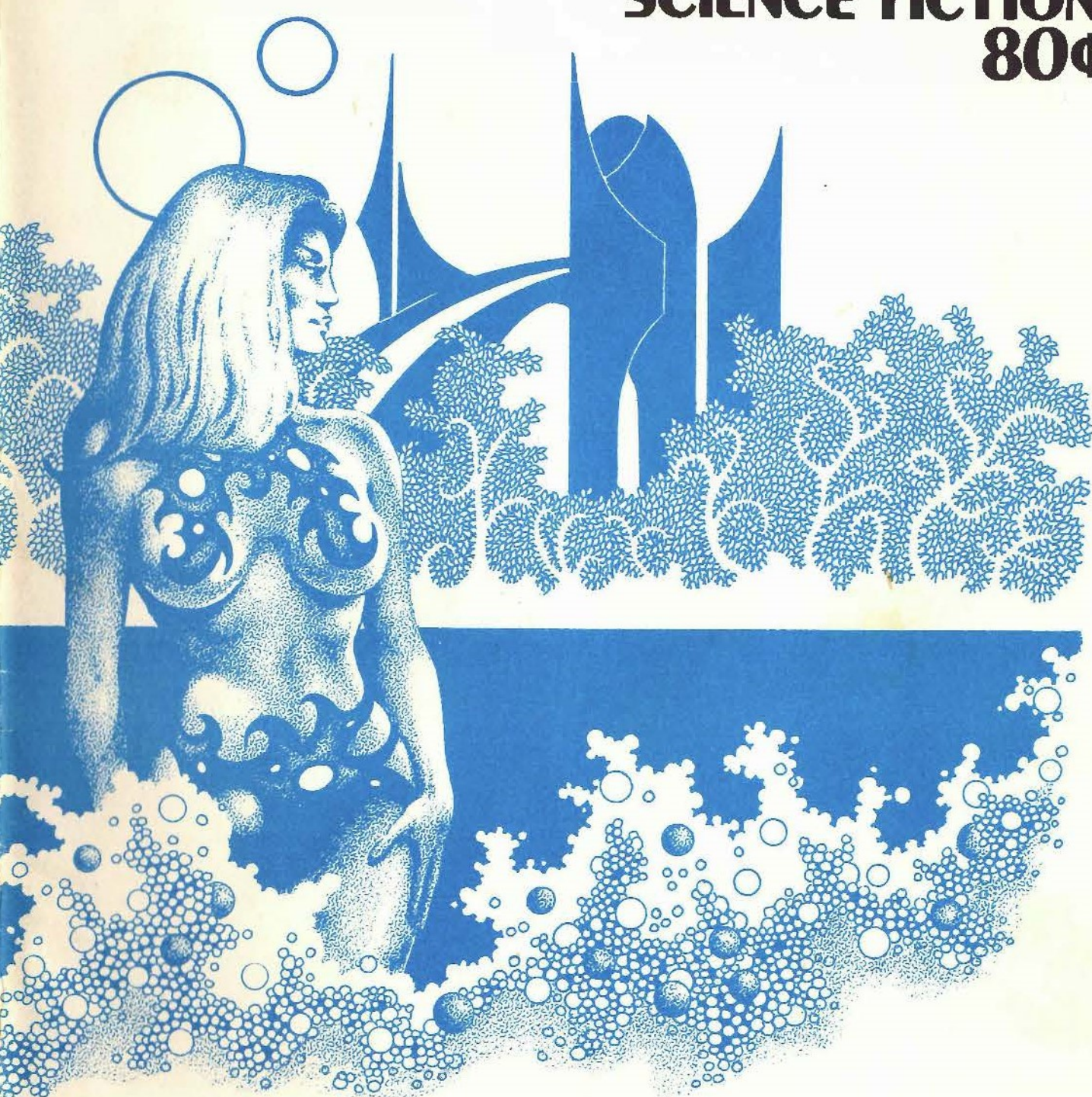


THIS ISSUE: Exploring Cordwainer Smith  
Brian Aldiss • Richard Lupoff • Ted White

# ALGOL

A MAGAZINE ABOUT  
SCIENCE FICTION  
80¢



# BETELGEUSE



## ANDREW PORTER

New York fandom is often a very strange thing. It waxes and wanes in long cycles, so long that it's hard to recognize them as cycles. But history often repeats, it's been said elsewhere, and history is coming around again, here in New York. New York fandom, the fandom that I knew and that shaped my fannish career, is on the wane. And there's not a thing I can do to stop it, to slow that long road from the heights of fannishness to the bitter plains of mundane.

It's a strange feeling, watching something which I've been a part of, interacted with, which has shaped and nurtured my fannish career and approach to things science fictional, slowly fade away.

Those readers familiar with the Lord Of The Rings, a majority of the readers of this editorial I would suppose, might find similarities. In the final chapters of Lord Of The Rings, after the destruction of the One Ring, a decision must be reached by the Elves, by the Elder Races in Middle Earth: to stay in Middle Earth, to dwindle in learning and stature and be washed by the winds of time, to be forgotten and to forget; or to pass beyond the sundering seas, into the realm preserved for them in the Uttermost West, where, perhaps, things and people do not change, and all that is good remains good forever. It is a heavy choice, an eternal decision. Not all make the same decision, not all have the same destiny.

I came late to the Lord Of The Rings. I first read the books in 1966, when Ace had first published them in paperback editions. They were...interesting, but little more. I read them again in 1971, after the first and in fact the second flowering of my fannish energies had passed. If I had had the immediate reaction I had on first reading, in 1966, perhaps the wheels of if might have thrown my fannish energies in another path: I might this day be the head of a powerful and

## A REQUIEM FOR THE FANOCLASTS

all-encompassing Tolkien Society of America.

At this date, in this time I've made the decision where to cast my fannish energies, and so, *Algo!* benefits to the detriment of the Tolkien Society. The enthusiasms and energies that I brought to bear on matters fannish in my younger days have passed. You can't after all, go home again. Tolkien fandom has waned, as the acceptance of Tolkien in the wider world beyond our microcosm has waxed, and the Tolkien Society itself has, in some strange irony, passed into the West, in merger with the younger, stronger, Mythopoeic Society. That latter Society is only now reaching its first limits of growth, spreading roots through Californium and eastward into the heartlands of this continent, more clearly defining itself for the benefits of its members, of which I am one. Whether the Mythopoeic Society will in turn slip into decadence and dissolution is not something I want to go into more deeply here, having wandered quite a way from the initial quest and aim of this editorial.

Returning to New York fandom: when I entered fandom, in New York at the beginning of the 1960's, the older guard, which had brought on the NYCon 2, the Nunnery and the wonders of New York fandom of the 1950's, had dispersed, some westward, some to the glades of gafia, some to more interesting fandoms and even stranger places. A newer guard was organizing themselves, separate from the other groups then existent in New York: the Fanoclasts. Founded by fannish couples (Ted and Sylvia White, Dick and Pat Lupoff, Larry and Noreen Shaw), the group coalesced into the vanguard of a new fannish resurgence in New York. The Fanoclasts spawned the NYCon 3 bidding committee and the NYCon 3 itself, and most of the fanzines published in New York in the 1960's. The Fanoclasts were fanzine fans more than they were club fans, and the loose nature of the club permitted the development of something new on the New York fannish scene: a club of people who liked and complemented everyone else within the group.

The Fanoclasts became convention goers as the bid for New York in '67 firmed; first to local conventions, then to the nearer cities like Philadelphia and Washington, and then out across immensity, to borrow a phrase, to the Midwestcon in Cincinnati and the Westercons in San Diego and Long Beach, California. But first and foremost we were fanzine fans, and compatible. Goddamn, but we were compatible. This mutual appreciation helped make the powerful and forceful personalities in the Fanoclasts mesh: people like Ted White, Dave Van Arnam, Mike McInerney, Rich Brown, Steve Stiles. I think more than anything these five fans represented the range and extent of talent in the club, and the essence of fannishness that the Fanoclasts possessed.

After I joined the Fanoclasts, in June of 1964, less than a month went by before that most insidious and diabolical of fannish inventions was created: the weekly apa. I know many of the people reading this are going to be asking, "what are apa's?" You've got to bear with me. One of the troubles with fannish expression in a large circulation, science-fiction-oriented fanzine is that a lot of readers aren't going to know what the hell I'm saying. You've got to accept these expressions, immerse yourselves in them. Suddenly you'll Understand All, after a suitable time of immersion, if you've the makings of a trufan, and you'll wonder why and how you were so perverse as not to understand all the fine fannish mannerisms and abbreviations. Let it percolate through your mind: the wonderful thing about fandom is that you really can't quit once you're in. Why, some fans still come to conventions and they've been dead ten or fifteen years. They only make it to the parties at night, true, but those are some of the better moments of any convention...

The invention was called apa F. A weekly apa [amateur press association, for those of you who've percolated yourselves through this last paragraph], whereas the most frequent type heretofore discovered had been every three

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weeks. It was sheer insanity, and a hell of a lot of fun. I began publishing a fanzine called *Degler!* for apa F. *Degler!* eventually turned into *S.F. Weekly*, which became a pretty damned good weekly newszine, in my own biased opinion, but that's another story, which I won't turn off into here. Bruce Pelz, co-chairman of last year's LACON, did pick up on the idea and promptly started a weekly apa in Los Angeles, called apa L. Incredibly enough, apa L is still going strong, having survived one period of being mothballed, until the local fans brought it back. Apa F lasted for 69 mailings, dying the death on Halloween, 1965. Apa L continues onward, having recently marked its 400th mailing.

One of the things that apa F did for me was gave me the ability to write, to organize my thoughts and put them down on paper so that other people, reading my words, could capture for themselves my feelings, my emphases and thoughts. This is not the formal writing taught in the classroom, which is fine for college literature papers and the dry writing of the company report, but the writing of life, of activity; the fannish writing which reflects the warmth and personality of the writer.

A problem in writing in any fannish way for *Algol* is that the fanisms so expressive of fandom, its language and meanings, simply can't be used in a magazine with the non-fan circulation that *Algol* has. Only about 40% of the readership are into fandom in any heavy way, I would estimate, and this has a hampering and dampening effect on anything I want to write or communicate. Most fannish writing I do nowadays appears mostly in a limited circulation (70 copies) fanzine which has little overlap with the *Algol* readership.

The New York fandom I knew and was a part of was typified by the Fanoclats. I was a member of other groups, and in fact was a member of the Lunarians, sponsors of the annual Lunacon several years before I joined the Fanoclats. But school kept me from any larger involvement in fandom until mid-1964. I began to attend local conventions after joining the Lunarians, but my first adventures away from New York were as a Fanoclast, when I attended the 1964 Philcon, in Philadelphia. The next year I went to conventions in Washington and Cincinnati, as a Fanoclast and a member of the NYCon 3 Bidding Committee. While bidding for the convention we went to a lot of conventions, and met a lot of good people, from Philadelphia to Washington, Cincinnati, San Diego, Los Angeles and San Francisco. It was a good time to be a part of New York fandom, and a good time for the Fanoclats.

I'd begun publication of *Algol* in November of 1963, while attending school in Milford, Connecticut, months before I joined the Fanoclats. The first six issues are pretty well forgotten, thankfully. With the 7th issue *Algol* began to show reaction and interaction with the Fanoclats. Steve Stiles contributed artwork; Dave Van Arnam contributed a short pithy article on Edgar Rice Burroughs, and Rich Brown wrote about the Walter Breen Affair, Topic A in fandom in those days. *Algol* began to show signs of what it might be capable of in future issues. And of course during that time the Fanoclats was a good club to be a member of: a place where good people got together to talk, to communicate, to bask in the glow of interesting people gathered in a fannish setting.

Most of those people are gone now, to other cities and other centers of fannish activity. The list reads like an honor roll of modern fandom; a list of those who contributed to New York fandom, and left it a sadder and quieter place: Ted and Robin White; Bob and Barbara Silverberg; Terry and Carol Carr; Larry and Noreen Shaw; Dick and Pat Lupoff; Mike McInerney; Rich and Coleen Brown; Joe and Hilary Staton; Jack and Phoebe Gaughan; John Berry; Lee Hoffman; Dave Van Arnam. An incredible Who's Who of Fandom.

The Fanoclats didn't die abruptly: the energy within New York fandom brought the Fanoclats to a peak in 1968, a year after the NYCon threatened to destroy the gestalt, as worldcons have destroyed the parent fangroup in so many cities (remember the flowering of St. Louis fandom before St. LouisCon?). But in the space of a few months some of the leading Fanoclats left, loosening the cohesive whole that has sustained the club for the last half decade. And, like a great Empire, the parts that reinforced the whole loosened their ties, only tenuous at best, and groups that had been at their height began a long slow fall which hasn't yet touched bottom.

Even the Lunarians, which have managed to sustain themselves through more than 15 years of New York's fannish evolutions, look back to the good old days when fandom and fan politics was a simpler art, easier to appreciate or laugh at. The Lunarians is currently attempting to grapple with internal problems: a new constitution, over-large meetings, younger fans anxious to topple the old power structure, the continued cancerous growth of the Lunacon.

I think the Fanoclats finally died when Ted White left New York, leaving the club in the hands of Steve Stiles. Reactions to Ted White, in fandom and out, have ranged down through the years from open hatred through bootlicking subservience to open and mutual respect. Those who hated White never denied his undeniable hold on the minds of fandom. When Ted White spoke friends and enemies, and there were and are many in both camps, listened. When Ted left New York that spark which had united the Fanoclats sputtered and went out. The club continued, but the emphasis changed from fanzine fan to club fan. Those who remained from an earlier day became divided and dwindled. And, like some great empire which has reached its furthest limits decay and apathy set in.

Here and there bright focal points grew, flowered and wilted. The much vaunted Brooklyn Insurgent crowd flourished for a year or so, publishing their myriad fanzines and impressing their views and opinions on an impressionable fandom, and faded. Today they are beginning publication of a new fanzine, *Tandem*, which Arnie Katz describes as a large fannish quarterly. The interesting thing to me is that it will replace a host of small fannish monthlies, drawing on the talents of the people who published them. I look on this as a retreat, the sort of amalgamation of talents which may produce a new fannish clarion call, but which still represents a shuttering and withdrawal of some small portion of New York fannish energies.

From my vantage point, the slide is continuing. *Algol* was never an integral part of the Fanoclats, although in the mid-1960's it depended on members of the Fanoclats for a perhaps overly large percentage of its contents, a charge made then by some fans and which I can accept now, though I didn't when it was first made. Although the same people still contribute to *Algol* their locales have changed, and the charge is true only of a common attitude toward fandom, rather than a common living place.

