presentation of "simplex, complex and multiplex" in *Empire Star* makes clear). Lobey learns to transcend the fear that change engenders by learning to tell the story of his encounters with change's manifestations in the fullest manner possible. And I, for one, respond with joy and exhilaration to Lobey's story because its style is sufficiently multiplex and grand to fully render the ideas it explores. Lobey lives in a world as terrifyingly liable to alter towards Armageddon as ours, but he learns, by the end of his story, to accept change, to *flow with* it; and Delany, by showing this *happening,* somehow engages us in the same quest, at least imaginatively. Now, as even Stableford admits, it's in the imagination that such adaptation must take place; but only art makes such imaginative adaptation possible. Which is why Delany's work remains humanly hopeful as Brunner's seems not to, even as it admits the problems Brunner presents with such despairing rage.

Which brings me by a circuitous route back to Stableford's arguments. *If* SF does what he says it does, it can only do so when it is well-written, when it is literature. The better written it is, the more entertaining it will be and simultaneously the more fully will it engage us on all levels of our being. And, for me, anyway, that is what great—and entertaining!—art always does, and that is why I enjoy the works that do so more than the ones that don't (that old Sturgeonian 90% of everything).●

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ALGOL Reader Survey RESULTS

THE ALGOL READER SURVEY: Response to the survey, which was included in all issues of ALGOL, came from readers in the US, Canada, and Brazil. We cut off the response (otherwise copies will be trickling in for the next half year) to simplify counting procedures. We also had to go out and buy a calculator to find out percentages—we never were very good at math in school and college. The survey questions very loosely follow those in the LOCUS survey. However, instead of totals, we're giving percentages of 100%. We think this will give a better idea of the average ALGOL reader than a lot of numbers by themselves would. Also, as this is the first time for any attempt at correlating the personal details and interests of our readers, percentages are more important than plain numbers would be.

All percentages are given rounded off to the nearest tenth of a percent.

SEX:

Male	75%
Female	25%

The number of female readers of SF seems to be going up. A few years ago it was less than 10%. Now it's obviously higher, and we think that's a good thing.

AGE:

15 yrs	2.5%
16 yrs	3.3%
17 yrs	1.6%
18 yrs	0.8%
19 yrs	1.6%
20 yrs	2.5%
21 yrs	2.5%
22 yrs	4.1%
23 yrs	10.0%
24 yrs	4.1%
25 yrs	6.6%
26 yrs	4.0%
27 yrs	9.1%
28 yrs	8.3%
29 yrs	3.3%
30 yrs	6.6%
31 yrs	4.1%
32 yrs	1.6%
33 yrs	1.6%
34 yrs	1.6%
35 yrs	2.5%
37 yrs	1.6%
39 yrs	1.6%
40 yrs	2.5%
42 yrs	0.8%
44 yrs	0.8%
46 yrs	0.8%
47 yrs	0.8%
48 yrs	0.8%
50 yrs and over	6.7%

Average Age . . . . . 29 years

Median Age . . . . . 37.5 years

The youngest reader was 15, the oldest 60. We were surprised by the number of readers in their 20's: we thought the average reader was younger. This average age implies a number of things which show up in other categories.

SIBLINGS:

Brothers only	21.7%
Sisters only	29.2%
Both brothers & sisters	34.2%
Neither brothers nor sisters	14.2%

The myth that the SF reader is a single child has been perpetuated long after it should have been killed. We were surprised at the number of large families revealed by this question—families of 4, 5, even more children. And the number of single readers is very low.

HOUSING:

Own a house	29.2%
Own a condominium	0
Live with parents/relatives	22.5%
Own a cooperative	0.8%
Rent apartments/houses	36.7%
Share apartments/houses	10.8%

Condominiums are evidently not in vogue among SF readers. The high number of readers living with parents/relatives correlates nicely with the figures for income and occupation. The high percentage of people who own houses also ties in with income figures, showing SF readers are not in the lower earnings bracket.

ANNUAL INCOME:

$0-6,000	30.0%
$6-10,000	20.0%
$10-18,000	25.8%
$18,000 and over	20.0%
No reply	4.2%

Two thirds of ALGOL's readers are middle income or better. A very healthy showing.

MONEY SPENT ANNUALLY ON NEW SF

Spend money on SF	93.3%
Spend no money on SF	6.7%
Average Spent	$191.20

The industry tells us the average spent on new SF is $25.00. Where has the ALGOL reader gone right? ALGOL's readers spend close to a million dollars a year on new SF—a very powerful voice in any marketplace. And if we assume three readers per copy, based on our widespread school, university and library subscriptions, and a publishing industry standard, ALGOL is a multi-million dollar market for advertisers.

MONEY SPENT ANNUALLY ON SECOND-HAND SF

Spend money	73.3%
Spend no money	26.6%
Average Spent	$129.86

A respectable figure in its own right. Bookstores that carry used SF are fast disappearing, though, and this figure should get smaller in future years.

TAKEN COURSE IN SF

Yes	19.1%
No	78.3%
Taught course	2.5%

The course in SF was unknown when we were in school. Today, 20% of our readership has taken such a course, and come out of it unscathed.

READING SF REGULARLY

2 yrs	4.2%
3 yrs	3.3%
4 yrs	1.7%
5 yrs	2.5%
6 yrs	5.0%
7 yrs	5.0%
8 yrs	2.5%
9 yrs	5.0%
10 yrs	11.7%
11 yrs	2.5%
12 yrs	6.7%
13 yrs	0.8%
14 yrs	2.5%
15 yrs	10.8%
16 yrs	3.3%
17 yrs	5.8%
18 yrs	3.3%
19 yrs	0.8%
20 yrs	5.0%
21-25 yrs	7.4%
26-30 yrs	2.5%
31-40 yrs	6.7%
over 40 yrs	0.8%

Average . . . . . 14.7 years

According to fairly reliable sources, the SF reading public changes every 3 years or so. That would place ALGOL readers in a definite minority.

PRINCIPAL OCCUPATIONS:

Student	19.2%
Teaching	14.2%
Computers/Electronics	11.7%
Writer, Editor	9.2%
Librarian	6.7%
Office, Clerical	6.7%
Skilled & unskilled labor	5.0%
Housewife	4.2%
Military, Govt.	3.3%
Bookseller	2.5%
Research	2.5%
Artist	2.5%
Medical profession	2.5%
Printing trades	1.7%

Law 1.7%
Bartender, Retail trades, Retired, Self-employed, Textiles . . . . . Less than 1.0%
No reply 2.5%

HIGHEST LEVEL OF EDUCATION:

High school 15.8%
Technical school 0.8%
1 year college 9.2%
2 years college 4.2%
3 years college 2.5%
B.A. 20.8%
B.S. 7.5%
M.A. 11.7%
M.S. 5.8%
Ph.D. 6.7%
J.D. 0.8%
LL.B. 1.7%
M.D. 0.8%
No reply 11.7%

Over 50% of ALGOL readers have college degrees of one sort or another. A total of over 70% have at least some college. Of the 30% with no college degree, 55% are students currently in school or beginning their higher education.

NON-REPRINT SF MAGAZINES READ REGULARLY

Read some regularly 79.2%
Read none 20.8%

MAGAZINES READ [percentage of those who read some regularly]

Fantasy & Science Fiction . . . 80.0%
Analog 76.8%
Galaxy c/w If 55.8%
Amazing 40.0%
Fantastic 34.7%
Vertex 30.5%
Eternity, Unknown Worlds of SF 1.0%

Vertex has now ceased publication, so it should be interesting to see which magazines, if any, pick up their readership. F&SF maintains a lead over Analog that's reflected in other polls we've seen. Surprising when you consider that Analog's circulation is twice that of F&SF. Eternity, a semi-prozine that has become increasingly irregular of late, and the Marvel Comics-published Unknown Worlds of SF are both completely out of the running as far as ALGOL's readers are concerned.

FANZINES READ

Read some 90.8%
Read none 9.2%

NUMBER OF FANZINES READ [percentage of those who read some regularly]

1-3 . . . . . 53.2%
3-5 . . . . . 18.3%
5-10 . . . . . 12.8%
10-20 . . . . . 9.2%
More than 20 . . . . . 6.4%

Once again, some of these figures may be deceptive. The half of our readers who read 1-3 fanzines may count LOCUS and SFR as fanzines, or they may be counted as semi- or prozines. The definitions have been blurring in the last few years. But we can safely state that a smaller and smaller percentage of ALGOL's readership is engaged in the pursuit of fandom, as the circulation increases.