That attitude is: Old and Tired. Dick Lupoff, so active in fandom more than 10 years ago (winner of a Hugo for his fanzine *Xero*; publisher of 69 issues of a weekly fanzine for apa F; active member of FAPA) has withdrawn from the ramparts for the more comfortable, if more precarious position of free lance writer and reviewer. Ted White lives in Virginia, editing two prozines and doing little fannish writing. Once in a great while he stirs and publishes a fanzine with John Berry, who has himself ceased publishing fanzines, though he still travels from continent to continent, looking for something, but never seeming to find it. And the others mentioned above, either gaffiated or hoarding their energies for other matters, surfacing at conventions and bringing to mind other years, other conversations, if only for a little while.

Like *The Lord Of The Rings*, the decision was made: to stay and dwindle, or to pass into the West and in so doing to pass from the mind and eye of Man. Looking at my maps, even Virginia, it seems, lies to the west of New York City. And surely the California of fact and legend is as close as modern twentieth century man can come to the legendary tales of Numenor.

And so I find myself sitting here, looking out on the worlds, having found the niche that I have created for myself. A withdrawal from New York fandom; more active, perhaps, than at any time after 1968 and the heights of fannishness; but a withdrawal nonetheless. I am sitting here and watching the end of something I cherished.

If history repeats, and the long wave which is now rolling out continues, we can expect maybe four more years of dwindling. At the end of that time, a new beginning. But I can't see myself putting as much energy into a new beginning as I have in the Golden Age of the Fanoclasts which is passing.

It would be nice to go on, unchanging, like the Lady of the Wood, breasting the stream of time and turning aside the waves of change. But that isn't possible, at least in this Earth, though perhaps it is in others. The Fanoclasts that I knew is gone; change is the only possible course.

\* \* \* \*

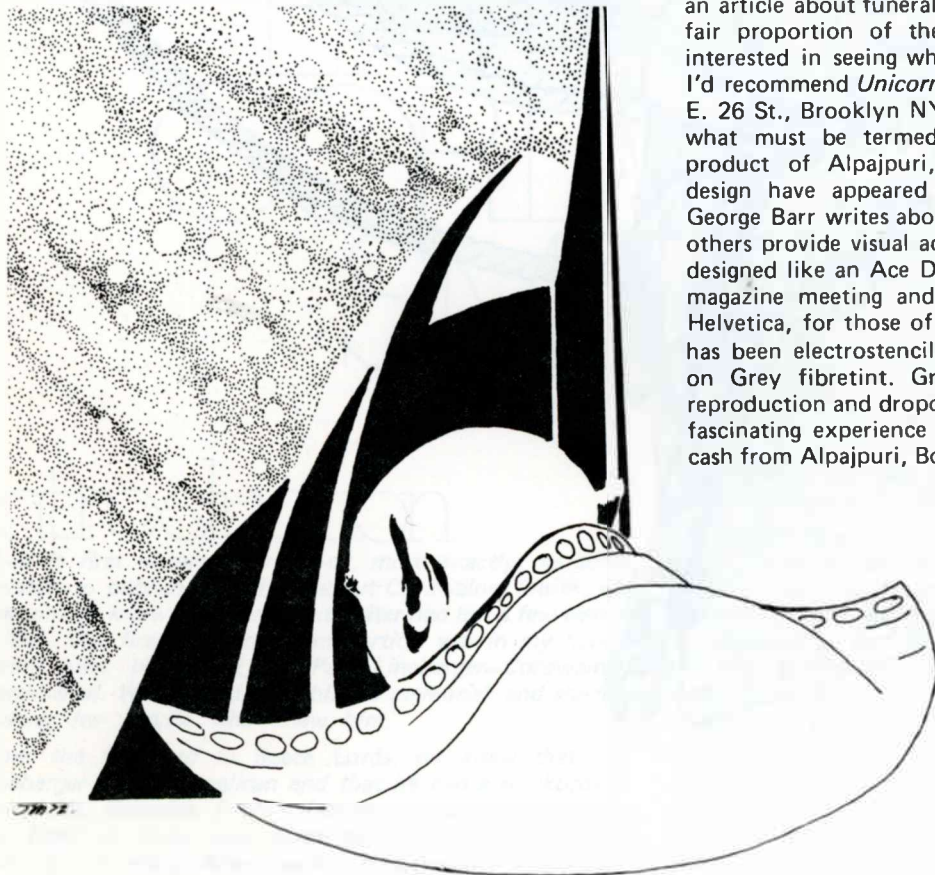
It's been interesting to watch the rebirth of British fanzines, as the sun sinks into the west over New York, disappearing into the primeval smog over New Jersey. For too long Pete Weston and a few others have been the lonely sentinels of the fannish way of life, preserving the ideas and images of a perished age of fandom that produced Irish Fandom and a lot of good fanzines. In the initial writing of this part of the editorial I tried to do in-depth reviews of a number of current British fanzines, but stopped after half a page of wordage with very little actually being said. So I recommend the following British fanzines to you, if you're one of the 80 or so British readers of *Algol*, or if you're interested in British fanzines and want to see some of the

better examples of the current renaissance.

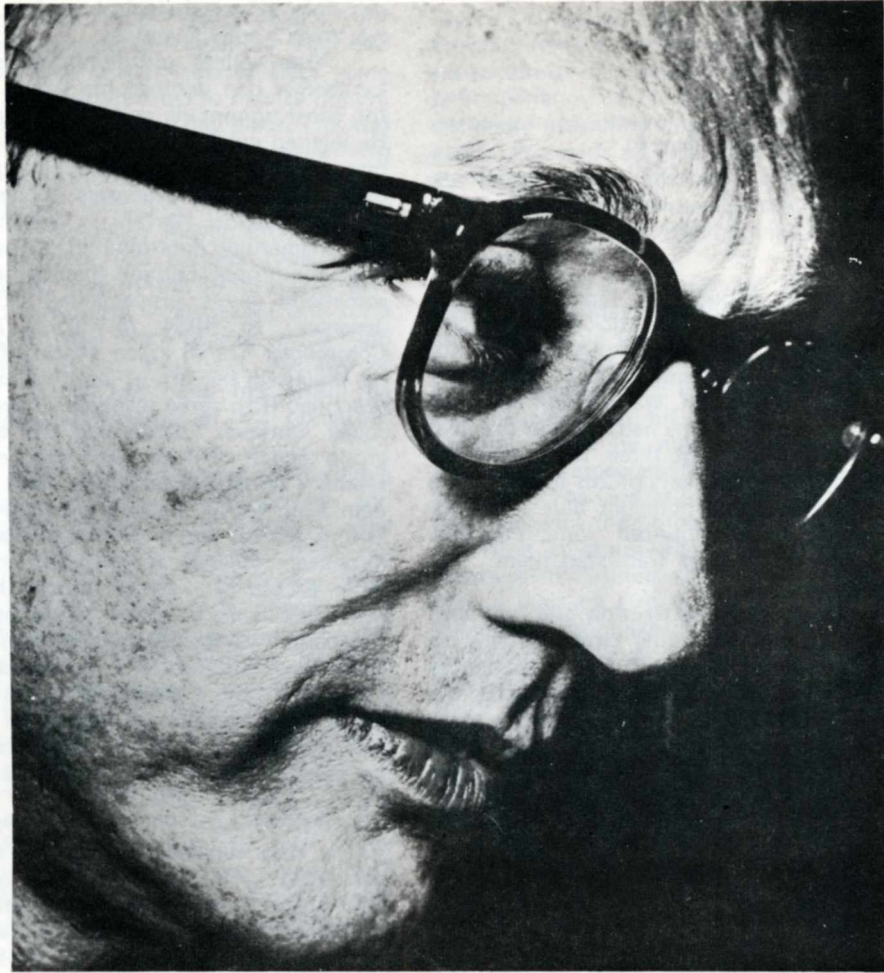
The 31st issue of Pete Weston's *Speculation* continues to offer excellent critical articles and discussion about SF. This issue features Aldiss, Pohl, Stableford, and a lot of other good people. 20p or 50¢, 5/1 pound or 4/\$2, from Peter Weston, 31 Pinewall Avenue, Kings Norton, Birmingham 30, UK. *Maya 5* is an interesting genzine published by one of a circle of new fans who seem to have the most incredible run-ins with fandom and each other. 50¢ from Ian Maule, 13 Weardale Ave., Forest Hall, Newcastle on Tyne NE12 OHX, UK. *Cypher 8* is a mammoth (80+ pages) genzine devoted to SF, this issue delving deeply into E. C. Tubb. If you're interested in the roots of English SF, this is a good issue to get. 60¢/copy, 4/\$2 from Cy Chauvin, 17829, Peters, Roseville MI 48066, or 20p/copy, 5/1 pound from James Goddard, Woodlands Lodge, Woodlands, Southampton, Hants, UK. Lastly, *Zimri 4* has discovered the old guard and its letter-column recalls a lot of names which have largely been forgotten by the current generation of fans. *Zimri* is an excellent example of what that current generation are capable of producing, given a little feedback from fandom. 20p or 50¢/copy, from Lisa Conesa, 54 Manley Road, Whalley Range, Manchester M16 8HP, UK. Future copies of all these fanzines are eligible for the usual published letter of comment; fanzines are heavily dependent on feedback from the readers, and there's nothing for the ego like a good, unexpected letter of comment. That goes for *Algol* also, of course.

Turning to our native shores, I've received several fanzines which warrant mention (obviously these are not reviews; I wouldn't dignify them with that title). *Ash-Wing 11* features a long article/speech by Philip K. Dick. Unfortunately this is perhaps the third time this speech has seen publication, but if it's your first exposure it's fascinating, saying a lot about Dick and the Dickian view of the universe. No price mentioned; you might try 50¢, to Frank Denton, 14654 8th Ave. SW, Seattle WA 98166, USA. *Unicorn V2N3* is more of a little magazine than a fanzine, although it features impeccable offset, Tim Kirk artwork and an article about funeral customs in the *Lord Of The Rings*. A fair proportion of the contents are non-stfnal. If you're interested in seeing what a better little magazine looks like, I'd recommend *Unicorn*. \$1/copy from Karen Rockow, 1153 E. 26 St., Brooklyn NY 11210. Finally, *Carandaith Seven* is what must be termed a graphic trip, the much awaited product of Alpajpuri, whose letters and thoughts about design have appeared in *Algol* as well as other fanzines. George Barr writes about fan and pro art; Grant Canfield and others provide visual accompaniment. The entire magazine is designed like an Ace Double novel, with the two sides of the magazine meeting and intertwining in the center. Text is Helvetica, for those of you conversant in type styles, which has been electrostenciled and reproduced in Burgundy Red on Grey fibretint. Graphics, text design, experiments in reproduction and dropout line photography abound. This is a fascinating experience to look at and read. Available for \$1 cash from Alpajpuri, Box 28, Vashon WA 98070.

— Andrew  
Pote







# EXPLORING CORDWAINER SMITH

## introduction

When it first occurred to us—or, more exactly, to John Foyster—to publish something about Cordwainer Smith, we were not to know that that great writer had but a few weeks to live. The first draft of John's article was in my hands during June. In August, Dr. Paul Linebarger—Cordwainer Smith—died. We decided to publish a memorial, and started looking for people who knew him.

From the foreword to *Space Lords*, we knew that Dr. Linebarger was an Anglican and that he had a stockbroker named Mr. Greenish. From other sources we knew that he had been in some way connected with the Australian National University. After much correspondence we located

Mr. Greenish and Dr. Burns, and during December John visited Canberra and talked with them.

The partial result of John's investigations is now in your hands. To John, Lee Harding, and myself, who have been so involved for the last year with Cordwainer Smith, the material in this issue seems terribly incomplete; it is a conscious effort to realize that for many readers this will be the first introduction to the amazing man behind those amazing stories. We offer this material, then, not as any kind of definitive statement about the man or his work, but as some information and some thoughts about them.

To Dr. Burns and Mr. Greenish, who have helped us so much, we offer our thanks—and our apologies that we have not honoured their friend in as lavish or significant a way as he deserved or we would like.

—John Bangsund 7

# Paul Linebarger » arthur bourne

What first struck one about Paul Linebarger was a considerate formality of manner—an odd trick of introducing himself as though he were a third person, his own ego not obtruding. I had just shaken his hand when a newsagency telephoned for particulars about him. Waiting till I had hung up, he affably demurred that his name had not four syllables (I had stressed the first 'e') but just three, reinforcing the point by way of the Chinese characters on his invariant ties (the same pattern in mauve, rose, midnight blue and other shades of silk), which he pronounced something like "Lin-ba-leh." Many months later he translated them, "Mr. Forest of Incandescent Bliss."

Paul was partly Southern by extraction and had been raised in Republican China's governing circles, where his father Judge Linebarger was for decades a leading adviser to Sun Yat Sen; these two influences had given him the punctilio found only in traditional societies, and a sharp perception of racial and cultural differences. But these actually furthered his capacities for coming to know all kinds of men and women and to enter sympathetically into the hearts and minds of subject races, as readers of the Old Norstrilian stories will recognise in his treatment of the part-animal underpeople. The negress who came in as daily help at his house in Washington was a personal friend to Paul and to his wife Genevieve.

He was above medium height, terribly gaunt, bald, high-nosed, narrowing in the chin; he wore severe excellently-cut suits; his favourite hat was a soft black velour like an Italian film producer's. He was constantly ill, usually with digestive or metabolic troubles, and had to put up with repeated surgery, so that in middle age he always lived close to the vital margin. He took time off from a dinner party in Melbourne for a long drink of hydro-chloric acid, at which a guest, quite awed, remarked that Linebarger probably was a man from Mars. The Lord Sto-Odin in *Under Old Earth* had his vital output increased to the limit of his reserves by the one-twelfth turn of a screw at the nape of his neck while he rode down into the depths to find neo-Akhnaton. That expressed Paul's attitude to his pyhysical being—though sharp in sensory perception, and active, he seemed easily able to dispense with bodily substance. I do not hold with spiritualism, but if a typewriter were to start now reeling off a Cordwainer Smith story, my disbelief would not be nearly strong enough to surprise me.

In 1957, when Lord Lindsay was Acting Head of the Department of International Relations at the Australian National University in Canberra, Paul and Genevieve came as Visiting Fellows to work on their history of politics in Southern Asia. (When I visited him, very ill, in hospital late in June 1966, he talked of retiring to settle in this country. I certainly wish he had lived to do so.) His allegiance to Nationalist China, his cheerful derision of all forms of Communism, his support—despite hereditary Democrat commitment—of Eisenhower, for whom he campaigned, caused shock amongst the expectably Leftist academics, including us who are socialists of the R. H. Tawney persuasion. I think it fair to say that the current Red Guard phenomena in mainland China would have surprised him far less than it has the best Australian Sinologists. I remember him as a light-hearted and somehow comic duellist in political debates with eminent Australians then on the Left, e.g. John Burton. He conducted a series of seminars on the

principles of psychological warfare, which I think are here worthwhile enlarging upon.