CONVENTIONS ATTENDED

LOCAL

None 39.2%
One 17.5%
Two 14.2%
Three 8.3%
Four 6.7%
Five 4.2%
Six and more 10.0%

WORLD

None 59.2%
One 22.5%
Two 8.3%
Three and more 10.0%

With the rapid increase in the number of conventions over the last few years, more readers are attending them than ever before. Most attend local or regional conventions; few attend World conventions, though a majority of ALGOL's readers would like information about them (see the *Should ALGOL Publish...* categories below).

READERS WHO NOMINATE FOR THE HUGO AWARDS

Yes 25.0%
No 75.0%

READERS WHO VOTE FOR THE HUGO AWARDS

Yes 36.7%
No 63.3%

READERS MEMBERS OF SF CLUBS OR SOCIETIES

Yes 25.8%
No 74.2%

Only a quarter of ALGOL's readers belong to any SF clubs. Listed clubs included SFWA, NESFA, Mythopoeic Society, Peninsular SF Association, all with multiple memberships cited, and a very wide range of single memberships ranging from the BC SF Association in Vancouver to the Atlanta SF Organization, with a wide range of cities and special interests in between.

ASSOCIATED INTERESTS:

SF/Horror films 53.3%
Sword & Sorcery 41.7%
Star Trek 34.2%
Weird fiction 33.3%
Comics 22.5%
Old radio shows 14.2%
Pulp heroes 13.3%
Edgar Rice Burroughs 10.8%
Georgette Heyer 3.3%

ALGOL has no intention of covering these subjects; we just thought it would be interesting to see who was interested in what. Films are covered quite well by CINEFANTASTIQUE and PHOTON; Sword & Sorcery as a subgenre of SF (though we've been turned off to the sub-genre in recent years by an unceasing horde of dreck from Hollis, New York) is covered in ALGOL already. We didn't correlate interests as LOCUS did, but then we really needed a computer terminal to bring out all the interlocking points of interest. If we do a survey like this next year, we're going to get Don Lundry working on it as well.

HOW READERS FOUND OUT ABOUT ALGOL

Fanzine 21.6%
In professional magazine 20.0%
At convention 17.5%
Bookstore 15.0%
Advertisement 9.2%
Friends 9.2%
Sample copy 3.3%
Miscellaneous sources 4.2%

The first two categories are ambiguous: some readers listed LOCUS & SFR as professional magazines; others as fanzines. Other professional magazines listed included LIBRARY JOURNAL, PUBLISHERS WEEKLY, AMAZING STORIES, and the Wisconsin Council of Teachers of Education Bulletin #31, which we personally haven't seen. We've been attending a lot of conventions, and this has brought in quite a few new readers. The figures for "sample copy" surprised us: we make it a policy of not sending any out.

READ ALGOL COMPLETELY

Yes 88.3%
No 11.6%

PARTS OF ALGOL NOT READ [percentage of those who do not read all of issue]

Dense critical articles 35.7%
Letters 28.6%
Book reviews 14.3%
Editorial, columns 7.1%

Dense critical articles, especially heavily academic articles, came in for the most criticism (see next question). We try to get good, interesting material for ALGOL, but sometimes it's hard to get exactly what we—and you!—would like to appear. If we paid twice as much as we currently do there's little doubt that we'd be able to skim the best articles from the top of what's available. As it is we have to compete with other magazines, both fannish and professional, for what's available. The only thing we can offer that others don't is the quality of reproduction and layout that make ALGOL so different in concept from the other publications in the field.

Letters also came in for some flak, but the opposition seemed to come mostly from those who don't read any letters in any publication. As anyone will tell you, one of the things that sets SF apart from other categories is the rate of response, of feedback, of egoboo for the writers and artists concerned. If we don't get 50 or 100 letters of comment on an issue, we know there's something wrong, somewhere. So cutting out letters would be like cutting off five fingers, half our taste buds, and a nose or two.

PARTS OF ALGOL LIKED LEAST [percentage of those who read all of issue]

Letters	14.1%
Lupoff's Book Week	9.4%
Ted White's Column	7.6%
Artwork	6.6%
Interviews	5.7%
Advertisements	5.7%
Brian Stableford article (issue #24)	5.7%
Editorial	3.8%
Non-SF advertisements	1.9%
Classified advertisements	1.9%
Articles, special sections, Le Guin material, "Male-oriented" artwork, layout, unrelevant articles	Less than 1.0%

PARTS OF ALGOL LIKED MOST [percentage of those who read all of issue]

Lupoff's Book Week	58.5%
Interviews	47.2%
Letters	33.0%
Ted White's Column	24.5%
Artwork	20.8%
Articles in general	20.8%
Editorial	10.4%
Algol's People	6.6%
Layout, advertising	2.8%
Classified advertising	Less than 1.0%

Obviously Lupoff's book reviews are the big favorite, carrying off over half of all readers of ALGOL. We humbly realize that Lupoff has been reviewing books for ALGOL for a longer period than anyone else in the field has been—coming up on 12 years, now. And the readers find him fascinating, opinionated, and very highly readable.

The interviews, ALGOL's newest feature, are also way up in reader interest. One of the few things we liked about VERTEX were the interviews they ran; we hope ours are twice as interesting and informative.

We've already talked about the importance of the letters; we're glad the readership has affirmed their importance in the overall content. Ted White's column continues to arouse readers' interest and ire. Ted isn't afraid to tell it like it is and to state this sometimes causes some interesting moments in the publishing business is to put it mildly.

PASS-ON CIRCULATION

None	56.6%
One	28.3%
Two	10.8%
Three	2.5%
Four or more	1.7%

This is for individuals only. None of our many school and library subscribers is counted in these figures. The librarian for the Vancouver, BC library system has told me that ALGOL is laminated and circulated to *all* branches in that city of several millions. No telling exactly how many readers ALGOL has in libraries and schools, but we suspect quite a few.

SHOULD ALGOL PUBLISH:

Fanzine Reviews & Convention News

Yes	66.7%
No	20.0%

Convention News Only

Yes	1.7%
No	2.5%

Fanzine Reviews Only

Yes	4.2%
No	1.7%
No opinion	3.3%

A column about the art in SF

Yes	72.5%
No	19.2%
No opinion	8.3%

Short Fiction

Yes	35.8%
No	50.0%
No opinion	14.2%

More Book Reviews

Yes	66.7%
No	25.8%
No opinion	7.5%

More Artwork

Yes	53.3%
No	37.5%
No opinion	9.2%

We took these questions as an unofficial referendum to advise us on what we might do in future issues. Effective this issue we'll have a convention listing. It's up to the readers as to whether they use it to join and attend the many local and regional conventions that are being held.

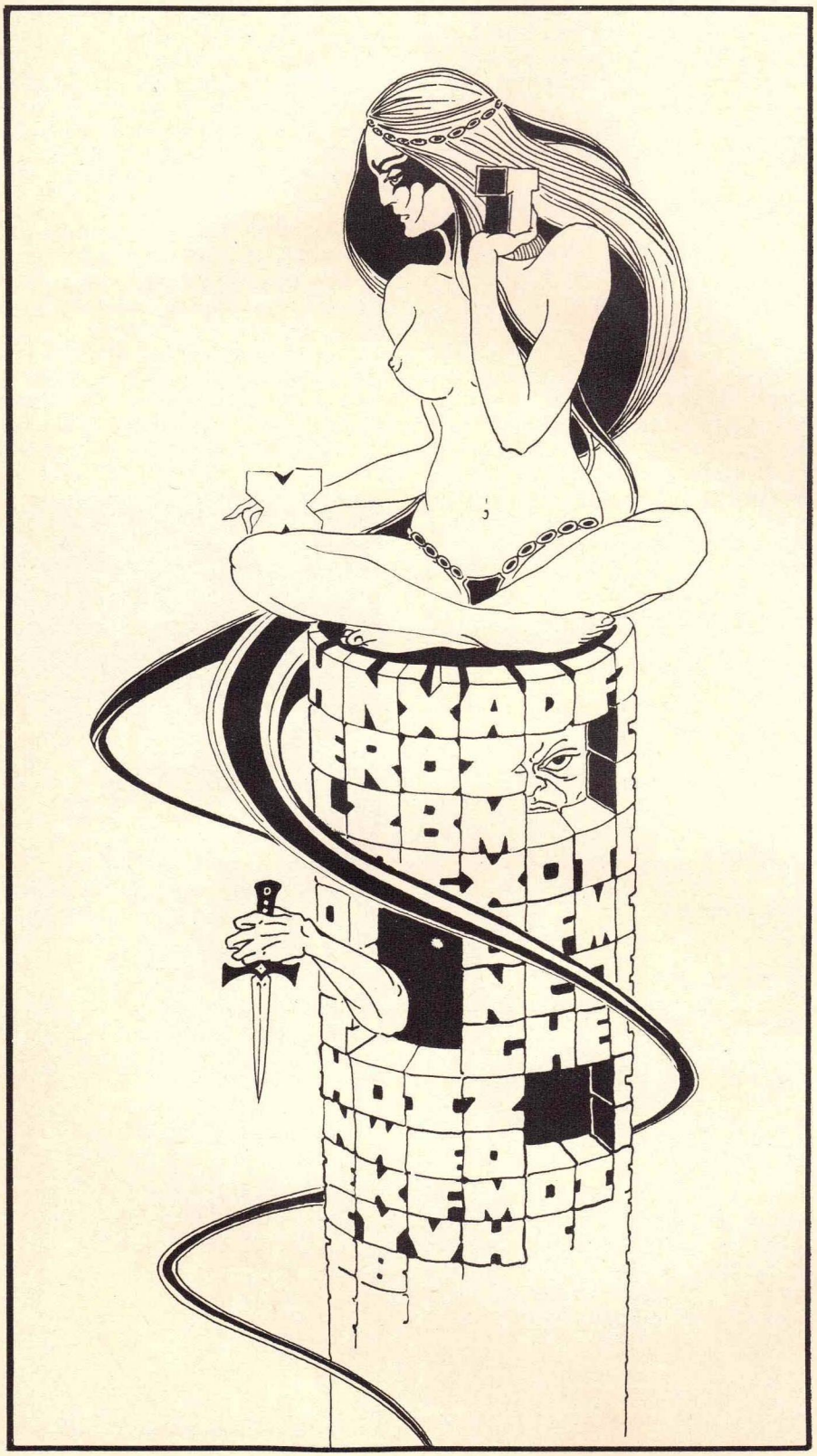
There will be a column about the artwork in SF, by noted artist Vincent DiFate, to run beginning in the Summer 1976 issue. Because ALGOL enjoys superior reproduction we expect it to be somewhat of a graphic experience as well.

Despite adverse reader reaction, we also plan to start running fiction in the Summer 1976 issue. Our plans, especially in the fiscal department, are rather unsettled at this time. But the fiction will be first-rate Hugo quality prose by well-known authors. *If* our plans come to fruition . . .

We plan to run the same number of book reviews as in past issues. There may be some guest reviews, in order to review books by our incumbent reviewer, who feels bound by modesty and the possibility of enraged hordes protesting a review that runs, "I wrote this and it's pretty good." There will also be a number of reviews of Canadian SF by myself and a number of guest reviewers, most of whom speak fluent Canadian, and some of whom even live in the land of the eternal weather.

Likewise, there will be the same amount of artwork, perhaps a little less than in the last issue. That issue, on consideration, was less well planned than others we've published. For those people who'd like to see artwork on the inside front cover and the other covers, we must explain that these are prime selling areas for advertising and the possibilities of placing art there are exceedingly small.

RANDOM FACTORS: letters



Andrew J. Offutt
Funny Farm
Haldeman, Ky. 40329

The letters in ALGOL 24 are fascinating in their revelation of inner needs, and thus most instructive. They should be called to the attention of sociologists interested in studying our quaint culture.

In issue 23, William Lanathan perpetrated a clever sendup about the Gor series of John Norman, which was selling extraordinarily well even before the recent spate of attacks . . . *in the tenth year* of the one-per-year series' life! In no.24, a number of your male readers feel constrained to prove their liberal-ness (I think I noted the jerks of several knees) by assuring us/themselves how terrible Norman, Gor, and Norman's books are. Most revealing . . . and among those letters are two that are unmistakably from females. Fascinating! Busy wife, scholar, conventiongoer, mother (and Hera only knows what else) Sandra Miesel only mentions the series in passing, while busy wife, fiction writer, etc.etc. Jacqueline Lichtenberg doesn't even do that. Both these fulfilled people, obviously secure in their roles as both people and as women, are too interested in getting on to comment on matters of more import and interest to them! They cannot be bothered bandwagoning on Norman.

Women, then, not girls, with no visible needs for support hanging out. A darned sight more secure and together, it would appear on *prima facie* evidence, than all those protesting males . . . boys?

Barry N. Malzberg
Teaneck, N.J.

I cannot praise Stableford's article too highly or understate the importance of what he has been doing in these essays here and there over the past year. He is in the process of laying out the most complex and truthful set of insights into the field that I have ever seen and is entitled to much encouragement. Hopefully there is an audience for his work.

Arthur D. Hlavaty
250 Coligni Ave.
New Rochelle, N.Y. 10801

I enjoyed Stableford's article. It's certainly an improvement over his effort to prove that SF is a "medium" which "contains" literature. Of course, "why people read SF" is too big a topic, but Stableford seems to be getting at *one* reason *many* people read it. Some people are drawn to SF because of the particular kind of imaginative landscape that has been prevalent in the field—one with a "cosmic perspective," where a lot of action takes place, where what once seemed magical is now scientific. Stableford has performed a service by showing how valuable this can be. And yet this is not all SF can do. As Ursula Le Guin says, the categories are breaking down, and a good thing too. One result of this breakdown is that more books are published as SF (or, like Silverberg's, put in the SF sections of bookstores) which have different types of imaginative landscape. And the SF community has not liked them. *Dhalgren* has been heatedly attacked; John Sladek's books have inspired a veritable groundswell of apathy; and one occasionally sees letters in fanzines complaining that Silverberg no longer writes the kind of good stuff he did in the 50s. Since these are some of the books I like best, I find this development unfortunate, and I hope they can find their proper audience.

Steve Simmons
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San Marcos, Calif. 92069

I enjoy Ted White's column whether or

not I agree with what he says. The same is true of Lupoff, even though his philosophies on what makes a good book are different from mine. His commentary on *Dhalgren* irks me, as I'm sure it will other prople. He has undoubtedly hit Delany's 'purpose' in writing it far better than anyone else, but his last paragraph indicates a point where departs from most SF readers, myself included. To quote: "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 you don't even try to read it." Damn right I'm not going to read it if it's that much work! Science fiction evolved from the pulps as pure entertainment in the beginning, and the fact that keeps most of us reading SF is that we will be *entertained.* Until recently if we wanted to be stimulated intellectually, we had to go outside the field. Yet the intellectual works outside SF are not, with a few exceptions, 'hard labor.' If a book (aside from a text) *is* hard labor, it is a failure. I enjoy hard labor in both the physical and mental sense, but when reading becomes hard labor I draw the line.

On the other hand, his review of *The Female Man* puts into words things I had not been able to say. I have found myself recommending it to friends, who ask "Is it a good book? " and I must reply "No, but she says what she says clearly."

Doug Barbour
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The Le Guin interview was great fun, though a bit out of date. Since most of us have read *The Dispossessed* her speaking of it in the future tense made it seem like we had entered a time warp; on the other hand what she had to say was of great interest, and very helpful in that it offered some possible routes to greater understanding of the novel. I especially like her comments on loving to see categories break down. As one who is interested in what a fine Canadian experimental poet, B. P. Nichol, calls "border-blur" poetry or art, I too like to make it difficult for others (critics, scholars, or just the readers and publishers, admen) to place a work in a nice little pigeon-hole. I'm with Le Guin on this matter, which puts me with George Turner too, something that amazes me. Her other comments on people and politics deserve to be read and thoughtfully digested. All in all a most provocative interview, and worth publishing for sure.

Jack Williamson's reminiscence was fun, but somehow seemed to be a bit of a tease. Why even mention a "meeting of a Los Angeles love cult" unless he was going to tell us what in hell happened there? He hints at personal aspects of the people he mentions, but doesn't tell me enough, anyway. Still, one can feel his warm admiration for all three editors he mentions. Then we move on to Stableford, and I can't comment in a letter on his piece; there's too much to say.

Then on to Lupoff's Book Week. I enjoy his reviews so much it shouldn't bother me when he goes wrong—he also goes right, as witness his reviews of Delany and Malzberg. Lupoff has caught some of the important aspects of *Dhalgren* and discussed them in a winning manner, which is important. I find the whole *Dhalgren* thing quite interesting. Most reviews I've seen have been very down on the book, and angry to boot, which comes from the reviewers expecting something else. Now, I would argue that Delany has always given his readers a hell of a lot more than many of them have been aware of, and that in *Dhalgren* he is merely being more open in doing so. He is also doing what Lupoff sees him doing, setting his own pace which is not the reckless narrative pace of his best earlier SF, say *Empire Star, The Einstein Intersection* and *Nova.* I think he is after something else as well. It seems to me that Delany is especially interested in *Dhalgren* with trying to deal with the whole phenomenon of *perception* within the confines of fictional creation. One reason he writes such long and complicated descriptions is that he is striving to render as completely as possible how such an action as even Lanya's putting on of her jeans would be perceived by an aware intelligence. On the other hand I'm with Lupoff when he shies away from looking for a *message*; Delany's after an experience, and a very large and multiplicated one at that, not something as simple and lacking in art as a message.