After college and doctorate and plenty of travel, Paul Linebarger had rejoined his father who was propagandizing for the Kuomintang and for an American-Chinese entente. He learned much at that time about the sense of vocation in man to which revolutionary Communism, with its conviction of historical destiny, appeals. As he says in the 1955 edition of *Psychological Warfare* (a classic in that sinister subject, and shamefully entertaining), "There is no better way to learn the propaganda job than to be thoroughly whipped by somebody else's propaganda." From 1942 (against the Japanese) to 1954 (in Korea against the North and Communist China) as an officer of the U.S. Armed Forces, he practised the art of political seduction—or, as he once described it to some scandalized academic psychologists and social workers, "persuading the enemy to participate in group activity." I too was shocked; but in one of those seminars he said, offhandedly, that he would rather seduce a man from his allegiance than have to kill him, and posed a serious ethical problem for us: most traditional Protestants have been convinced by the Kantian version of the Protestant ethic, according to which the one thing more valuable than a man's life is his integrity. At the opposite corner from Paul Linebarger was the German officer, a Kantian, who escaping from Swiss internment in the Great War insisted on killing the guard, whom according to his fellow-officers he could much more readily have bribed, on the grounds, first, that it was his own duty to escape, and second, that he would injure the otherwise-irremovable guard less by taking his life than by taking his honour.

Paul himself, for his own self-respect, would have died sooner than surrender to a power that was evil; but he was persuaded of human frailty, and of the beneficent vitality that supports cowardice, as no Kantian could be. He knew professionally about brainwashing and about what he called, with no donnish inhibitions, "de-brainwashing." He knew that even without the aid of drugs or torture almost anyone will crack if worked on long enough by people trained in efficient "re-educating" techniques. He considered it the duty of a prisoner-of-war to hold out as long as he can, but almost solely because he thereby costs the enemy a maximum of brainwashers' man-hours. He also maintained that the most useful soldiers in such situations were those who harboured the least guilt for having eventually succumbed, and who maintained a certain humour regarding themselves; they were the soonest de-brainwashable, though no brainwashing treatment, he said, survives a few weeks' good feeding, freedom, and uncensorious welcome. In the contest between a sense of duty and the deeper emotional relations and dispositions, he would back the emotions any time. (See *Drunkboat* and particularly *Think Blue, Count Two*, where old Tiga-belas ensures out of his own yearning that the young girl who is to be projected over so many light-years is endowed with enough "Daughter Potential" to keep her safe.) For that disposition, the characteristic danger is sentimentality, which Paul did not succumb to. Instead, he cultivated a feeling for cats.

Some intelligent and sensitive people have found the cat stories, particularly *The Game of Rat and Dragon*, quite creepy. They seem to me less creepy than uncanny. The Linebargers' Washington house population of cats varied from seven to eleven, and they lived in all three and a half levels of it. Paul's communication with each of these cats, as individuals, suggested a distinct variety of ESP. It was as though one were watching a subtle and moody conversation amongst grandees who took care to respect each other's dignity. The house itself I cannot recall without a pang, for I mostly remember it with Paul tapping away upstairs at his typewriter, or as another feline presence in the bow-windowed living-room, flicking through some elegantly-bound work from the curve of bookshelves. Beyond the living-room arch, an oblong dining-room



displayed a New Year card, two or three feet by three or four feet, bearing in great Chinese characters greeting from Sun Yat Sen. In the basement were yards of bookshelves, some open and some encaged, and most devoted to science fiction. I have never seen so much of the latter in one place. This was also especially cattish country. In the attic were two collections of objects—the more predictable, firearms, notably pistols and revolvers including a lot of weapons dropped to World War II resistance movements; the less predictable, dozens of more or less antique typewriters. Genevieve's picture as a girl was in the living room, over where a fireplace would have been in Australia; and on a half-wall facing it at my last visit was a bronze sword from Persia, dated about 1400 BC—as Paul said, the age of Abraham. Paul's study upstairs was piled high with the manuscripts, first editions and scoria of his numerous writings.

Besides Cordwainer Smith's science fiction, which was a deliberately segregated aspect of P.M.A. Linebarger's life, and his work on psychological warfare, the house carried abundant traces of the researches of Professor Paul and Genevieve Linebarger on the politics of Southern Asia. After publishing three studies of Republican China (the latest in 1941, *The China of Chiang Kai-shek*), and suspending further academic operations until late in the Korean War, he wrote with D. Chu and A. Burks, *Far Eastern Government and Politics*. By his first 1957 visit to Australia, he was a Professor in the School of Advanced International Studies, in the Washington branch of the Johns Hopkins University, as well as a leading light in the Operations Research Office of the U.S. Army, on the reserve of which he was then a Lieutenant Colonel. Paul was proud of his Army connections, and it was fitting that he was buried with military honours in Arlington Cemetery. Academically, Central and South America became a field of interest only secondary to the politics of Eastern and Southern Asia. On their second Australian visit of 1965, he and Genevieve were revising their voluminous work on the latter subject, and Paul was also selecting contributors for a book of essays on "small wars," for which of course Africa and Southeast Asia are fruitful fields. They went off to Australian New Guinea for several weeks, and Paul produced a little memorandum on that country, very much in the character of his academic writing. It began with a geographic, ethnographic, economic and sociological sweep of background, concerned itself with questions of social development and internal and external security, illustrated by bizarre, comic and sometimes outrageous anecdotes, and concluded with recommendations which many Australian academics would find startling; for example, increased recruitment of Papuans and New Guineans into the Pacific Islands Regiment as a principal instrument of civilization, integration and development.

Most dons have a streak of scholarly wowerism, and in this country it is certainly strong. As I have said, Paul rather shocked the academics in 1957 by his Kuomintang party card (issued, he would tell them, earlier than Chiang Kai-shek's), his support for Eisenhower, his military commitments, the black humour of his lectures on psychological warfare, his academically unorthodox prose style, but above all, I think, by his uninhibited, unbridled intellectual imagination, which of course had free rein secretly as "Cordwainer Smith." That imagination clearly had native sources but was also liberated by psychoanalysis: Paul was given a training course as part of his psychological warfare work, and afterwards continued in analysis, once a week or so when not travelling, for fifteen years. It seems to have been a kind of inward exploration: he said there was always more to find out.

He must have been quite a patient. In the 'forties, before analysis, he had published two novels (the one I can remember the title of is *Ria*, New York 1947) under the pseudonym Felix C. Forrest. Both were written exclusively from the viewpoint of the heroine, and each involved its

herone's travelling from China through Japan to Central Europe, much as Paul had in youth. These too, I think, were explorations—of a possible alternative dimension of feminine self-experience which had not been given by Nature to the decidedly masculine Paul. He loved outlandish cultures: read avidly Professor W. E. Stanner's Oceania monograph on aboriginal religion, and much admired his friends among the Nisei (Japanese-Americans) in the Allied Forces in World War II Europe, for their traditionally Japanese fantasy, courage and honour.

Paul was a High Church Anglican. He and Genevieve went to Sung Mass on Sundays, and he said grace at all meals at home. The faith extended and shaped his powerful imagination, and gave his emotions their qualities. I believe that it explains much in the science fiction, and not merely the recurrence in his distant futures of the "Old Strong Religion." But he simply ignored contemporary religious movements, especially the secularizing ones directed to social problems. The God he had faith in had to do with the soul of man and with the unfolding of history and of the destiny of all living creatures—He is not concerned with the sharp practices of business and politics. In his personal life, Paul was a man of strong and deep feeling, with a gift for friendship that makes us regret him greatly. He was one of a half-a-dozen friends of mine who nourish one's imagination whenever we meet. Also he was a wonderful audience for one's formal academic work, very quick and perceptive, extremely intelligent, but utterly uninterested in chopping logic: in a remark of two sentences he could open up on an untouched aspect of one's subject. But one had to catch that remark as it came—he never laboured a point.

Paul is survived by two daughters of a first marriage, both in their twenties and highly gifted. He and Genevieve, who had once been his student, had no children, which was a pity as they have been so charming and interesting to ours. He died while being prepared for a difficult and possibly not very hopeful operation, at the age of fifty-four.

We often conversed about science fiction—his own and others'. Characteristically, he admired the craftsmanship and consistence of Arthur C. Clarke's Defoe-like tales, while feeling that there were vast dimensions of human experience that Clarke never touches. Cordwainer Smith's stories were a kind of important 'playing' (Paul was greatly impressed by Huizinga's *Homo Ludens*): through them are dotted irrelevant cryptograms, geographic allusions, and names transliterated from foreign languages. He once said that Cordwainer Smith was a "pre-Cervantean"—the stories are like cycles of medieval legends, without the Aristotelian beginning-middle-and-end of classic tragedy, and certainly without the same structure as transposed into the modern novel, which Cervantes began. They are legendary cycles of the future, rather than future history, and were meant to be connected with and consistent with each other on the legendary and not the historiographic model. They are not the logical development of some concept of social existence, like the main line of social-science fiction, but are evocations of the emotional and imaginative responses of people in bizarre social relationships and situations, whether the fighter-pilot relying upon telepathic communication with a cat, or the "gentleman-suicide" dancing into existence a religion of sorrow as well as of joy in a world where it was impossible for men to be anything but boringly happy.

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## background

1930: LINEBARGER OFFERED POST OF LEGAL ADVISER TO CHINA: Paul Linebarger, formerly legal adviser to Sun Yat Sen in the overthrow of the 4,000 year old dynasty in China, confirmed that he had been offered the legal advisership of the Chinese Council of State, and that he intended to accept. Linebarger, formerly U.S. District Judge

in the Philippines before linking his fate with Sun Yat Sen, said he had been offered the post by Chiang Kai-shek, head of the Council of State. The former judge, father of P.M.A. Linebarger, said he would accept the position if the Soviet, or left wing of Chinese politics, would assure him that the price on his head would be withdrawn.



P.M.A. Linebarger was born in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. He lived in Washington, D.C.; Hawaii; Monte Carlo; Baden Baden, Germany; and other cities. Linebarger entered George Washington University in Washington in 1929, at the age of 14. He attended Oxford University, North China University in Peking, and Johns Hopkins University, from which he received his Ph.D. in 1937, when he was 22. "I grew up in a household where soldiers of fortune were common visitors, where secret messages were received and dispatched, where men left black satchels full of money in the front hall, much to my mother's consternation." For six years he served as secretary to his father, the late Judge Paul M.W. Linebarger. Later he taught at Harvard and Duke before joining the army in World War II. While in the army he held the rank of Colonel, U.S. Army Reserve; he was attached to General Stillwell's staff, and was an expert in military intelligence.

# Cordwainer Smith »john foyster

There are few writers of science fiction of whom it can be said that their work needs no exposition. But Cordwainer Smith revealed himself so completely in his writing that any attempt to explain, to describe, is redundant. Nevertheless, because relatively little attention has been given to Smith's work, there are a few things which might profitably be said.

"I think that Cordwainer Smith is a visitor from some remote period of the future, living among us perhaps as an exile from his own era or perhaps just as a tourist, and amusing himself by casting some of his knowledge of historical events into the form of science fiction."

Thus Robert Silverberg, in *Amazing Stories*, June 1965. The feeling Silverberg expresses is surely one which most of those who have read Smith's stories have felt at one time or another. The utter strangeness of the words in our ears, and the easy familiarity with which Smith juggles them, give precisely this feeling of, almost xenophobia. Yet if we examine the stories a little more closely we find that Smith was very much a man of our time, and that his feelings and thoughts were very much those of his contemporaries.

In "The Dead Lady of Clown Town," "The Ballad of Lost C'Mell" and "A Planet Named Shayol," to choose only three stories from his collection *Space Lords*, he writes strongly and with great feeling of the racial problems which surrounded him in his own land. His love of Australia is revealed in the Rod McBan stories. It isn't fair to Silverberg, but there is only one way at least in which Smith shows himself very much tied to his time. His story "On The Storm Planet" deals with an attempt by Casher O'Neill to assassinate the turtle girl, T'Ruth. If one turns to page 38 in the February 1965 *Galaxy*, or to page 69 in *Quest of Three Worlds*, one finds, despite the interference of both editors,

the acrostic KENNEDY SHOT. Several pages later a second acrostic appears: OSWALD SHOT TOO. (Mr. Arthur Burns, who had it from the author, is responsible for this information.)

But not only was Cordwainer Smith very much a child of his time; he wrote what are in fact fairy stories. He suggests as much himself in his introduction to *Space Lords*. This helps to explain the language which Mr. Silverberg had so much trouble with.

A less well known story, "Angerhelm," reveals his ability to write a story set solidly in the present.

Despite Cordwainer Smith's obsession with our time and the condition of man in it, rather than because of his strangeness, he has been able to bridge many ravines, one of them the most important for science fiction. Now in fact, when these attributes are considered, the appearance of his stories at all is quite remarkable. It is even more remarkable if the circumstances under which he was first published are considered.

The year 1948 was a good one for science fiction readers. By that year the SF magazines had recovered from their wartime problems, which varied from shortage of worthwhile stories to shortage of paper, and were able to produce issues which contained by far the best SF written to that date. *Amazing Stories* and *Fantastic Adventures*, unfortunately, were not able to take part in this general revival of story quality, due to poor editing, but the other magazines managed rather well. *Astounding Science Fiction* continued to feature material of the high standard of former years, though perhaps the first signs of the coming decadence might have been detected by discerning readers. At this time *Planet Stories* published the better SF adventure yarns—far better than those it was to present in later years. *Startling Stories* and *Thrilling Wonder Stories* were well on the way to their peak, with *Xeno* and *Wart-Ears* almost forgotten; increases in pages and price went hand in hand with continually improving lead stories. *Famous Fantastic Mysteries* and *Fantastic Novels*, though really running short of the best material, continued to produce fine issues, well illustrated by Finlay and Lawrence. And even *Weird Tales* seems to have been worth reading at this time. In the near future, nineteen years ago, were the golden years of 1949 and 1950 when, along with many other magazines, *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction* and *Galaxy Science Fiction* were born. These two magazines, more than any others, were to change the face of science fiction.

But back in 1948 there was another event which, in its humble way, also changed the face of SF. In a small West Coast SF magazine called *Fantasy Book* (which thought so much of itself that it printed 'collectors' copies' on book paper) appeared the first story under the name Cordwainer Smith.

"Scanners Live in Vain" was in many ways unlike its contemporaries. The editors of the leading magazines were striving to rise above the needs of the pulp market and to publish non-pulp SF, but they were still working with pulp authors. The result was that although characters in stories were now carefully defined, they were hardly ever lifelike or human. It might be said that this was a period of inhuman humans. In many ways we are still in this period, despite the attempts of some editors to create a more literate SF.

Cordwainer Smith was the first writer to write science fiction which could possibly be accepted as 'Literature.'

I do not make this claim for him. His work does it for me, and for anyone who chooses to look. For me, it is enough to point out a few of the virtues of his writing. His imagination, his style, his freshness; these are so prevalent in his work that only line-by-line quotation could possibly do him justice.

I intend to make a few comments, first, on Cordwainer Smith's attitude towards the writing of science fiction, and then about his style.

Smith's approach to the revelation of the future is

almost unique. Most SF writers have difficulty in convincing readers of the reality of the future they create. Some ignore the problem, and hope the reader can accept their ideas. Others attempt to make them credible by explaining what is occurring, as it happens. For example, in *The Weapon Shops of Isher*, when Cayle Clark arrives at the gambling gallery, Van Vogt describes with care the mechanism by which the various chance machines work. Now this is not a matter of interest to Clark, since he can only sway luck in his favour, not physical events; the description is only there to lend verisimilitude to the novel. The reader becomes fascinated by this complex machine—which doesn't really do much more than toss a coin. By contrast, Smith reveals the workings of his world in a natural manner. In "Scanners Live in Vain," for instance, the nature of the scanners and the habermen is made plain to the reader by the recitation of a ritual or catechism which is vital both to the character Martel and to the plot. It is not something tacked on 'to make it all seem real.'

Robert Silverberg writes of Smith's world as being "so tiresomely familiar to him that he does not see the need to spell out the details." This is not quite true. The details of Smith's future are only made clear as this becomes necessary, and those who have read the bulk of his work will realize that it is filled with cross-references which help to give the whole a remarkable unity. Smith has achieved something that no other SF writer has: the ability to make his fiction read as truth, through the careful use of facts and explanations, or rather revelations.

In "The Lady Who Sailed the Soul," the technical details of the sailing ships are revealed only as the plot necessitates, yet the reader feels that it is all necessary and essential. In a regrettably oft-ignored story, "Think Blue, Count Two," Smith explores the concept of the sailing ships in greater depth, adding to the meaning and richness of "The Lady Who Sailed the Soul," but having a magnificence of its own in many ways unrivalled in his other stories.

In the recent story, "Under Old Earth," Smith starts a new section of his 'Future History' and here, at the beginning, the facts, the realities, feel slight and scrawny. But is not this the way history unfolds?—at first a skeleton, then, with study, the body takes on flesh and meaning, and finally the whole stands as a consistent unit. This would not make any part of the history wrong, or badly written: it is simply written at a different level of sophistication. Thus any given story by Smith may seem to contain things not seen, not explained. To see, to understand, one must refer to another, perhaps remote, story.

There are two levels on which the reality of Smith's future is intense: in the story itself, by virtue of the story, some fact or more is revealed, which the reader cannot fail to perceive; the contiguity of the stories lends a third dimension. Thus C'Mell, as revealed in, say, "Alpha Ralpa Boulevard," has an inner meaning and charm and intensity which may intrigue us. But is in the context of "The Boy Who Bought Old Earth," "The Store of Heart's Desire," and "The Ballad of Lost C'Mell" that we come to understand, or partly to understand, her role in Smith's future. Each image is a fractured one, just as each view of reality in Durrell's *Alexandria Quartet* is fractured.

Here, too, one must make the point (which Silverberg mentioned in his review) again, that every one of Smith's stories falls within the one series—called by some the "Instrumentality" series. There is not one Smith story which does not fit into this future. There is one story—"Angerhelm," I think—in which the connection is rather tenuous, but there is a link in theme with the later "No! No! Not Rogov!" Too many readers fail to make the necessary connections. But these references are often passing ones—just as they would be in 'real' history.

In this section I have attempted to reveal Smith's approach to the craft, to writing believable science fiction. He decided to take a consistent future and to develop this

slowly. Each story reveals something of the future—but only because this is necessary to the plot. I don't feel that it is necessary to investigate closely the consistency of Smith's creation from an historical point of view. I know that minor inconsistencies exist, but believe them to be of little importance by comparison with the overall scheme. They are probably no more than occasional lacunae resulting from the truncation of Smith's writing career, when he had really only started (*Space Lords*: epilogue).

Now let us examine a small portion of what might be called 'style.' Simply the way in which Smith starts and ends stories, compared with some other writers.

"His mother's hand felt cold, clutching his. Her fear as they walked hurriedly along the street was a quiet, swift pulsation that throbbed from her mind to his."

Thus A. E. Van Vogt commences his celebrated *Slan*. We are immediately in the middle of the story: telepathy is to play a part in it, and there is trouble.

"The idiot lived in a black and grey world, punctuated by the white lightning of hunger and the flickering of fear. His clothes were old and many-windowed."

Theodore Sturgeon starts his *More Than Human* in intense description. Feelings are rammed down our throats before we are properly seated.

"Were they truly intelligent? By themselves, that is? I don't know and I don't know how we can ever find out."

Robert Heinlein, in these opening words from *The Puppet Masters*, plunges us into a world of action. Some of his stories do not use this approach, preferring to start with a description of ordinary events. But something exciting is always happening.

"George, I wish you'd look at the nursery."  
"What's wrong with it?"

Thus Ray Bradbury, the 'poet' of SF, starts with action in "The Veldt."

"The stone door slammed. It was Cleaver's trade-mark: there had never been a door too heavy..."

Immediately, James Blish is pouring out characterization, in *A Case of Conscience*.

"Late on a day in 1959, three men sat in a room. Edward Hawks, Doctor of Science, cradled his long jaw in his outside hands and hunched forward with his elbows on the desk."

From here, in *Rogue Moon*, Algis Budrys goes on to develop his problem starkly, his plot sweating as profusely as that suffering young man.

"Everyone now knows how to find the meaning of life within himself. But mankind wasn't always so lucky. Less than a century ago men and women did not have easy access to the puzzle boxes within them. They could not even name one of the fifty-three portals to the soul."

Here is a slight change. Kurt Vonnegut, whose novels are always remarkable, has a slightly different attitude. Nevertheless, by the bottom of page one of *The Sirens of Titan*, we realize that this is just a prologue, and the action starts immediately.

Alfred Bester goes further. His prologue to *The Stars My Destination* is several pages long, and is designed to lull us into a relaxed mood, to prepare us for the tremendous action to follow. But when the prologue is over, the fireworks commence.

Now, by contrast, let's drift into a Cordwainer Smith 11

story:

"Later, much later, people forgot how Rod McBan had bought the whole Planet Earth without even knowing that he had done it..."

This is an action-packed start for Smith. Notice how he reveals the entire plot of "The Boy Who Bought Old Earth" in these opening lines, a practice not commonly found in this field of the snap ending. But Smith is more frequently even slower in his start. In "Think Blue, Count Two," he begins thus:

"Before the great ships whispered between the stars by means of planofforming, people had to fly from star to star with immense sails—huge films assorted in space on long, rigid, cold-proof rigging."

"Assorted" is probably a misprint—"assembled" would be a better word. But here Smith starts by going over a familiar road, coaxing the memories of the reader back into action.

"You already know the end—the immense drama of the Lord Jestocost, seventh of his line, and how the cat-girl C'Mell initiated the vast conspiracy."

In these opening words of "The Dead Lady of Clown Town" Smith is referring to events which have no causal connection with the story he is presenting. The words are simply there to make the reader feel at home.\*

Now let's look at the latter ends of those stories by better authors which I have quoted:

*Slan*: "It was at that point in his thought that Kier Gray's voice cut across the silence with the rich tones of one who had secretly relished this instant for years: "Jommy Cross, I want you to meet Kathleen Layton Gray... my daughter.""

Pow! To say the least.

*More Than Human*: "He stretched out his arms, and the tears streamed from his strange eyes. Thank you, he answered them. Thank you, thank you... And humbly, he joined their company."

Sturgeon is too good a writer to foul up an ending, but one does sit stunned.

*The Puppet Masters*: "We are about to trans-ship. I feel exhilarated. Puppet masters—the free men are coming to kill you! Death and Destruction!"

No comment needed, I think.

"The Veldt": "The lions were done feeding. They moved to the water hole to drink. A shadow flickered over Mr. McClean's hot face. Many shadows flickered. The vultures were dropping down the blazing sky. "A cup of tea?" asked Wendy in the silence."

In the context, this is horrifying.

*A Case of Conscience*: "Nevertheless, when Father Ramon Ruiz-Sanchez, sometime Clerk Regular in the Society of Jesus, could see again, they had left him alone with his God and his grief."

*Rogue Moon*: "Hawks was no longer paying any attention to him. He opened the note, finally, and read the blurred message with little difficulty, since it was in his own handwriting and, in any case, he knew what it said. It was: "Remember me to her."

*The Sirens of Titan*: "We're—we're going to Paradise now?" said Constant. "I—I'm going to get into Paradise?" "Don't ask me why, old

sport," said Stony, "but somebody up there likes you.""

No need to comment on any of these. Bester, in *The Stars My Destination*, allows the novel to fizzle out. The action, as I have suggested, is so immense that he has little choice.

But this was not Cordwainer Smith's choice. In places he does end his tale fairly conventionally (for him). But there are strongly contrasting examples.

"Under Old Earth": "She was one of the principal architects of the Rediscovery of Man and at her most famous she was known as the Lady Alice More."

"The Dead Lady of Clown Town": "In that year there was born the man who was to be the first Lord Jestocost."

"The Ballad of Lost C'Mell": "Jestocost lay back on his pillow and waited for the day to end."

In the first two cases the sentences are not just tacked on to soften the ending. They are, quite simply, the climax of the story. The third example is a little different: it is still a climax, a tremendous one, yet Smith is still able to write about his principal character.

And what of the general style of the stories? Well, we can refer to Smith's own introduction to *Space Lords*.

He is talking to children; in his stories he is producing history as fairy tales. This is explicit in one story, "The Lady Who Sailed the Soul," where the familiar old story is told by a mother to her daughter. But it is implicit in many of his verbal mannerisms, in other stories. This is not to demean, in any way, the intelligence or maturity of his readers; myths and legends have always been told in simple language, by father to son, and to do otherwise would spoil much of their magic.

Because of the casual approach to the opening of a story, and because of the child-like language used, Smith's technique could easily fail; in writing thus he walks on one side of the narrow gap between beauty and fatuity. But his foot is sure. As an indication of his masterly control—indeed, to use the two sentences by which I would be prepared to let his reputation stand or fall, I will quote the ending of a story sometimes forgotten: "The Burning of the Brain."

"Magno Taliano had risen from his chair and was being led from the room by his wife and consort, Dolores Oh. He had the amiable smile of an idiot, and his face for the first time in more than a hundred years trembled with shy and silly love."

Assuming that any other SF writer had written the story, it would have ended with the word "idiot." Go further; try to find any writer who would have finished the sentence more or less in that way. It would not be the same. For the words "and silly" are unique with Smith. In these words, these two words, he transcends the petty world of science fiction and reaches out into the world of reality. The words scream out of the page. The agony of space, introduced in "Scanners Live in Vain," comes down to Earth. Other SF writers, and not only Harlan Ellison, "have no mouth, and cannot scream."

If I emphasize Cordwainer Smith's separation from other writers as far as style is concerned, then I should equally make some distinction between his view of the future and that of his contemporaries.

Science fiction is a cumulative thing. A story written in 1967 will often rely on stories written much earlier for background. Heinlein's waldos, the law of robotics, various forms of hyperspace drives—these, and other things, are

\*Ford Madox Ford, in his novel *The Good Soldier*, makes masterly use of a 'weak' opening:

"This is the saddest story I have ever heard."

permanent fixtures in SF. But Smith did not borrow from earlier stories: his future is unique.

This is quite unusual. It is true that in some of the stories near to our time he relies upon present-day knowledge, but once he steps to the Rediscovery of Man all of his work is original. If anything, it is likely that other writers have begun to borrow from him.

Furthermore, his attitude to the future was rather different. Perhaps this is because he was telling fairy stories, but nevertheless he seems to have had a more responsible view of humanity. In SF in general two things happen to humanity. In the more common mode, nothing happens, or at least nothing discernible. The writing is so bad that we can see and understand nothing of the workings of society. Alternatively, the changes are revolutionary—for example, in Evan Hunter's "Tomorrow and Tomorrow." Smith writes of small changes, of characters behaving like human beings, or as nearly like human beings as they themselves are. His characters are responsible and moral. In many ways they reflect his own feelings.

Smith was serious in his intent. Very few writers of SF take their work seriously, and sometimes those who do are amongst the least of its practitioners. While being Cordwainer Smith was relaxation for Paul Linebarger, it was also very, very important.

His writing career was cut short, terribly short; as is this attempt to outline some of the virtues of his writing.

"We can admire more or less, but a sincere impulse, a little impulse toward admiration is always necessary, if we are to receive the phenomenological benefit of a poetic image. The slightest critical consideration arrests this impulse by putting the mind in second position, destroying the primitivity of the imagination." (Gaston Bachelard: *The Poetics of Space*.)

## John Foyster talks with Arthur Burns

A.B. Let me see if I can say some other things which would give you some sort of insight into his very strange kind of personality. Now before he wrote any SF he wrote a story called "Atomsk," which was the first sort of Russian nuclear spy story—and it got a very savage review, I remember, in a Russian journal. He also wrote under the name of Felix Forrest those two novels, both with the names of women as their titles. They are very interesting in that they are not only novels about women but are written as if by women. He'd done a lot of that kind of writing. However his main professional activity while he was still a fairly junior academic: he took a commission in the American army and became a psychological warfare bloke. It was in this capacity that I found him most scary. Psychological warfare is a very scary thing, and in his book called *Psychological Warfare*, written under the name P.M.A. Linebarger, is the classical text on the subject. In the course of this work he had a training psychoanalysis, and this explains more about the kind of personality and, in some senses, the style of his writing, than anything else.

The first impression people here had of him was that he was a real reactionary, a bit tough and a bit bloody minded and that kind of thing. He was here for the

whole of 1957 and he took on a lot of the academic left wing, and quite a lot of the non-academic left wing, and made lots of speeches about China, wrote a number of articles, and that kind of thing. But you had to get to know him to realize that a great deal of this was simply the uninhibited expressions of aggression that you get from people who've been analysed. In fact, he was in many ways an extremely humane man. In his stories one sees this, incidentally, in the sort of allegories he was constantly writing. For instance, in his stories about the Instrumentality like "The Boy Who Bought Old Earth" and that kind of thing, and the very last one, that very queer one, "Under Old Earth," the underpeople keep on coming out—these animals which have been made over into human beings. Now this is a sort of social allegory for the American Negro.