I don't think Lupoff is fair to Joanna Russ's *The Female Man* (one reviewer who has been is Sheryl Smith in *Gorbett* 11). I don't believe the book is completely successful (but then I do believe her earlier novels *are*); or rather I know I haven't yet been able to understand it as a successfully united and coherent organic whole; on the other hand it is a wildly inventive parodic and deadly serious experiment with fictional form. Which is why it may appear to be a failure at first. It also contains some writing which is so intense and brilliant it glows; and I sure do believe everybody should read it, if only for their souls.

Then Lupoff turns around and gives Silverberg a fine and intelligent review, follows that by clearly articulating some very important points about Malzberg that a lot of fans refuse to see. I too think he can be a very funny writer, and I really loved the various books *on* SF, fandom, conventions, the writers. If Malzberg has overused his particular style in some cases, it nevertheless remains an instrument of great cutting power when used properly. One thing for sure, Malzberg is among the SF writers who clearly *dis*prove Stableford's argument that style doesn't matter in SF.

Lupoff on Andre Norton is providing further ammunition for the anti-Stableford stable. I rather enjoy Norton's works, except I find it sad that she is so sexist. But Lupoff's right, she ain't no stylist; suited for an evening when you've nothing really interesting around to read, and you still gotta have a fix of the ol' SF. Also she deals a lot with ESP and a lot of readers just plain enjoy speculation on ESP.

[The Le Guin interview was taped in New York, following her acceptance of the National Book Award, and parts of it were subsequently aired on "The Future File" and another, unnamed show, both over CBS-AM and CBS-FM. The Dispossessed *was then in production, and not a finished product waiting in the publishers warehouses. The published interview was transcribed from a tape of a half-hour radio show, complete with lead-ins, commercials—which account for breaks in topic—and a host not too familiar with Ursula's writing. The heavily edited transcript was then sent to Ursula for her approval, and appeared in Algol with a new ending.*

Generally Ursula is a very private person, as you know, and her public appearances have been few. As Mike Glicksohn comments further on in these letters, she is, however, a Great Lady, and when she is not confronting a crowd of appreciators she is charming and intelligent and much more. I had the pleasure of meeting her in Portland last summer, and despite having had a root-canal session only hours before, she was a gracious host and a fascinating conversationalist. A Great Lady indeed. AIP]

Harold Goldfus
6848 N. Kildare
Lincolnwood, Ill. 60646

I am sick and tired of critics like Richard Lupoff telling us what ungrateful illiterates we are for not appreciating the quality of Robert Silverberg's writing. It does neither Silverberg nor the SF reading audience any good when Lupoff comes on like Silverberg's press agent.

Robert Silverberg has been on the decline for the past five years, not because he has become increasingly introspective and depressing, but because he has become increasingly contrived. He has been too concerned with showing his readers what a Writer he is, and not concerned enough with telling a story and communicating with his audience. What this has resulted in is stories, such as "Born With The Dead," where the symbolism sticks out like a sore thumb and the characters and plot lie buried beneath the prose.

There is nothing wrong with using sophisticated literary techniques in writing science fiction, but Silverberg seems incapable, at the moment, of integrating them into a work that has any life to it.

D. A. Bray
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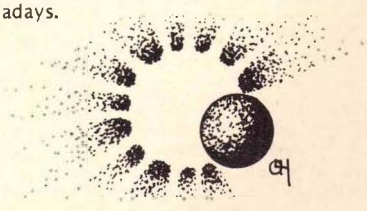
Montreal, Quebec
Canada

In the last issue of ALGOL, Richard Lupoff reviewed a book by Andre Norton and asked for an explanation of her popularity, which he fails to understand. I haven't read *Forerunner Foray* but I am acquainted with Norton's work and I would like to try to answer Mr. Lupoff's question.

Andre Norton's appeal is her imagination. She has the ability to create cultures and futures, strange worlds and strange beings, in any number and variety. There is nothing controversial, allegorical, or heavily moral, in her books; they are straight entertainment. However, her most serious flaw (which you rightly pointed out, Mr. Lupoff) is her writing. In most of the books which I have read, she attempts a style reminiscent of the mediaeval *chansons de geste.* This type of prose is extremely difficult for modern authors to master and sustain, and still hold the reader's interest (William Morris incorporated it in his style, but Norton is not of his calibre). Andre Norton is often too conscious of her style and, as a result, the writing becomes stilted and laboured, her characters suffer, becoming painfully wooden, and the action bogs down in formality of speech. She does seem able to handle her plots and her prose style at the same time. This shows up most in her recent books where she is trying to compete with the leading science-fiction writers of today. Her best books are her earlier ones which are slanted toward a juvenile audience. In these, the story, not the style, is the main concern and Norton is most successful in her writing. *Witch World* was written before Norton's leap into the lists of the top-ranking science-fiction authors; she was still writing like Andre Norton, still witn an eye toward a teen-age audience, and had almost developed her style to a level of mastery. She was writing science-fantasy before that term was used and some of her juvenile fiction is better than some adult-oriented works churned out nowadays.



Stephen A. Antell
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Brooklyn, N.Y. 11201

Certain items in the last couple of issues have touched on a subject dear to my heart—the nature of religion. What started as a simple comment on there being, or not being, religion in the *Ring* trilogy, has developed into a hot debate over God, ritual, belief, and the definition of religion as a whole. Allow me to point out that a certain prominent philosopher once summarized it rather neatly as follows: Religion is the opiate of the masses.

It's not just a meaningless slogan; it has real significance. Forgetting, now, all your ideas about what religion *should* be in an ideal society, look about you at actual religious institutions. Consider the myths by which they convey their propaganda to the masses, and the rituals by which they arouse feelings of solidarity. In any society, regardless how primitive or how civilized, you'll find the same massiveness characterizing the religious establishment, all devoted to the end of instilling in people a body of doctrine which will justify the structure of society. If the people come to believe that the ethics preached by their church are identical with some absolute, natural moral code, then so much the better for the church in particular and the upper classes in general. As long as the lower classes behave themselves in accordance with the dictates of their religion, those in power need fear no dissent or revolution.

In essence, what I have said above is the same as what Lin Carter means when he says that religion is "an established canon of inspired writings and an organized priesthood, a system of temples and shrines, and so on." To that letter-writer who objected that illiterate cultures may possess religions without inspired writings, I suggest that he interpret that to include also oral literary traditions. Now, Carter may not go along with me as to the evil and dangerous nature of that great conspiracy which is established religion, but the fact remains that he recognizes that religion *is* a body of myth and ritual. It is a *social* phenomenon; it is imposed on the individual by society. Those who accept the claim that religion is "the presence of an actual god or gods" or "a spirit which informs human acts with a significance and a moral value," as Richard Lupoff does, or that it is something which is "lived," as does Sandra Miesel, have merely fallen into the trap set for them by those who shape public opinion.

As for Lupoff, his views concerning religion seem on the whole to be rather strange. In his letter in the last issue, he denies at one point that he is an atheist or agnostic, then, 13 lines below, he states: "I have been at various times in my life a Jew, a skeptic, a pantheist, a Buddhist, and most recently a Jew again." This is roughly on a par with claiming that a man must be a good husband because he's been married five times. This is all especially strange when considered together with the impression which Lupoff generally seems to be trying to get across in his critiques and his own writing that he is a nonconformist. The definition of religion given above entails that a nonconformist by his very nature cannot be a religious man. Where does that leave Lupoff? Let him think long enough about the following: In our society, religion is Billy Graham; when that sinks in, he may be less desirous of thinking of himself as "religious." As for Miesel, I admire her readiness to spring to Lupoff's defense, but when it comes to her attitude toward religion, she seems to me to err just as badly as he does. I was amused by her irritation upon her encounter with an agnostic rabbi. According to what I believe, the agnosticism of all but the most naive rabbis, priests, and ministers (to say nothing of imams, gurus, etc.) is only to be expected.

In order to be able to evaluate the religious element in a society depicted in a work of SF, it is necessary to bear in mind the distinction between morality and worshipfulness on the one hand, and established religion on the other. The *Ring* trilogy I only read once, a long time ago, and my memories of it, supplemented by the descriptions given by various ALGOL loccers, tells me there is virtually no religion in it. The characters in these books may regard certain aspects of their world with something like awe or wonder, in the religious sense of these words, but this is not the same thing as religion. As an example, in *The Left Hand of Darkness*, on the other hand, there are two religions—the Yomesh cult, and that of the Handdarata. The way in which Le Guin delineates the structures of their respective doctrines and myths is most instructive.