He was an Anglo-Catholic, a very high one by American standards, and his religion in a strange way meant a great deal to him—in a funny way, one might even say loosely. Often he was unserious about it. Once he was very ill in Mexico—and, by the way, he was a man who was ill practically every year of his life; he'd had dozens of operations, and that was one of the reasons why he died so very young—well, when he was ill in Mexico, he said he thought he was pretty bad and that the only thing to do was to invoke the Virgin Mary, because Mexico was her territory. This was very much his attitude.

He grew very fond of Australia when he was here in 1957, and again last year (1965) for a few months. When he was here last year he went up to New Guinea with his wife, and spent about two months up there, and wrote, in my view, the best paper that's yet been written on the development of New Guinea. But it was an extremely "wild" kind of paper. . . . His analysis was a very complex one, and it wasn't very popular because he was saying some of the things that neither the Australian Government nor Australian officials really want to have said. . . . It was characteristic of him that in no more than a couple of weeks he was talking Pidgin without trouble: he was very quick.

His liking for Australia comes out in the Old Norstrilia stories. Once again it was characteristic of him—it was very much a part of his SF writing—that all of his stories, in some sense or another, were oblique comments on contemporary politics and society. Take for example an early story of his, "Mark Elf." Paul had lived for some time in Germany, and there were some things about Germans that he admired, but there were many things which he thought extremely dangerous; and this sort of Gothic romance—because that was really what "Mark Elf" was—was meant to be a comment, as it were, on the strain of barbaric Gothic nationalism that can always come out in Germans.

He was never one to attempt to draw a terrific moral—I mean, any morals in his stories were all concealed. They were meant to amuse, to be fun; they were something he did because he liked it. He called himself a Pre-Cervantean. By this he meant that if the European novel—a connected story dealing with a group of persons, having a beginning, a middle and an end, and that kind of thing—was started by Cervantes with *Don Quixote*, then he was a Pre-Cervantean in the sense that his stories were more like medieval stories—more like parts of a legend or cycle, such as Malory collected in *The Death of Arthur*.

J.F. This is evident. Why do you think he chose this method and made his stories consistent?

A.B. He made them consistent in the sense that he gave them a common background, but he didn't make them continuous.

J.F. There are a lot of internal inconsistencies.

A.B. That is true. I don't think it's too pretentious to say that he had a sort of view of mankind and of human nature which he saw as something that was changing and developing in a most complex kind of way, and I think that he saw it as going through certain stages. The period of Instrumentality, for instance, is really a period of considerable human decadence, brought on by the perfection of something that he often spoke about as having already developed in the Twentieth Century—something that he called the Pleasure Revolution. One of the things that interested him about Australia when he was here in 1957, in contrast to the U.S.A., was that the Pleasure Revolution had not yet struck this country. I don't know what he'd say now; he didn't really get around amongst the young people in particular very much when he was here last year. But on his first visit he said that in Australia people were still accustomed to doing without, whereas in America affluence had got to a point where it really was perfectly possible for people to avoid discomforts—or rather, use drugs to avoid discomforts—and use their affluence to get what they wanted. He felt that this did inevitably produce a certain sort of slackening of the human drive and dynamism. And of course it is in this context that the analogy of the underpeople is very interesting. . . . As to his general view of man and of human nature, he had a variety of types of character in his stories. He had the Go-Captains, who are adventurous and expansive, men of action, and men like Casher O'Neil, men with initiative.

J.F. What is the connection of Casher O'Neil with Egypt?

A.B. Oh, I gather Casher O'Neil is, if transliterated into Arabic, the name of a street in Cairo. The planet Mizer is obviously Egyptian. But he picked a man with an Irish name because he wanted the idea of an adventurer. You remember that in "The Storm Planet" he is initiated into Christianity at a time when all religions are sort of contraband. I think the Egyptian context there is simply a vehicle: I wasn't aware of any kind of allegory. He never worked his allegories out; there was never any deliberate attempt in his stories to say, I have now proposed to write an allegory; what he did was to allow, for instance, his impressions of Australia to work on his imagination, and to produce a story which he wrote for fun.

But as well as these men of action he also had his Administrators, the Instrumentality, those people who were the natural rulers; he had the underpeople; he also had, every now and then, the kind of romantic individual character. Now, "Alpha Ralpa Boulevard" contains a great deal of literary sophistication, and that one is a French romance, in a sense a comment on French literature and character.

J.F. I will admit that I had more trouble with it than any other story. Whereas with one of his more 'ordinary' stories you can pick up things very quickly, the Abbadingo and those things pass me pretty easily. . . . What would be the reason for his increased output in recent years? More leisure time, or . . . ?

A.B. Partly, being more and more sick. He was confined to bed a great deal and he'd often write these stories when he couldn't get up and lecture—that kind of thing. He and his wife were writing a great political history of South East Asia and when he wasn't well he had to put that and his lecturing and his army work aside, so he wrote more and more SF. He had written a great deal of other things, and you must remember there was this "Atomsk" story and two other novels, and he was a man who wrote naturally and very easily. He'd sit at his

typewriter and just knock it out. I've never seen anyone compose so fast when he had it on him.

J.F. This might help to explain the sick sheep of Norstrilia. The sheep were permanently sick and . . .

A.B. Now I hadn't thought of that . . .

J.F. They had to be sick to produce this drug.

A.B. I think he felt that there were some kinds of sickness that were not along the lines he suffered from that did produce at once a sort of grossness, but also something that only came out . . . this, of course, is a main theme of romantic literature and he was in that sense very much a romantic.

... He had a very quick mind, but at the same time a deep one; that is, he'd read something or listen to what you had to say, and he'd make a comment which indicated . . . it would be a very deep comment—he was very fast—and he'd never elaborate it. I'm the kind of person who builds up a kind of complex structure; he never played that game at all—he wasn't a systematic thinker. In some senses, once he'd made his point, there was no sense in elaborating it; he went on to something else. That's why I think his stories just fall short of being major literature, in the sense in which, as you'd say, Wells or Orwell . . . He didn't have that kind of consecutive mind. On the other hand, the penetration of his imagination took him a long way, and I often used to think after having a conversation with him, well, what's the point really of being terribly systematic and rather pedantic about getting all your structures down, when you can fit it all up in this kind of way, with these kind of deep insights that he had.

J.F. This is what I have felt, too. Most SF I read doesn't impress me very much, but the more I read Cordwainer Smith the more obvious it is that he's close to being major literature.

A.B. Yes, but of course he never bothered about his prose—that was the other thing. When he revised he would enrich his story, he'd bring in more and more detail, he'd cut out some things, he'd try to give the story more of this sense of looking at a particular society—looking at a whole complex, personal, social, and indeed historical and religious situation—but he never fussed around with his sentences. . . .

Over the years he developed this picture of the succession of human society; beyond the stage of the Instrumentality there's what he called the Lords of the Afternoon. This is when human society has reached even beyond this kind of thing and is not exactly the decadence of the Pleasure Revolution—it's got beyond that—but it's a bit . . . odd. You know, it's . . . There are certain limits to this sort of thing and despite his romanticism he did feel that there were some kind of limits: there were some things that you transgressed at your peril.

J.F. I gather from this that there are more stories to come?

A.B. There are quite a few. He used to work on them, three or four stories at a time, and often there would be an interval of six or seven years between the first version of a story and the final revision, and I would think that most of the ones that there are at the moment are still in this incomplete stage.

J.F. There haven't been any published about the Lords of the Afternoon.

A.B. No. The Lords of the Afternoon was his name for a set of stories that he was talking about, and I think that "Under Old Earth" was one of these.

J.F. It's obviously the start of a series, and it must have been finished in the year before he died, at least.

A.B. Yes.

J.F. What were his feelings about SF in general?—the fans, other writers . . .

A.B. He said that he had actually feared getting in with fans. It wasn't that he disliked them; he said, "They make me nervous." He felt that if he became known as . . . He knew a couple of the SF writers—quite well and quite personally; he would talk to them, but he never wanted to become part of that kind of thing. He was a very difficult man in that sense in any way to pin down. He saw no reason why he should become a part of anything, any kind of organization. In that way his membership of the Episcopalian Church worked in very well because, as he said, he didn't have to go along and hear some damn fool clergyman lecturing on politics or something which he knew nothing about.

As far as other SF writers were concerned, he read in the way of opposites. He was very strange about Arthur C. Clarke. I mean, sometimes he would say, "That man does not understand a single thing," by which he meant about people. On the other hand he would say that there is a certain classic kind of SF writing, and nobody does it better than Clarke; that, in a way, that's the way the stuff ought to be written. He could admire somebody like Clarke who is in the tradition of Defoe; somebody who tells you everything, who has worked everything out in an enormously complex manner, with attention to scientific detail and all that kind of thing, and who has a classical beginning and end and no loose ends. He thought very highly of this kind of writing. On the other hand it was exactly the opposite to the vision which he had.

J.F. Would he have expressed any opinion about Robert Heinlein?

A.B. Yes; he thought well of him, but thought that he often went astray. Some of his stories were nowhere near as good as others. He liked some of Van Vogt's work, and he confessed to enjoying Fritz Leiber. He felt that in a way some of Leiber's work was very much like his own way of thinking—but he was never as much of a Nietzschean as Leiber, nor was he, in a sense, as hard a man. There's a streak of very considerable hardness in Leiber; it's quite impressive in some ways but it's also very tough, and Paul wasn't tough in that way.

J.F. The remarkable thing about him is that he's tremendously genuine in his stories, and this contrasts so very much with his work.

A.B. I think that's true, but I also think that one of the clues to this is that he really did feel psychological warfare to be a more humane way, and he was not in the least pretentious about this work. He gave four lectures on the subject at the University here, and they were the funniest lectures I've ever heard.

. . . He had a great sympathy for the Japanese. In the Italian campaign in the Second World War he worked closely with some Nisei, and he got closer to them than any other anglo-saxon type I've ever struck. He never tried to make them anything that they weren't, but he did admire qualities that they had. Other people might have found them strange and uncomfortable. He spoke very highly of one chap who had, I think, volunteered as an American soldier, and his Japanese family went through this rather strange ritual Japanese apparently do when a soldier goes off to war: he's dead, and they have a sort of ritual burying. They wash him with rice spirit and that kind of thing—in other words, you're dead. And he said the reason why these Nisei were so incredibly brave was that every morning they'd wake up and say well, I should be dead! And he had an insight into those kind of characters.

## background

DR. P.M.A. LINEBARGER AWARDED HONORARY DOCTORATE: In tribute to his and his father's 59 years of service to the Chinese Republic, Dr. Paul M.A. Linebarger, professor of Asiatic Politics at the Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies, was awarded the honorary degree of Doctor of Civil Law by the National Chengchi University on Taiwan. Because of the national emergency caused by the withdrawal of Republican forces to the island of Formosa, all honorary degrees ceremonies had been halted. Due to the esteem in which he was held Dr. Linebarger was first to be honored when the practice was resumed. One of the few scholars who personally knew Sun Yat Sen, founder of the Chinese Republic, Dr. Linebarger was the author of *The Political Doctrines of Sun Yat Sen*, published by the Johns Hopkins Press in 1937.

亞國約  
洲際翰  
政問霍  
治題金  
教研斯  
授學大  
院學

林  
白  
樂

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I Am Joan &  
I Love You  
»sandra miesel

There had to be men and women saints of all kinds. And today . . . we ought perhaps to have saints of yet another kind.

—Charles Peguy, *The Mystery of the Charity of Joan of Arc*

Jehanne la Pucelle, Jeanne d'Arc, St. Joan has been a perennially popular artistic subject from Villon to Bresson. Cordwainer Smith believed his 1964 novella, "The Dead Lady of Clown Town," to be the first science fictional adaptation but the merit of his story lies not with its novelty but with its intrinsic beauty of conception and style.

His saint is distinctly 'of another kind.' To begin with, she is a dog. Or more precisely, she is the underperson D'Joan, a genetically modified dog, human in form but barred from human status by unbreachable walls of law and custom. The Lords and Ladies of the Instrumentality of Man rule the known universe 15,000 years hence. Their

bloodlessly rational benignity decrees a safely bland existence for men: "They live in a stupor and they die in a dream." But birds, dogs, mice, elephants, cats, snakes, cattle, goats, monkeys, and other animals molded into underpeople exist for society's difficult and dangerous tasks. "When underpeople got sick, the Instrumentality took care of them—in slaughterhouses. It was easier to breed new underpeople than repair sick ones."

For a hundred years outlaw underpeople hiding in Clown Town on Fomalhaut III have been listening to messages of hope proclaimed by a computer imprinted with the personality of the dead Lady Panc Ashash and a "non-adjusted man" called the Hunter, an animal executioner by profession. The Lady and the Hunter promise that someday a dog girl named D'Joan will come to save them. So the community rears one D'Joan after another. Each is ready to accept her role as "bridge-to-man" whenever Elaine, the "mislplaced witch" arrives to complete the initiation.

After the ravages of the Hundred Years' War and the Black Death fifteenth century Frenchmen are as desperate as underpeople. They, too, await the virgin promised by legend who will restore their country. The saints who summon St. Joan to her destiny are SS. Michael the Archangel, Catherine of Alexandria, and Margaret of Antioch. The latter two, virgins supposedly martyred in the persecution of Diocletan, enjoyed immense popularity in the Middle Ages but were purged from the Roman Catholic list of saints in 1969 on grounds of dubious historicity. St. Joan's helpers correlate with D'Joan's only in function. Lady Panc Ashash is wise like St. Catherine, the patroness of scholars. (Her official post, Travelers' Aid, might fit the spiritual role of any saint.) The Hunter who only kills with love is, like St. Michael, a foe of dragons. The dragon is also the emblem of St. Margaret, symbolizing the temptations she overcame. St. Margaret was invoked in cases of difficult childbirth which approximates Elaine's role in preparing for D'Joan's emergence.

St. Joan sets forth equipped with armor, weapons, blessed banners, and the counsel of her "voices"; D'Joan is imprinted with the fused personalities of her mentors. St. Joan is wounded during her first action, raising the siege of Orleans. D'Joan likewise is wounded during her first action, raising the siege mentality of her fellow underpeople. Joan—the animal prefix should be dropped henceforth—convinces them of their equality with human beings and their duty to persuade their human brothers to accept them. Both heroines have short public careers: St. Joan roughly a year, Joan six minutes. No doubt this is a tribute to the efficiency of a technically advanced society.

No treachery is involved in Joan's apprehension. Instead it is the Instrumentality which is betrayed in a sense when a squad of robot policemen destroy themselves rather than fire on Joan and her companions. Human soldiers are called in to slaughter the underpeople. That equally brutal scenes have been played out century after bloody century does not blunt the horror of these paragraphs. But the new breed of *flores martyrum* dies loving and blessing its murderers. Beasts become men while men become beasts.