So far, this may sound as if I'm out to get Lupoff. Not true; our views are probably not as far apart as they seem. If we ever sat down and talked it out, we'd probably find that we agree on the difference between established religion and morality, and on the nature of the relationship between society and the individual. Our differences spring from a quibble over words. Lupoff accepts the claim that true religion is morality, and thus concludes that it is not the same thing as established religion. I persist in the belief that religion is an established social phenomenon, and thus conclude that it is immoral.

Fred Fowler
63 Hyde Park St.
Dedham, Mass. 02026

It is interesting how the views of a person may be misconstrued from what he says in writing. Since my own views on fiction have been greatly clarified since I wrote the first letter, I think I might clarify Arthur Hlavaty's understanding of them. First, I should not have used the words "art" and "entertainment" in the way that I did. Perhaps I should say instead that a work of fiction should be enjoyable, rather than entertaining. Good examples of widely disparate books that I consider enjoyable are *The Worm Ouroboros, The Pickwick Papers,* and the novels of G. K. Chesterton. The thing in common among these books is the telling of a good story: this is what is most commonly *missing* in modern fiction, causing it to be anti-art rather than art. The praising of anti-art is what I should have attacked: and with it fiction which presents the author's ideas without giving a good story with it. This is the difference between the *Chronicles of Narnia* and much modern science fiction that purveys a philosophy: Lewis' fantasies tell a story, whereas in a book such as *The Dispossessed,* the story is largely subordinate to the presentation of the philosophy. But I was quite aware when I read *The Chronicles of Narnia* that they were written in part as Christian instruction, for at the same time I read Kathryn Lindskoog's study of them: *The Lion of Judah in Never-Never Land.* In fact, Lewis' Narnia tales are among those books of his that converted me to Christianity.

This recent conversion explains my mistakes with regard to Mr. Lupoff's privately held philosophy. I realize now that he is a modern: he shows this quite clearly in the attitudes displayed in his last letter, and in his attack against my supposed arrogance and religious bigotry. In actuality, I could never believe Christianity if I had to believe that all other religions were completely false in every respect, and only Christianity was, by some fortuitous chance, true. I believe that Christianity is the culmination and fulfillment of all that is true in paganism: Christ is He of whom the corn-kings and dying gods were portraits.

The charge of arrogance, which both Mr. Lupoff and Mrs. Miesel make, is equally untrue. In reply to Mrs. Miesel, I must say that I did not attack Mr. Lupoff's views out of scorn; I gave the impression that I was primarily defending Mr. Carter, whereas I was attacking Mr. Lupoff's views on religion. I know now that what I said about religion applies only to the Christian religion. Mr. Lupoff's characterization of religion is inadequate and misleading, in that he does not cover all religions: he does not seem to know that the worship of God is central to Christianity. And Mrs. Miesel's definition does not even define: to say that "religion is man's response to the sacred" is to say that "religion is man's response to those things pertaining to religion." A thing is sacred only by already being associated with a religion. Are we to say that an atheist whose response to a sacred thing is one of contemptuous disbelief is a religions man? I suspect that Mrs. Miesel actually means that religion is a man's response to what is sacred to him: this would fit her modernism. Her dismissal of my views as being concerned only with externals is an example of willful blindness: for I explicitly stated that a religion must claim the whole of a man's attention: and though this is not true of a religion such as pantheism, it is true of Christianity, and to let his religion be merely external is what a Christian must *not* do.

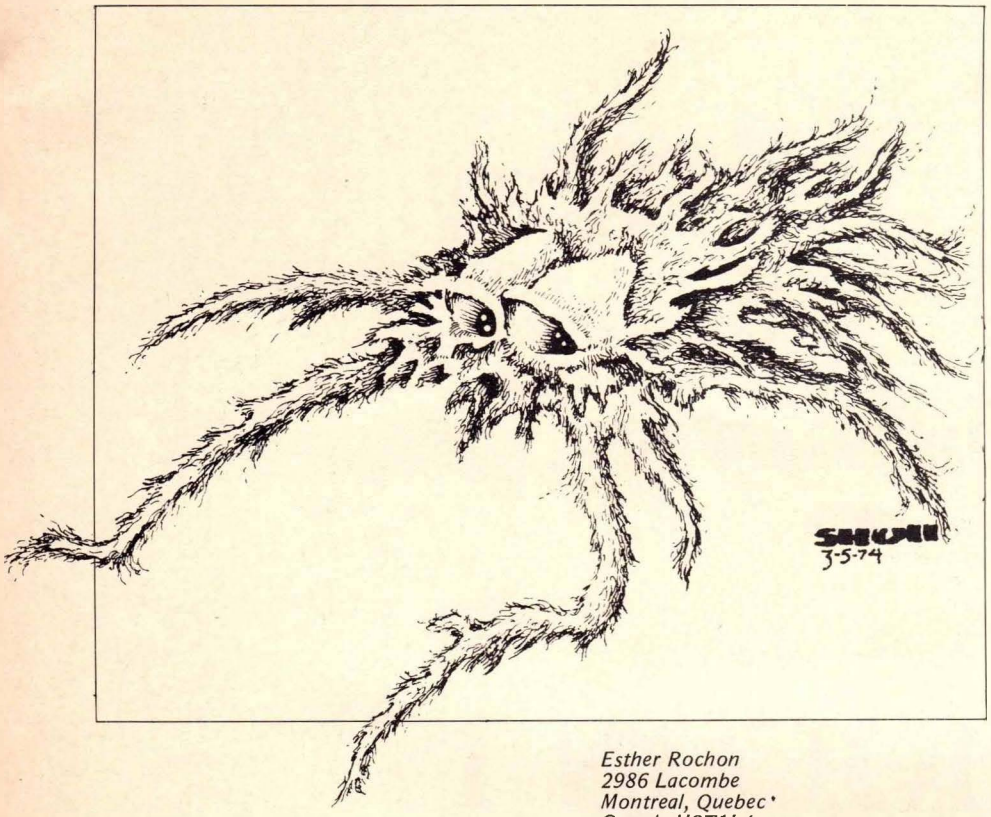
Now, I am sure that the charge of arrogance, and the "broadness" of thought, both stem from the same root of modern thought: the denial of the existence and knowability of absolute truth. This leads to relativism, and a vagueness of thought that is clearly exhibited in both Mr. Lupoff's and Mrs. Miesel's statements, and especially in their assertion that one need not believe in any religion to understand it. The application of this belief to religion involves the hidden assumption that all religions are untrue: this shows clearly in the notion that apostates dishonestly taking their living from the very religious groups whose religions they are attacking can have a true knowledge of the religions they disbelieve. I would ask this of Mrs. Miesel: if she believes that her religion is true, then how can she say that an atheist would know its real nature?

It is ironic that moderns use the word "arrogant" for those who disbelieve in the falsehoods of modernism: it is ironic because it is they who are arrogant in denying the existence of truth and the validity of reason. This is quite evident from Mrs. Miesel's remarks regarding my statements about the lack of religion in the imaginary world of Tolkien's novel: for she hardly bothers to write on this point: instead, she asserts the symbolic presence of religion, and Christian thought, in the novel, and this I had never denied. I know much better now that I have been a Christian for one-and-a-fourth years that religion is present in the novel; but I also see much more clearly that there is no religion in the world of the novel. There is no worship of any god in *The Lord of the Rings*: indeed, the only god mentioned in the book does not have any notice taken of him by any of the characters, and it is precisely this point that I was making when I stated that the only mention of the One is a single reference in the appendix. To say that this point is "silly" is nonsense, and Mrs. Miesel even contradicts herself about this, for she calls the One a *deus otiosus,* that is, a resting god, one who is doing nothing. The presence of God is not sufficient for religion, for otherwise atheists, who take no notice of God, would be just as religious as the most devout Christian. Even the belief in God is not enough, for the devils believe, and tremble, but no one would say that they are religious.

The argument that Mrs. Miesel offers is instinct with the hatred that moderns have for

ceremony and hierarchy. But ritual has always been a part of religion: the ancient Jews sacrificed animals to God from the time of Abraham. The notion that spontaneous and unorganized experiences are more truly religious is false; and if Mrs. Miesel would look into any religion that is not one of the vague modern beliefs, she would find ritual and ceremony abounding in it.

Finally, Mrs. Miesel is wrong about the morality expressed in Tolkien's book, and if she would read *The Abolition of Man*, by C. S. Lewis, she would learn this for herself. With regard to the Hobbits, I was not speaking of the principal Hobbit characters, but of the behavior of the ordinary Hobbit; but I realize now that the fallen nature of the Hobbits was appropriate to them: they would not be evil in the same way that men are. With regard to Christianity: if Mrs. Miesel and Mr. Lupoff wish to dispel their ignorance of it, I suggest that the best books written by recent authors are *The Everlasting Man*, by G. K. Chesterton, and three books by C. S. Lewis: *Mere Christianity, Miracles*, and *The Problem of Pain.*



Lou Fisher
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It's not too difficult for Arthur C. Clarke or any other writer to convert specific measurements into metric. The real problem is that nonmetric terminology has also become part of our casual language. In my own writing, I seem to be painfully aware of turning out sentences like this: "Leaving behind the *acres* of blue skies, John *Yard*ley began to *inch* his way through the dark tunnel, knowing that unseen dangers could be only a few *feet* away. . . ." Obviously, direct conversion does not work at all for such sentences; so they have to be completely rewritten, usually from a different angle (angles are still measured in the same old degrees).

But metrication is coming at a kilometer-a-minute, and any science fiction writer who doesn't consider it in every way is going to give his readers a laugh and also end up with his foot (30.480 centimeters) in his mouth.

[It's odd to note that while Canada's weather forecasters are reporting all temperatures in Celsius, thus further supporting the average US citizen's ideas that Canada is perpetually covered in ice and snow (". . . high tomorrow of 18° to 21°" . . .) the wind speeds are still quoted in miles per hour! AIP]

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When I wrote *En Hommage Aux Araignées*, I was quite sure it would never see print. Thus the audience I had in mind was composed mostly of myself—myself as a Quebecer, and myself as an SF and fantasy fan. Réginald Martel, the book reviewer in *La Presse*—the big French newspaper of Montreal—interpreted my book in terms of today's reality in Quebec. And now Asenath Hammond writes about it in the language of an SF reader. I think both approaches complement each other. But I am nevertheless very surprised to see the book so well received.

Here in Quebec there are about as many women writers as men writers—whether that be in theatre, television, journalism, poetry, novels, etc. Writing novels is extremely non-lucrative: you get 10% of the price of each book sold, plus 50 free copies, and that is all. (Incidentally, the price of my book is $3.00, not $2.50.) As the total population of the province is something like 7 millions, and as distribution of the production in other French-speaking countries is almost non-existent, writing novels can be nothing more than a hobby. The whole system lives on grants; once the editor knows the grant will come, he doesn't care much about the actual selling of the book. And magazines almost never print fiction. The nice side is that writers, too, have easy access to grants. Successful writers eventually enter some big publishing firm in France, which prints all its books on real fine paper (the equivalent of hardcovers—but they do have soft covers, suitable for binding in leather or whatnot), and sell them here for 7 or 8 dollars.

I reserve my last paragraph for publicity. There is one French fanzine in Quebec; it fills a big ecological niche, and stands halfway between fannish and professional. The name is *Requiem*. 455 St. Jean, Longueuil, Quebec, Canada. 6/$4.00.

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I was sorry to see Ted White taking up space in his column discussing his slushpile. Ted already does this in just about every issue of his own magazines, it seems, and frankly, anybody with an I.Q. that is in double-figures could figure out for themselves what's in a slushpile. Ted also says that all the science fiction magazines are around the same level of sophistication and quality. Does he really believe this?

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ALGOL is fast becoming the Lay Person's Guide to SF. General-interest articles on the big SF writers, an atmosphere and packaging that are directed to those familiar but not intimate with SF, etc. This is not a bad thing, but it satisfies me less as I half-read rehashes of Arthur Clarke's career and Jack Williamson's reminiscences of the Campbell era—things which are valuable in their own right, don't misunderstand me, but which nonetheless are rather basic stuff; I can think of a few other items which would be as attractive to newcomers as to old, jaded SF readers and writers. (Name some? Okay: SF and films; Leslie Fiedler's attempted nomination of *The Iron Dream* for a National Book Award; an interview with Ursula K. Le Guin; uh . . .)

The Le Guin interview in ALGOL 24 is the best single item. (The lettercolumn, however, beats everything for sheer thrills and bang-up action.) I'm a bit familiar with her methods, aesthetic ideals, and work philosophy, from other interviews and articles, but it's nice to hear her restate them in different form, and I picked up a few interesting tidbits—reading *The Lord of the Rings* in three days! ?

Her attitude toward work is appealing. I haven't seen many writers approach work in much of a fashion, but she makes it one of her major themes, and an important theme it is. Misunderstanding of what work is, and the warped reasons our society put out for it, seem to be among our major ills as individuals and cultural components. Too little fiction has explored its nature to be of much help, and other tools that supposedly help us "find" ourselves—psychology, whatever religion is left, etc.—are mainly ignorant or unconcerned about work. There seems to be a stigma to discussing what is the prime activity of just about everyone, as if it's a mystical, taboo "given" that we observe and blindly accede to. I'm glad to have seen *The Dispossessed* deal with this among its other notions.

Ted White can continue doing what he wants, as far as I'm concerned. I have no idea what would serve the readers best, but perhaps the reader survey will help point it out. He seems to be doing alright with what he's given so far—at least it's convenient to have his capsulized views of the science fiction profession within easy reach when one needs some information. He might try to get a little more nitty-gritty, though: dive into the money scene with publishers more deeply, dirty deals and other such scummy things. *That* I would like to know more about.

I'd like to analyze and evaluate Brian

Stableford's sociological view of SF, but it strikes me as being so formal and hence silly that I don't have the energy. How can any of his claims ever be substantiated? Luckily, however, I took marginal notes when I read the piece, and won't have to reread it to pick up my nits regarding it.

First of all and most suspect is his archaic dualism, the notion that we exist as public, social beings and as private, psychological beings. Life is much less easily categorized than that, and certainly these two "worlds" mix to the point of indistinguishability. Science fiction itself recognizes this, I think, although perhaps unconsciously and accidentally—so many of its socio-technological fantasies have their own meaning in the collective unconscious, and the complex mix that results (before the fact of fictional creation) is what has probably given SF most of its basic problems. Call it the Kilgore Trout effect. At any rate I feel that Stableford should wash himself clean of Freud. It messes up his analysis.

Worse than this weakness, really, is his contention that the science in SF needn't be empirically instructive or "true." Yet in arguing for its use as a social adjuster or future-shock alleviator (this begins to sound Gernsbackian!) this appears absurd if not heinous. Scientific ignorance—and this is what the "pretence of quasi-realism" (that's *two* steps removed from fact!) will abet—is what gave us future shock, along with a few other factors. This is ridiculous and I feel I needn't say more. Gernsback *is* dead, thankfully, but Stableford seems willing to carry the tradition on. (Even after quoting Calder that we must "know" science and know what it implies!)

Stableford's likening of SF with R. D. Laing's philosophy is laughable as well, but it needn't be documented by me. Just read Laing and then plow through any half-dozen SF writers to see the depth of their intentions.

My real argument with him remains his insistence on dualism. The life of the mind and the body—the *whole* person—is so rich and richly, confusingly complex, as to make the word "real" meaningless. I hope Stableford didn't intend us to accept his usage of it for the sake of argument, for even if we do the argument falls flatly because of it.

Dick Lupoff's review of *Dhalgren* seems to be the fairest I've read so far; it's easily the most open and perceptive one I've seen. A book that doesn't play the familiar "action" and what-happens-next game with the reader is usually fated to denunciation by the SF world. As if the readers expect to be treated in the accustomed fashion. Granted *Dhalgren* will not satisfy all readers, but they may determine that for themselves and then shut up, thank you. Unless the book fails "artistically" or in its narrative (and there have been critics to say it has, and that's valid), other comments are inappropriate. High time writers are given the commercial freedom to write such careful, intricately figured, dense books without regard to fictional "hooks" or traditional story forms, and Fred Pohl (of all people! but it's really not that surprising) is to be thanked for publishing the book.

Dick is a little bit wrong in assuming de Camp's suggestion in the Lovecraft book was that one must be "an agonized, crazed,... poverty-stricken psychic freak" to produce art. He believes *Lovecraft* might possibly have needed to be so to write his work (art, I don't know), but I don't think he extends this to all writers. Strange to see Dick jumping to that conclusion.

Andrew Tidmarsh
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Jack Williamson's article seemed to me to be generally irrelevant to the basic intention of ALGOL. Discussions about writers, and whom and when they met, should be confined to more fannishly orientated 'zines and not take up space in a 'zine of constructive prose about SCIENCE FICTION. Anyway, though I'm a relative newcomer to fandom, I've already read virtually all of what Williamson wrote in other places.

Secondly, Ward's interview of Le Guin was disappointing. Presumably you liked what Ward has strung together; I found his questions and Le Guin's answers to be incoherent and thereby innocuous. Ward's introductory note supplied more information than the entire interview. OK; interviews are more than fact sheets. What would have been nice to have read was a joint (Ward-Le Guin) analysis of one of Le Guin's novels. Le Guin's statements were, predominantly, hardly more than concretisations of what I had assumed were myths that have, somehow, become associated with writers and their profession. (e.g: "Writing is a joy"; "When I make up futures, I'm playing with all my heart and soul." These statements are cliches.) I'm a cynic, anyway; I'm trying to become a writer. To whom do I listen: my heart? Or my soul? Or Le Guin? (Or, maybe, Ted White?)