Both Joans are tried before hostile, prejudiced judges but Cordwainer Smith does not attempt to duplicate the historical trial in any detail. Joan could be any unjustly accused prophet: "But it is the duty of life to find more than life, and to exchange itself for that higher goodness . . . My body is your property, but my love is not. My love is my own, and I shall love you fiercely while you kill me." Her judges might be any insensitive defenders of the status quo: "They were maintaining established order . . . and they were distressed to see themselves portrayed as casual, cruel men when in fact they were nothing of the sort." So it is only appropriate that Lord Limaono's sly question "What is a 'miracle?'" echoes Pilate's infamous, "Quid est veritas?" or that Joan's

response to death threats, "If you light a fire today, my Lord, it will never be put out in the hearts of men," paraphrases the last words of English Protestant martyr Hugh Latimer. Her 'war of love' resembles the non-violence of Gandhi and Dr. Martin Luther King. She forces opponents to confront her and thereby begin to implicitly acknowledge her humanity.

Both Joans are executed precipitously and in the same manner. The brief suppression of Joan's reason at the stake corresponds to the attempts of St. Joan's enemies to trick her into betraying her mission. St. Joan dies calling the name of Jesus. Joan the dog-saint dies proclaiming her love of all beings. The spectators' grief, the accusation that her death was a hoax, and the authorities' grisly demonstration of its reality are the same on Fomalhaut III as in France. Both saints received immediate popular acclaim but it takes centuries for St. Joan to be canonized and for the underpeople to acquire legal rights.

But most important of all, the two Joans' lives have the same sort of catalytic impact. The French and the underpeople are set upon the path to freedom. The poet Alain Chartier, a contemporary of St. Joan says of her: "She raised [all] spirits towards the hope of better times." To inject hope into the situation is to transform it irreversibly. To proclaim the message of liberation is to initiate its fulfillment. (*Empire Star*, Samuel R. Delany's palindromic parable about the emancipation of a slave race, is based on the same proposition.)

"The Dead Lady of Clown Town" is like a Picasso rendition of a Cranach portrait—a fusion of traditional and modern images. It retells St. Joan's story in a creative yet wholly faithful way through the judicious selection of authentic details and witty improvisation. The novella's structure is anecdotal, non-linear. "You already know the end," it opens, "But you do not know the beginning." (This is literally true—"The Ballad of Lost C'Mell" set in a later era had been published two years earlier.) The story's imaginary far future audience relates to Joan exactly the way actual contemporary readers relate to St. Joan: with familiarity unencumbered by much data. The narrator, speaking hundreds of years after Joan's trial, repeatedly explains the meaning of events in the plot before they occur. His asides are studded with background information, historical critiques, and artistic judgments on the myriad poems, songs, paintings, opera, and dramas spun around Joan. For believability, Joan is not used as a viewpoint character. Instead Elaine serves as her doublet. Her origins, call, and commitment are depicted in much more detail than Joan's to provide a point of identification for the reader, a lens for viewing heroic experience. Overall these techniques convey the feeling of a legend that has permeated an entire civilization's consciousness.

As might be expected, the universality of St. Joan's mission is underscored with basic mythology in Cordwainer Smith's account. An analysis in terms of Joseph Campbell's monomyth would be fascinating, had we but world enough and time. For the present it suffices to list a few motifs: entry into the Other World, resistance followed by acceptance of the summons to glory, initiation, name-change, physical transformation, wounding/healing, a new birth for individual and community, and emergence from the labyrinth. Interestingly, the hierosgamos celebrated by Elaine and the Hunter is the prequel to the heroic deed instead of the sequel as is customary. The survival of the lovers and the birth of the first Lord Jestocost are pledges for the underpeople's future victory.

The author also inserts additional Christian imagery beyond what pertains to St. Joan. He indulges his well-documented delight in word play and allusion with: Fomalhaut (brightest star in the constellation of the Southern Fish), Waterrocky Road (recalling the miraculous rock that gave water to the wandering Israelites, later



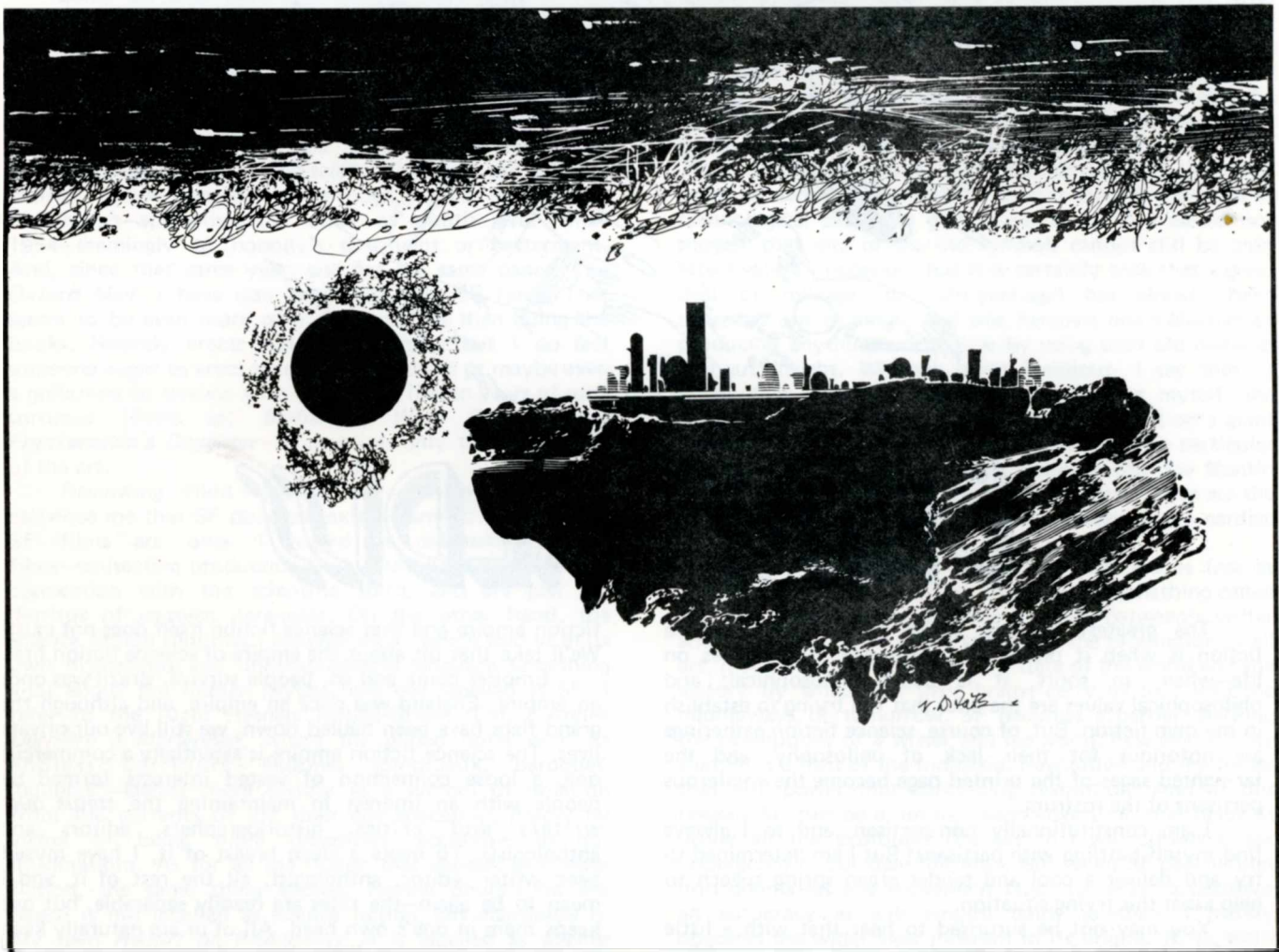
considered a foreshadowing of baptism), Clown Town (the clown traditionally symbolizes Christ, cf. Harvey Cox's *Feast of Fools* and the popular musical *Godspell*), the Brown and Yellow Corridor (an appropriate color scheme for a catacomb masquerading as a sewer), and the Englok door ("Enter by the narrow gate.").

Given this complex of associations, the hints that the underpeople retain knowledge of Christianity that humans have lost, and the Hunter's Trinitarian invocation, "In the name of the First Forgotten One, in the name of the Second Forgotten One, in the name of the Third Forgotten One," then the three voices which speak during the "daring sharing," the telepathic blending of Joan, Elaine, and the Hunter must be interpreted as a theophany accompanied by visions of Pentecostal fire and baptismal water. Crawlie, the buffalo woman, is satanic in name and pride. She refuses salvation, the possibility of becoming a real person. Therefore she does not find her life by losing it in joyful martyrdom.

Thus "The Dead Lady of Clown Town" is as Christian in values expressed as in subject matter. It is a grand romance of redeeming Love laying siege to a loveless world and patiently dying to conquer it.

It is nevertheless an extraordinary fact, it is one of the greatest proofs, it is one of the greatest tokens of God's goodness that there should be for all that; . . . as many martyrs as executioners; . . . as many victims as required; . . . executioners will grow weary before victims and martyrs.

—Peguy, *The Mystery of the Charity of Joan of Arc*



# SCIENCE FICTION AS EMPIRE



## BRIAN ALDIS

The greatest pleasure to be derived from science fiction is when it presents us with new perspectives on life—when, in short, it is being philosophical; and philosophical values are the ones that I'm trying to establish in my own fiction. But, of course, science fiction gatherings are notorious for their lack of philosophy, and the far-sighted sages of the printed page become the vociferous partisans of the rostrum.

I am constitutionally non-partisan, and so I always find myself battling with partisans! But I am determined to try and deliver a cool and tender green spring speech to help assist this trying situation.

You may not be surprised to hear that with a little careful thought I soon perceived what was troubling everyone. I realized simultaneously that there is a science

fiction empire and that science fiction itself does not exist! We'll take that bit about the empire of science fiction first.

Empires come and go, people survive. Brazil was once an empire; England was once an empire, and although the grand flags have been hauled down, we still live our private lives. The science fiction empire is essentially a commercial one, a loose connection of vested interests formed by people with an interest in maintaining the *status quo*; writers and critics, historiographers, editors and anthologists. To make a clean breast of it, I have myself been writer, editor, anthologist, all the rest of it, and I mean to be again—the roles are readily separable, but one keeps them in one's own head. All of us are naturally keen to preserve our own little piece of territory against all newcomers, not realizing that this is an illusory goal. One

way that we do this is to pretend that science fiction is perfect as we have made it and must not be altered; this keeps out new writers, who naturally have their own ideas about what is what.

But change is the only constant. You can't keep the competition down.

Like Lord Byron, you wake one morning and find yourself famous. You wake the next morning, and there's a strange new name on all the billboards. The future is raving at the windows of the present. It is useless to talk about surviving and preserving the prose and the forms and even the ideas of the thirties and forties. The seventies are coming up, and you go down with them or drown. Look ahead and leave ancestor worship to vain ideologists.

None of us in the science fiction empire owns science fiction. Even our own stories are torn from us as we write them down—fathered, yes, but immediately fatherless. They don't become part of some imaginary palace guard—they vanish, or else they grow in the minds of others. They change as do the times. We may be creators ourselves but it is the times that are in labour. The great breakers of *transience* and destruction bust against our imaginations like those unhurried waves on Copacabana.

If there's one thing I enjoy, it's a couple of stiff propositions, as the actress said to two bishops. I want to convince you that there is not only a science fiction empire, but that there is no such thing as science fiction. Admittedly, there is a sort of imaginary muse, a fickle jade called SF. Yet, who can define her? There are many mutually conflicting definitions, as there are of the Martians, and like the Martians SF does not exist. She is a product of the imagination!

Some of you have the distinct advantage of not knowing me well, and may ask who I am to attempt to prove the nonexistence of SF. Well, I have my critical qualifications, apart from those that I enjoy as a writer, and I will name two of them since I did promise to confine myself more or less to anecdotes. I believe I can claim to conduct the oldest established SF review column in the world appearing in a non-science-fictional professional journal. I have been delivering rough justice—and I stress the *rough*—approximately once a month ever since 1954—seemingly to nobody's detriment or betterment. And, since that same year, and for the same paper, *The Oxford Mail*, I have also been reviewing SF films. That seems to be even more of a dead-end job than doing the books. Nobody erects statues to critics; but I do feel someone ought to erect at least a small tomb or maybe even a guillotine to anyone who can sit out fifteen years of such tortuous [films as] *Barbarella*, *Wasp Woman*, and *Frankenstein's Daughter*—to mention only the distaff side of the art.

Reviewing films and books, writing stories, all convince me that SF does not exist. Many of the so-called SF films are ones I regard as debauched horror films—nauseating productions like *The Fly*—which have no connection with the scientific spirit, and are just the detritus of western paranoias. On the other hand, the science fiction film that I enjoyed most, which told us in its own mysterious and unparaphrasable language something vital about the human psyche, was not labelled as SF; I refer to the Alain Resnais Robbe-Grillet film, *L'Année Dernière à Marienbad*, where the gilded hotel with its endless corridors—"énormes somptueux, baroques, lugubres"—stands more vividly as a symbol of isolation from the currents of life than any spaceship, simply by virtue of being more dreadfully accessible to our imaginations. As for all the fiction that appears as science fiction, the same thing applies. Neville Shute's *On the Beach* is not labelled as science fiction, but manifestly is. My own *Report on Probability A* is labelled as science fiction and manifestly isn't. And even the writing that is SF

and is so labelled, often suffers from that label. And the label is meaningless. To consider this label—SF—a philosophical approach similar to Wittgenstein's for instance, may help us. SF has to be a vague term in order to cover everything; and so it applies to nothing. We have a parallel case with the label "Game." What is a game? Games include two small boys chasing each other 'round a barrel, chess, strip-poker, baseball, shuttlecock, table tennis, coin-spinning, polo, wei'chin, and Twenty Questions. By the time you have a definition broad enough to cover all the components, you are left with no viable definition, and so it is with SF. It cannot be defined; therefore you can't contain it because it will continuously seek a deep form and maintain a new form and its virtue lies precisely in that. Directly we face this fact, of course life becomes easier and happier. You cannot make even a paper empire out of something that does not exist. I admit it makes life rather more difficult for people like Fred Pohl who edit magazines, but for the writers, how much nicer! how much freer!

Once writers realize that SF does not exist, they can write their own thing, can attempt to satisfy themselves instead of bowing to some vague set of external standards; they can be free of all the trappings of the medium that, to our mind, have become stale—clichés that no longer work, even in the hands of the masters. Some of these clichés, like the reporter who turns up at the end of the SF film and says, as he surveys the smouldering carcasses of the giant tyrannosaurs, "There are secrets in Nature with which man should not meddle," are things we laugh about. But other clichés, like spaceships that travel faster than light and robots that can't be distinguished from humans and telepathy, are still taken very seriously. People still write stories about telepathic robots on spaceships which can't be told from humans. But I suggest that all writers write more effectively and more freshly if they write from themselves and coin their own imagery. The corridors of a gigantic hotel may indeed be more effective in suggesting human isolation than the corridors of a giant spaceship.

I once wrote about a giant spaceship myself, in a novel called *Nonstop* (or *Starship*). I used it then as a symbol of technological processes getting out of hand. I would not suggest that any of the old symbols cannot still be used effectively on occasion; but it is certainly true that a great deal of mileage (or light-year-age) has already been squeezed out of them, and one hampers one's chances of producing anything worthwhile by using such old material without insight. Without being invidious, I say that, it seems that now I'm incapable of defending myself, the Nebula winning *Rite of Passage*, which was set on a giant spaceship, well exemplified the staleness of this particular location. What is wrong about locations like the Manski Island, Anguilla, Vietnam, Berlin, the Negev? Those are the places where next week is already flustering the cardiac nerve of today.

If writers do their own thing, they are as free as anyone can be. The very idea that there is something called SF is an impeding one, because it stands between a writer and the greater thing which stimulates the production of all art, including SF: i.e. the current state of the world and the victory by which our little brains carry us over into the middleways of tomorrow. SF becomes a barrier, baffling the perceptions of a writer and his world. Few would deny that SF is a fruit of the Industrial Revolution and the forces that still power that continuing revolution. And in this respect SF can be a useful, imaginative tool, that helps us probe all the profound changes that we, ourselves, are undergoing in our own lifetimes. But when SF degenerates into dogma—as any movement tends to—when it becomes an autocracy—as any empire tends to—then it merely obscures the wider view inherent in its origins. H. G. Wells possessed that wider vision. We have to rediscover it as

individuals—in an idiom, of course, suited to our times and not to H. G. Wells’.

As an Englishman, I am fortunate in having enjoyed a wide range of vicissitudes. When I was a child, Red on the map was a phrase denoting not the Communist sixth of the world but the British fifth. I have seen an empire fall, fade like the snows of yesterday. Nothing is permanent. American SF of the cult variety is amusing—its obsession with beautiful empresses and the colony world, the galactic empires, and all the toy romance of conquest inevitably rings a little false to one who was stoned out in Bombay the month before India achieved independence. All things connect, and the most powerful connections are often over the least pretentious. I’ll give you an illustration. In 1964, I came under a pressure in my life when everything seemed to be at a standstill. To escape it, I bought a secondhand car and drove with the girl who is now my wife to Yugoslavia, where I stayed for six months; we drove about enjoying the scenery. Later, I wrote a book about it—*Cities on Stone* which is illustrated by the photographs Marge took on our way. When we were down in Macedonia we were strolling through the market of a small town, one fine and sizzling day. There were donkeys for sale, pots, combs, rope, and primitive saddles, chairs, fruits with wasps in them, tired-looking vegetables and half-dead hens, cheap Greek and East German trinkets—the usual sort of thing.

At one stall, I came on a pair of shoes, made very simply of a wooden sole with a strap cut from a car tire, and it was exactly like a pair I’d bought many years before in Sumatra. There was the very footprint of time. The quarter-century between those two pairs of shoes healed invisibly in my mind, and I was back on the Equator in those turbulent days when another empire was folding up. I refer to the Dutch overseas empire. I was then a soldier in the Indian Army, as I told you: I was one of a polyglot rabble sent to disarm the Japanese Army that had been holding Sumatra, and return them to Japan. Our orders were also to reinstate the Dutch in power. But that was in 1946, and we found that the old world had crumbled, giving place to a new—not perhaps better, not perhaps worse—new Soekarno’s cry of *Merdeka!* And, indeed, his snipers as well were heard all over the land because the Indonesians, free of the Japanese, wanted to be free of everyone. And the British, who were then losing their grip on India, were certainly not going to battle for another power’s retention of a bit of an Eastern empire. So we all got out and left Soekarno to it.

This I remembered looking at the pair of shoes in the Macedonian market place. Yugoslavia itself is a patch of older empires—the Ottoman empire in the South, the Habsburg’s up in the North. Our planet is richer and more complex than any imagined world could be. As for the Macedonians, they still recall the great bygone days of Alexander, and dream of one day becoming a separate nation again. Tomorrow’s news is built of the ground-down bones of yesterday’s empire.

All this is not as far from SF as you may suppose. It is certainly not far from the sort of fiction I am trying to write. For stresses increase, empires tumble, memories remain—all that is characteristic of our century, amid the havoc and splendour of which the human experience itself still endures and thrives. My personal response to our times is to see in them not only the shadows of the future but all the multitudinous twilights of the past. The 20th century is as yet little more than an annex to the 19th—though there are signs that this may change, even as dawn comes over the arctic waste. The human experience is far more interesting and complex than most SF writers allow.

The people who have had so much to say about the role of SF have often stressed the need for an understanding of science before life can begin to make sense. But there is also an older claim to be met; the claim

that history must be understood before life begins to make sense. And I would like to make a similar claim for art; but at least it is unarguable for the present that we are a part of the inexorable processes of history and must draw from them before we begin to make sense as writers. By now this young sybil muse of SF has a history of some decades as Sam Moskowitz certainly reminds us, and it gets in our way on the wider panoramas of history. I feel that SF is boring; it is only the work of individual writers which is interesting: never look back, burn down the vegetation, move on! . . . Writers should cultivate the art of themselves, and practice nonconformity. All true artists are rebels.

Let us try and tolerate more opinions, turn neutrality into a crusade. A conifer can grow next to a deciduous tree. Myself, I see no harm in any amount of sex in the stories, but at the same time, I hate all the empty violence that takes place in the stories in SF magazines. The magazines, of course, argue that violence is okay but you must not have sex. Yet, where does sex begin but in the home? It’s something that appeals to all ages, doesn’t it? In one form or another. I also find horror terribly boring when applied with a trowel; in very limited amounts it can be tremendously fructifying. Myself, I’m for non-violence. But that does not want me to stop Keith Laumer from writing; he is simply writing for a different audience from mine.

What I do find really tedious is a literature without cognizance of corruption. All great literature pays tribute to corruption; all nursery literature—whether Soviet SF or Analog SF—seeks to deny corruption. SF writers like Dick, Disch, Sturgeon, and the incomparable Ballard are familiar with corruption and use it without base sensationalism.

Within our little bit said of SF many boredoms have their day and fade away, giving place of course to others. At one time, the big pain in the neck was: can SF be literature? That question generated a lot of talk—and, again, because people were trying to judge all SF as though it were homogenous, instead of, in fact, what I believe it is: a great divergence of writings released by a number of writers whose outlooks are often in sharp conflict. The current pain in the neck is whether New Wave is better than Old Wave, and vice-versa. Anyone who joins in this one is dooming himself to the same area of misapprehension. Labels are ways in which one writer has to suffer for the sins or the virtues of others. Like empires, and even more speedily, individual writers have their day and then are gone. Personalities speak louder than print—but only until the arc lights die. It is a sad fact that very few works of SF remain generally valuable, generally readable, after the lapse of a quarter of a century—very few short stories, not many novels. It is true, we have our great old names, Otis Kline, Heinlein, A. E. van Vogt, Harry Harrison. Sacred totems that are resurrected from *Crashing Comet Tales* for admiration but reveal themselves as grinning corpses, I am sad to say. I believe that one reason for this is that too many writers have been blinded by this glamorous myth of the SF empire, and have bowed to its canons and shibboleths instead of feeling and speaking for themselves. In reality, a writer can offer nothing but himself. Yesterday, rather than next week—you’ve lost your way forever!

The New Wave controversy is not only boring but wrong, since it simplifies the real situation at present, which is more complex and more interesting than this sort of faked violence of having only two sides (one of which, of course, has to be the baddies). Much is happening in SF right now, and you will never comprehend it if you think that it is just a matter of Right versus Wrong, or Us versus Them. Nowadays, I have to confess that very few SF novels really delight me, I believe, because most of them are at least tacitly addressed to an adolescent audience and I am no longer adolescent.

I greatly enjoy the works of Philip K. Dick; I can see

# STATUS REPORT

the shortcomings but admire his towering competence of artistry behind them. Although he indeed uses many old symbols, he uses them so personally and obsessively that he creates an individual two-tonicity, and he gives them too that distinction of *baraka* that comes from a used and loved thing. In the last SF review I wrote I had three pleasant and readable novels to notice—and that is something of a record. The vagaries of English publishing were such that, grouped together coming out at the same time were James Blish's *Black Easter*, Harry Harrison's *Deathworld 3*, and Robert Sheckley's *Dimension of Miracles*. Here were three accomplished practised authors doing the things that they individually do well. Yet, their novels were tremendously unlike. You could not begin to compare them in any satisfactory context. There they lay, like identical eggs in the basket of my column, each given its meager ration of two or three paragraphs. Yet what had they in common beyond individual excellence?

Blish's novel is a study of the madness for power: *Operation Overkill* told in invertedly religious terms—yet told so sparsely that one was prevented from thinking of it in terms of allegory. Its style is as bare as a winter bough. Harry tells the sort of exuberant adventurous tale that he does so irresistibly, throwing in vivid pictures of his world, a wild planet where small bodies of men move into action in the early dawn light. Bob Sheckley does a sort of cantering *Candide* all the way round the galaxy, generously inventing, with blasphemous jokes for good measure.

It was manifestly absurd to to what I had to do; throw those three books together and give them that non-label, SF. Yet they were three novels by Jim, Harry, and Bob, all of which come within the margins of those giant tides raised by the Industrial Revolution.

A writer is entitled to individual consideration—at least, if he shows himself an individual and not a lackey of the nearest editor. One way you can be individual is to find your own audience and your own markets, without relying on readymade ones. There is no progress in the arts. Every writer worth anything is a new beginning. Old tunes are great from old singers; although there could be something wrong with your ear if you find the new singers are merely discordant.

Of course, there are divisions between writers, as surely as there are illusions. But the illusion of the empire of science fiction has grown so tatty that I, for one, have begun to write in other modes of fiction where this certifying petty spirit behind it does not operate. The major division in the ranks of empire, as I see it, is between the philistines and the artists; or between the creators and the hacks; or, perhaps I just mean between those who can and those who cannot.

All life is to be lived directly towards art, and the individuality of art that always survives empires. And so, my cool and tender green spring advice to the science fiction writers is "Down with empires and up with individuals." In fact, that is my advice to the worlds.



The following is a status report, for those who've subscribed or otherwise helped support the continued evolution of *Algo!* Since last issue promotion and advertising have continued and accelerated. Subscriptions will have gone from 300 at the time of publication of *Algo!* #19 to over 500 by the time this issue is mailed; the bank account is definitely showing signs of health, though of course much of that amount is for deferred subscriptions. #18 nearly broke even, and #19 should also. My expensive tastes in typesetting and visuals have raised the cost of each issue, but I hope to break even with #20, based on a pressrun of 1500 copies and a much greater attempt at bookstore distribution. I've discovered that conventions are a good place to sell subscriptions: look me up in the huckster room at the Torcon this Labor Day weekend. Meanwhile, I've joined the Committee of Small Magazine Editors and Publishers (COSMEP), an association of small presses and little magazines. If you're interested in selling *Algo!* in your local community or know of a bookstore that's interested in carrying *Algo!* write me. Discounts are available for minimum orders of as few as five copies of the issue. For larger orders, larger discounts can be arranged.

In addition, I've applied for a grant from the Coordinating Council of Literary Magazines; at this date (late March) I've heard no word as to the fate of the application. Of course I'll be pleasantly surprised if I do get a grant, but I place no great hopes on the possibility.

## NEXT ISSUE

COMING NEXT ISSUE: The November issue of *Algo!* is the tenth anniversary issue, and the lineup is something special. I think it will be the best issue of *Algo!* ever published, but of course that's for you to decide. Ursula K. Le Guin will have an article about her Earthsea series, illustrated visually by Tim Kirk and textually by a story set in the world of Earthsea. In addition, Jack Williamson will be talking about the SeeTee stories; Ted White and Dick Lupoff will have their usual columns, Lupoff taking time to review the Earthsea trilogy; John Brunner will be present, as will other yet unknown contributors. Visually we'll try to have another Play-Alien, if response warrants it, and the usual fine graphics. The letter-column is, of course, up to you.

# DEADLINE: SEPT. 15TH

IF YOU MOVE . . . please send a change of address form to us. Many of you send changes of address in to *Locus* and we pick them up from there. But it's a time consuming chore that you can make simpler all around by notifying us when you move. If you don't send us anything, your issues of *Algo!* come back to us with additional postage due. When we resend them we're forced to remove one issue from your subscription, to make up for time and money lost.

# Algo's People

DIAN GIRARD AND TED WHITE



It's hard to write a brief autobiographical sketch for an audience which is divided between those who already know me as well as they care to, and those who know me relatively little. A few bald details, then:

I was born in Washington, D.C., and raised in nearby Virginia, which I left when I was twenty. After a year in Baltimore I moved to New York and began a career in writing and editing, first with a jazz magazine, *Metronome* (and to other markets with jazz-related writing), and then with SF. I was an editor of *F&SF* for five years and have been the editor of *Amazing* and *Fantastic* for the past four and a half years. I left NYC in 1970 to move back to Virginia with my second wife and newly born daughter.

I've been a science fiction reader since I was eight (and I read fairy tales and the like even earlier—as soon as I learned to read, in fact) and a SF fan since I was thirteen. I began writing and selling SF when I was twenty-four, and I've since published thirteen novels (12 are SF) and around two dozen short stories.

My concern with and interest in publishing was a direct outgrowth of my involvement in fandom. In the late fifties Marion Zimmer Bradley compared me with Harlan Ellison, and stated that we two had shown more talent for editing in our fanzines than anyone else and were obviously destined for Great Things. This would appear to have been a perceptive judgment. I've been a printer (both typesetter and

pressman), an artist (I presently do the type, layout, and mechanicals for the covers of my magazines), an agent (see My Column, this issue), a carpenter, a business-machine repairman, and (twice) I've run a mimeo shop (I am a poor businessman, and both shops failed).

Presently my interests are veering back toward music; I mess about with an alto sax in the company of equally amateur musicians, and think wistfully about becoming a professional musician/composer. I am still a fan at heart, and still put out a fanzine with John D. Berry, *Egoboo*.