[The "basic intention" of ALGOL is to provide background for the interested reader, both in current SF and in the roots of the field. Without knowing the background of writers active in the field how can you fully understand the reasons they write the ways

they do? Knowing that a writer has come into SF from far left field, we understand that their writing leaves something to be desired; but if the same sort of writing comes from a seasoned professional who worked with Campbell, Gold and Boucher, we'd be understandably confused. AIP]

Mike Glicksohn
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Canada

ALGOL is a marvelous visual experience. "Undoubtedly the most professional and slick fan magazine ever, bar none" as some neo called Geis called it in his latest issue. The quality of the printing, the standard of the artwork and the expertise of the design have reached the point where it's scarcely worth discussing them for fear of redundancy of praise. I'm particularly impressed with your use of—to me—new artists of exceptional talent. Roy Porter is a prime example: the man is nothing short of brilliant.

Enjoyable as the interview with Ursula Le Guin was, I found it frustratingly slight in spots. Ward had a tendency to flit from topic to topic without properly exploring any of them in depth. Just when Ursula would offer some fascinating insight into her philosophy of life or of writing, Ward would blithely jump to another topic entirely. Still, because Ursula Le Guin is Ursula Le Guin, it couldn't help being a delight to read. Meeting her in Australia was a wondrous experience for me. I know little of literature, and on the academic or scholarly level I know nothing of science fiction, so I approached her with a large degree of awe and the expectation that our meeting would parallel those I've had with other such people who reduce me to jelly, people such as Fritz Leiber, Alfred Bester and Arthur C. Clarke to whom I'm barely capable of stammering hello before beating a hasty retreat to the safety of the company of fans. Not so. In the hour during which I was lucky enough to share the judging of the Aussiecon masquerade with Ursula and Susan Wood, I found her to be one of those rare people who put me completely at ease. She's someone who radiates a real interest in the person she is talking to, regardless of the importance of the conversation, and her humor and intelligence and spirit captivated me as they charmed an entire convention. I'm not qualified to judge her as a writer, but Ursula Le Guin is a Great Lady, and it was a privilege to meet her.

I can think of few things I'd enjoy reading more than the type of material Jack Williamson had in this issue. The personal reminiscences of the men who helped to shape the field, without any attempt to analyse or place in historical perspective or legitimize or make respectable or any of the other raisons d'ecrire which often weaken "academic" pieces for me are as fascinating as anything you or anyone else could publish. Delightful stuff: and three cheers for Orlando for selecting Jack as the GoH for the 1977 Worldcon!

I do not usually read book review columns in fanzines, but I *always* read Dick Lupoff! I was delighted to see you allowing him so many pages this issue. Dick writes so damn well I don't even care if I've read the book he's talking about or if he agrees with me in the rare instance when he discusses a book I have read. For no other reason than Dick Lupoff ALGOL would be worth its cover price.

Good meaty lettercolumn mostly about subjects I feel unqualified to comment on. But there are always the fan Hugos, aren't there? The victory of SFR in the fanzine category is one I can live with, even though it doesn't reflect my personal tastes or opinions. And Rotsler winning at last is one of the longest overdue triumphs for Truth, Justice and the American Way in the history of fandom. But Dick Geis as Best Fanwriter. . .? ? ? ? I'm afraid that one is too much to take. With at least three nominees who can and have written rings, circles, ellipses, cones, cylinders and spheres around Dick, this is a clear indication of the inequities of mass circulation in the fan categories. I'm hoping, along with some of your correspondents, that the new Faan Awards will become more representative of the true merits of contributors to the fanzine field. With Thompson and Bangsund as one-two in this year's balloting, I think they're already a lot more creditable than the Hugo.

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I kept hoping that Brian M. Stableford would take up one matter in his essay: that is the question of why people read science fiction except non-fiction which speculates about the future, if the people have a real need for finding a way to adjust to change or for getting away from the limitations of today. It's possible to save enormous amounts of time by reading the right magazine articles and books about where science is leading and the prospects for finding life elsewhere in the universe and similar topics. What is it that compels so many people to read instead fiction, which may devote sixty thousand words or so to making a point that an essay could achieve in a couple thousand words? For that matter, why have newspapers and big circulation magazines been de-emphasizing non-fiction of this type in recent years? There's no magazine today that is an exact equivalent of the old Gernsback *Science & Invention*, nor is there any huge-circulation publication emphasizing such material as the Hearst Sunday supplement, *The American Weekly*, did in dozens of metropolitan newspapers when I was a boy.

This may have been the finest of all the fine instalments of Dick Lupoff's book review column. He has resisted this time the temptation which occasionally assails him to say something more brilliant than penetrating. It helps to find Dick sharing my opinions on such matters as the writing ability of Bob Silverberg. We differ strongly this time only on the preoccupation with Lovecraft's life style. If he "lived a life of gothic horror," so do perhaps one-third of all the people in Hagerstown whom I know a great deal about. Wouldn't non-conformist be a better way to describe Lovecraft than "a warped, stunted, and ultimately self-destroying personality"?

The cover is superb. It's something like seeing a movie star in his first Technicolor role, to find a familiar artist bursting forth in multi-color work. Mike Hinge also gets a startling amount of personality and reality into the sketch of Mrs. Le Guin for the interview illustration. Roy Porter captured in the first illustration for "The Campbell Era" exactly the spirit of the prozine illustrations from the 1930's and 1940's, without imitating the styles in use in those days. Also sticking particularly in my memory is the Alan Hunter full-pager. The lettercolumn heading is a trifle disturbing because that's exactly how I've been feeling here of late.

R. Laurraine Tutihasi
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Some interesting things have resulted from my subscribing to your zine. In the first issue I got, November 1973, I found a letter from a fan in my immediate area. I contacted her shortly after reading the zine. Until that time, neither of us personally knew any other fen. Now that there were two of us, there was enough motivation to dig around for others. Not long after, we discovered an SF club in the area which had been in existence for about a year.

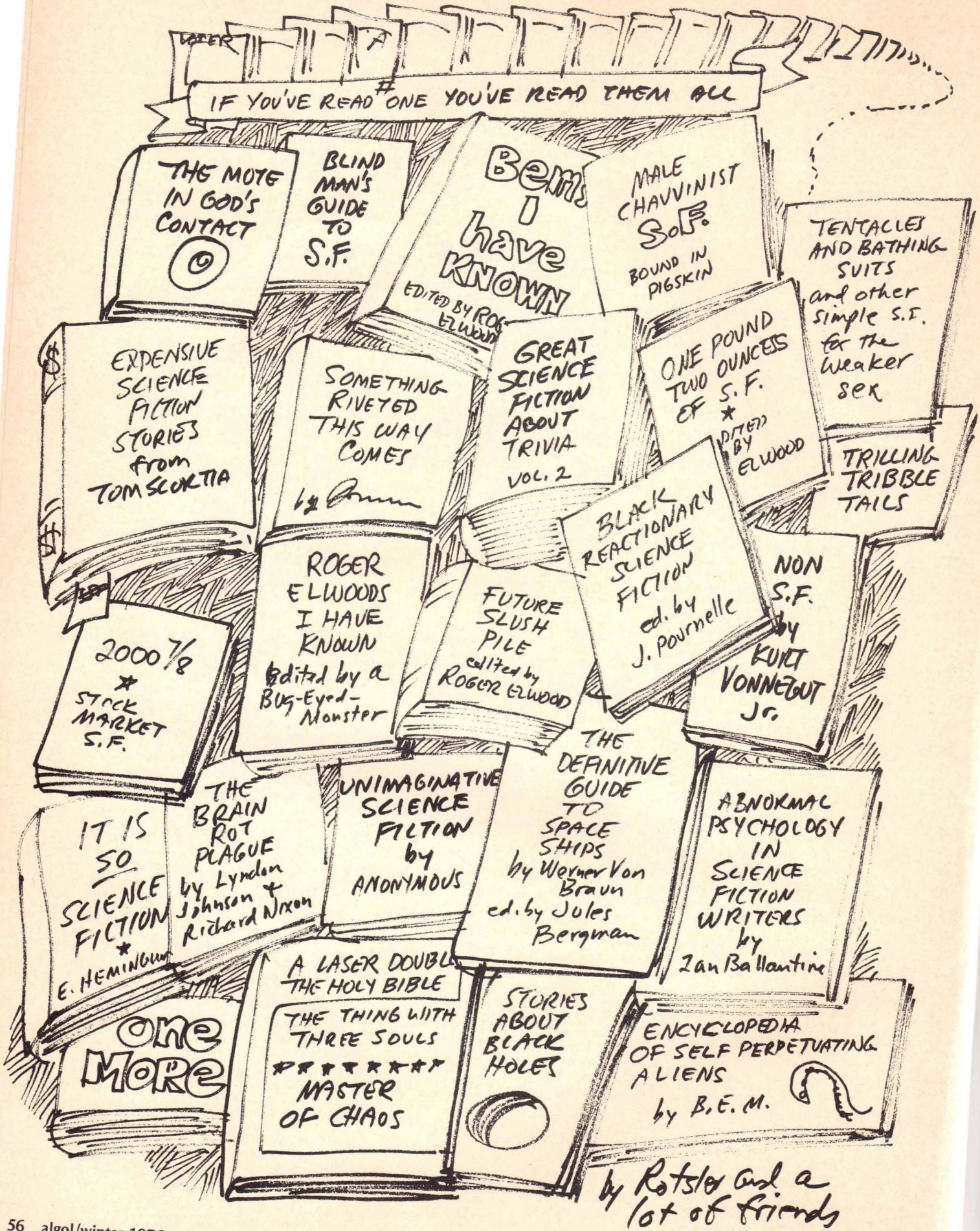
In the November 1974 issue, you published an excerpt from a letter I wrote. Because of that, I received the first issue of a new reviewzine; and now I am doing book reviews for it. It's a small world, especially when one subscribes to ALGOL!

The real reason for this letter is Sandra Miesel's letter in the current issue. I bristled when I read her sidewise swipe at Trekzines. I do not really consider myself a Trekfan, just a trufan taking a short stroll into Trekdom. I find some of the Trek activities just plain fun. During the past year I have read much Trek literature, following the advice of one who is a true Trekker. Sandra's criticism was about 1973 Trek literature, and although much of what I have read is of recent vintage, I have bought back runs of what is considered to be the cream of the crop.

In the absence of professional Star Trek fiction magazines, much of Trek literature has turned to fiction, and therefore is very different from most SF zines. Taking into consideration the fact that the Trekzine is a slightly different species, there is much of good quality and some of exceptional quality. I do not think that Trekzines or Trek artists and writers should be barred from qualifying for the fan Hugos. Is Sandra aware that many of the Big Names in Trekdom are also trufen? In the same issue there was a letter fron Jacqueline Lichtenberg, who is a very well-known Trekfan. I do agree that too many of the mindless Trekkies (please note the difference in terminology) who often are fans of the actors as opposed to the study of Star Trek as a kind of SF, have been recently overrunning the Worldcons. I think the MidAmeriCon committee were wise to bar all Star Trek activities from their convention. Until the current Star Trek craze becomes more controlled, Trekkies and Trekkers should be restricted to their own cons.

[I've always found it amusing that some of the best ST fiction has come out of the "let's get Spock into bed" school of fiction. Realizing, of course, that the male/female ratio is weighted on the female side in ST fandom, I suppose this is perfectly logical . . . AIP]

WE ALSO HEARD FROM: Brian Aldiss, Noah Stewart, Keith Soltys, Dr. A. D. Wallace, Doug Nathman, Steve Fahnestalk, George Duncan, Chris & Shari Hulse, Jessica Salmonson, Doug Garrity, Jeff Hecht, Bob Sparks, Alan Bostick, Brian Topp, Jan Brown, Ken Hitchcock, Kathryn Drexel, Marjii Ellers, HJN Andruschak, "Terry Dixon," Devra Langsam, Tim Mitchell, Lawrence Severs, Dainis Bisenieks, Bruce Zado, Baird Searles, Sandra Miesel, and Carl Max.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FINAL THOUGHTS: As this issue goes to press, I'm sorry to report that Tom Monteleone's 5,500-word article on Roger Zelazny was squeezed out by Robert Silverberg's autobiographical piece (15,000+ words by count instead of the estimated 10,000). And, despite an economically disastrous added 8-page form, there's still not enough room for the Monteleone piece. Never fear: it'll be in the next issue, out in May.

You'll note to the right that subscribers have to read the mailing label, as renewal forms aren't being sent out anymore. Please, folks, read 'em!

—Andy Porter

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Jan. 2-4 RHOCON 1. Sheraton-Park, Washington, DC. GoH Forrest & Wendayne Ackerman, Gray Morrow, Walter Ernsting. Write: Tim Whalen, 2901 NE 39th Ct., Lighthouse Point FL 33064. See display ad, this issue.

Jan. 23-25 CONFUSION 12. Ann Arbor MI. Pro GoH Lloyd Biggle, Fan GoH Bill Bowers. Write: Ro Nagey, 240 Michigan Union, Ann Arbor MI 48104.

Feb. 12-16 THE STAR TREK CONVENTION 1976. Commodore Hotel, NYC. Membership limited to 6,000. Registration $21.60. Write: STCON, P.O. Box 951, Brooklyn NY 11201.

Feb. 13-15 BOSKONE 13. Sheraton-Boston, Boston MA. GoH Poul Anderson. Write: NESFA, Box G, MIT Branch P.O., Cambridge MA 02139.

Mar. 12-14 LEPRECON II. Ramada Inn, Phoenix AZ. Membership $4.00. Write: P.O. Box 1749, Phoenix AZ 85001.

Mar. 19-21 MARCON 11. Neill House Motor Hotel, Columbus OH. GoH Joe Haldeman. Write: Larry Smith, 194 E. Tulane, Columbus OH 43202.

Apr. 9-11 LUNACON '76. Statler-Hilton Hotel, NYC. Write: Walter R. Cole, 1171 E. 8th St., Brooklyn NY 11230.

Apr. 16-18 MINNICON '76. Minneapolis MN. Write: Bev Swanson, 2301 Elliot Ave. South, Minneapolis MN 55404.

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Apr. 16-18 BALTICON 10. Hunt Valley Inn, Baltimore MD. GoH Philip Jose Farmer, Fan GoH Suzanne Tompkins & Jerry Kaufman. Registration $4 advance, $6 at the door. Write: Norman Schwarz, 7901 Oakwood Road, Glen Burnie MD 21061.

Apr. 16-19 MANCON 5. 27th British National SF Convention. Owens Park, Manchester, UK. GoH Robert Silverberg, Fan GoH Peter Roberts. Registration $6 (US) 3 Pounds (UK). Write: Brian Robinson, 9 Linwood Grove, Longsight Manchester UK or USAgent Bill Burns, 48 Log Ave., Kings Park NY 11754.

Jun. 4-7 SCANDINAVIAN SF CONVENTION. Stockholm, Sweden. GoH Jack Vance. Registration $10 attending, $2.25 supporting. Write: Scandinavian SF Con, Box 3273, S-103 65 Stockholm, Sweden.

Jul. 2-5 WESTERCON 29. International Hotel, Los Angeles CA. GoH H. L. Gold, Fan GoH Gregg Calkins. Registration $5 to 6/76; $6 after; supporting $3. Write: Westercon 29, P.O. Box 5384, Mission Hills CA 91345.

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Sept. 1-6 MIDAMERICON. World Science Fiction Convention. Hotel Muehlebach, etc., Kansas City MO. GoH Robert A. Heinlein, Fan GoH George Barr. Registration $20 to 5/1; $25 5/2-8/1; $50 afterwards. Supporting registration $6. Write: P.O. Box 221, Kansas City MO 64141.

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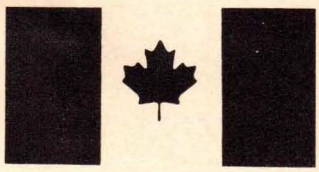

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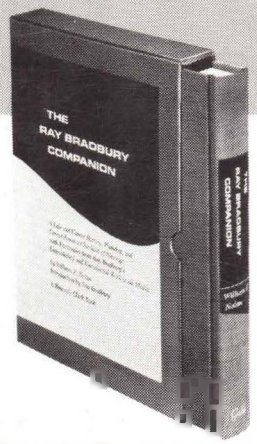

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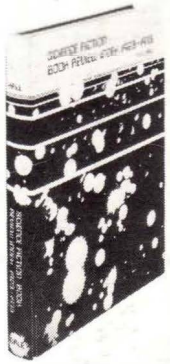

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CONTENTS

The *Index* is arranged alphabetically by author, with books listed alphabetically by title under each author's name. Full bibliographic information is provided for each book reviewed. Citations to reviews follow each book and give magazine code, volume and issue numbers, pagination of review, date of issue, and reviewer. There are citations to about 14,000 reviews of 6,900 books reviewed in the 250 magazines indexed.

Two-part appendix: Part 1, a record of the science fiction magazines from 1923 to 1973, includes all available data on each magazine. Part 2 is a title checklist of the general, amateur, and library magazines covered by the index, with date coverage started.

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