I co-chaired the 1967 World SF Convention in New York City, the NyCon3, and the following year I won a Hugo as Best Fanwriter. It would be nice to have another one some

## PLAY-ALIEN OF THE MONTH

San Francisco is famous for its fine restaurants, its breathtaking views, and its friendly people. All three combine in the persona of our first Play-Alien of the month, Astrid Anderson.

Astrid, daughter of multi-science-fiction-and-mystery-award winner Poul Anderson, attended her first science fiction convention at the age of six weeks. She has been charming attendees ever since. Over the years, the costumes she has put together have gotten a well-deserved reputation for sparkling creativity in conception and excellence in execution. The costume portrayed here is a fine example.

Here Astrid depicts Dejah Thoris, Princess of Helium, lover of John Carter of Mars—from the famous Edgar Rice Burroughs novels. If the Miss Thoris of the Mars series was half the woman our Astrid is, no wonder that John Carter put himself in Mortal Danger again and again to save her

from evil doers.

Astrid, who will soon be nineteen, is currently a student at San Francisco State University and one day plans to be a marine biologist. Her interest in the sea and its life is more than academic: two years ago, when oil slicks spread in San Francisco Bay, she helped save oil-trapped birds by cleaning the oil off and feeding them. "Never," says our lovely ecologist, "try to force-feed a cormorant."

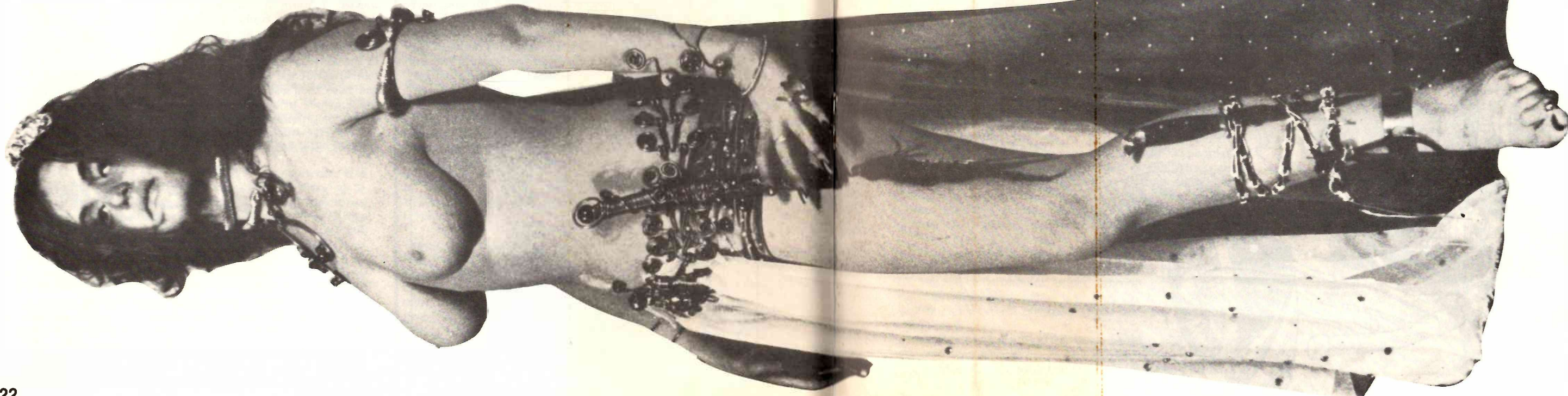
Though much of her time is taken up with her schooling and the inevitable homework, Astrid still finds time to show friends from out of town around the city. She especially delights in watching the spectacular sunsets that are so frequent in San Francisco, from the top of one of The City's many hills. Downtown San Francisco is also a source of many hours entertainment as she roams the boutiques

looking at dresses and unusual jewelry, as well as appreciating interesting architectural achievements like the pyramid shaped TransAmerica Building.

When not eating at home, where she cooks with mouth-watering skill, Astrid can be found at one of San Francisco's fine restaurants where she tries each dish with the palate of a trained connoisseur, and comments on it with astonishing clarity and judgment. Our attractive miss has been all over the world and knows what she likes, in food as well as fashion.

Despite her flamboyance at conventions, Astrid is really a domestic sort, given to listening to the problems of her friends, and whipping up such delights as shrimp curry, with which, she says, she can seduce anyone.

Any takers?



ASTRID ANDERSON

day—I've sweated out several banquets during which Best Prozine Hugos have been handed out, but the best I've managed was to place third with *Amazing*. For reasons obscure to me, none of my fiction has ever been in contention.

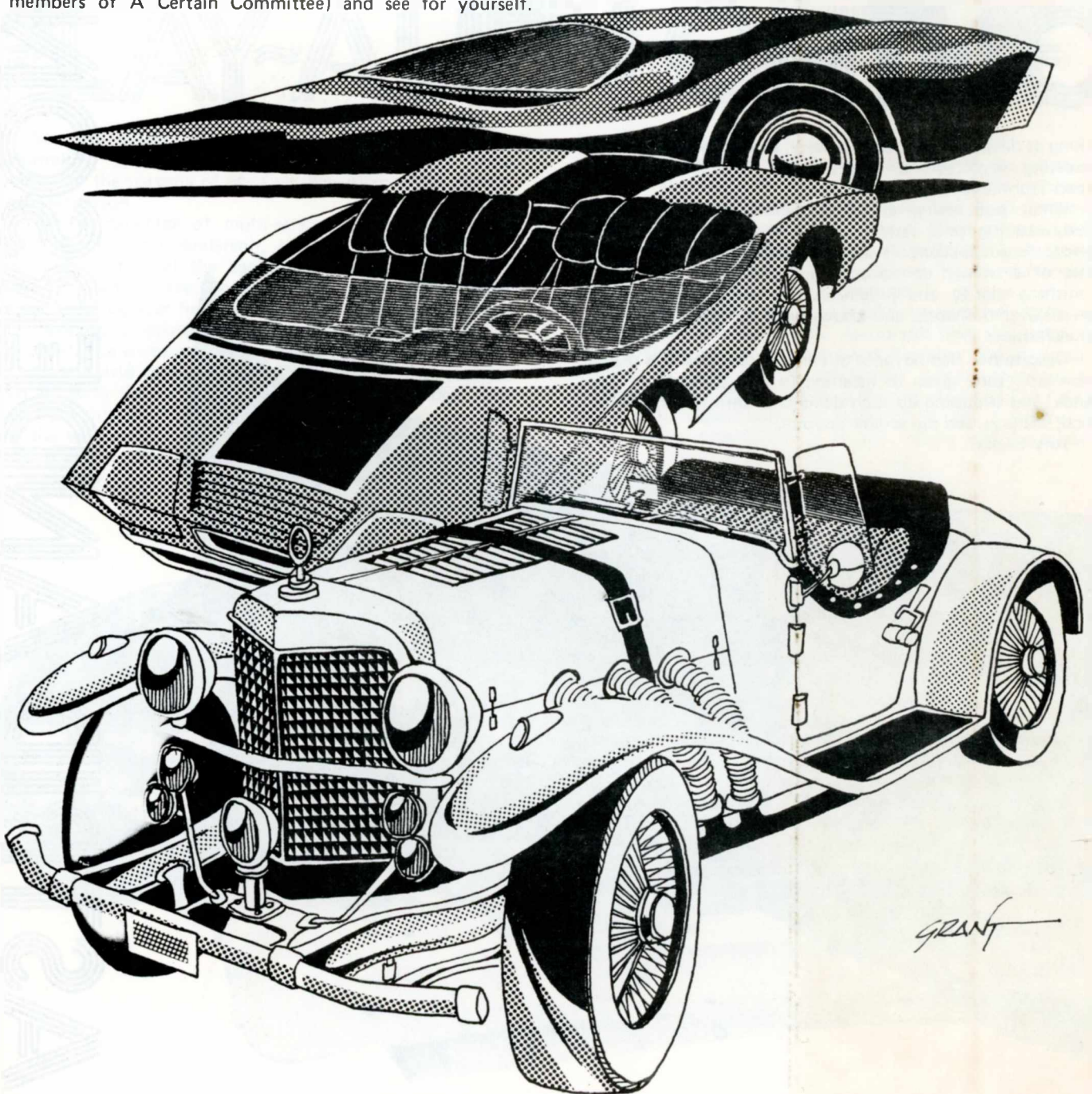
But then, you already knew most of this anyway, didn't you?

—Ted White

GEORGE TURNER: The photo reproduced here is not quite the one you asked for, being more in the nature of a photographer's revenge. He regarded my request for an unretouched print as the mouthing of a barbarian, and reacted accordingly, determined that no one should ever ask such a thing of him again. The bastard lit me to bring out every line as deep as Hadley's Rille and even succeeded in getting sharp-edge definition of the lower lenses in my bifocals. The reality hovers somewhere between this and the earlier souped-up version, with a reluctant admission that this is closer to the truth. The only way to know the facts is to come to Australia in '75 (this line is included in deference to members of A Certain Committee) and see for yourself.



GEORGE TURNER REVISITED



THE WORLD INSIDE by Robert Silverberg. 174pp. 95¢ ISBN 451-05176-095. 1972. Signet/NAL.

From flashy phony to talented beginner to a solidly established star performer. *The World Inside* is a thoroughly drawn and thoroughly convincing portrait of a future society radically altered from that of the present. It's an example of the fine old science fictional technique of taking a commonplace notion and standing it on its head: in this case the notion is that continued population growth within a closed (planetary) ecosystem must lead to catastrophe.

Any number of books have been written on the theme: Harrison's *Make Room! Make Room!* sees a social dichotomization into privileged few and squalid proles, Blish and Knight's *A Torrent of Faces* details massive social engineering at a constant crisis level, del Rey's *Eleventh Commandment* (do I remember right? it was eleventh, wasn't it?) predicts a sort of technological middle ages with a computer-aided theocracy, and so on.

So okay, so what does Silverberg do? He solves the ecological problem by inventing "urbmons," urban monads, giant vertical structures housing some 800,000 persons each, surrounded by giant agricultural greenbelts. The kind of society here projected might not really be practical, but it certainly seems workable in the book.

As for the question of making the urbmons work sociologically, there is again a thoroughly invented system of counselling, drug therapy for all, entertainment, work, art, and sex. The last is heavily emphasized in the book (and in the urbmons). The prime rule of interpersonal relationships is thou shalt not frustrate anyone.

Bedroom doors are never locked, and anyone may "nightwalk" and visit anyone else.

It's a peculiarly effective and subtle kind of dystopia, for the people of the urbmons are not miserable, not deprived, not noticeably oppressed. Their society does work and they are happy in it. And in fact the totally-sealed environment in which these people live is not really too far beyond that which exists today in certain parts of society. It is possible for some residents of Manhattan, for example, to live in an apartment house, descend by elevator to a subterranean arcade in the morning, ride a subway a few stops, walk through another subterranean arcade, take an elevator up into an office building, dine in that building, shop in those arcades and return home at night without ever setting foot out-of-doors...

Of course there are a few people who can't adjust to urbmon life, the "flippos," and anyone who goes flippo goes down the chute to the recycling machines. And even those who do adjust to this way of living give the reader an uncomfortable feeling. The thing is, I suspect that Silverberg found the urbmon life as he described it seductively attractive. To overcome this attraction—to keep from making attractive what he wanted to make repellent—he resorted to some deck-stacking.

In the urbmons, the one taboo topic is population limitation. Human fertility is regarded as the highest good. And so population growth is constant and stupendous, with five, six, ten children to a couple, all living in a single room, women pregnant almost without a break from puberty to menopause. A revolting prospect to us today.

Try reading *The World Inside* as it would be with universal free, simple, reliable contraception.

The dystopia becomes something else. Would we miss the natural environment under urbmon conditions? The transition generation might well long for trees and oceans, wildlife and weather. But generations born and raised in the urbmons—?

It's a thought-provoking book peopled with believable and empathic characters. A fine combination and one that makes this book a good example of serious science fiction.

# LUPOFF'S BOOK WEEK

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## RICHARD LUPOFF





**OVERLAY** by Barry N. Malzberg. 189pp. 95¢. ISBN 447-75345-095. 1972. Lancer Books.  
**THE FALLING ASTRONAUTS** by Barry N. Malzberg. 191pp. 75¢. ISBN 441-22690-075. 1971. Ace Books.

Last time I mentioned Malzberg's *Beyond Apollo* as a good try that didn't quite make it. Here are two novels by the same author that do make it.

*The Falling Astronauts* is very similar in construction to *Beyond Apollo*; in fact, one is inclined to wonder why Malzberg would write two such similar books in such quick succession. The idea here is that the command-module pilot, the "lone man in orbit" on an Apollo moon flight, freaks out and very nearly abandons the two astronauts on the moon. Remember—in *Beyond Apollo* it was a two-man Venus flight from which only one man returned.

Malzberg brings all three men home in *The Falling Astronauts* and has the "lone man" transferred to press relations by NASA. From there he carries him through the stresses that produced the near-disaster in a kind of retrospective study, until a new space crisis brings the man up against a new situation of stress.

It's a study in the dehumanizing pressure of space-flight, from an author passionately devoted to the notion of space exploration.

*Overlay* is a different sort of science fiction novel, an alien-invasion story that did blow my mind. A single alien is doing the invading, and he is doing it by telepathically insinuating himself into the minds of four hopelessly addicted horseplayers.

The book is totally mad, the characters are totally mad, but the character portrayals are hugely convincing and the compulsions of the gamblers are so totally compelling that I was completely swept into the book. As in *What Entropy Means to Me*, the framework involves a narrator who is conscious that he is writing this stuff, is conscious that someone else is reading it, and as a result lapses from time to time into self-aware cutenesses, a definite peril that tempts the insufficiently disciplined author.

But Malzberg writes with some maturity—he's done a dozen books or so already published and a bunch more still in inventory—and the difference is very visible.

*Overlay* reads like an amalgam of Thomas Pynchon, Phil Dick, Kurt Vonnegut and R. A. Lafferty. You'll finish it with a lot of information about horseplaying, a lot of insights into addictive personalities, and a head that spins around for several days after the book is read.

**SEVEN STEPS TO THE SUN** by Fred & Geoffrey Hoyle. 160pp. 75¢. ISBN 449-01778-075. 1973. Fawcett Crest Books

Hot dang, gang, let's trot out the old John Smith Test and try it out on *Seven Steps to the Sun*. You remember the John Smith Test, don't you? We take the latest opus of some big name author and subject it to the following scrutiny: if the manuscript of this thing had come to the publisher and the byline on it had been John Smith instead of Robert A. Heinlein / Robert Silverberg / Isaac Asimov / Arthur C. Clarke / whatever—would it have got purchased and published?

In the present case, if this book had arrived bearing the signature of some obscure journeyman author instead of the biggest noise in English astronomy (and his son), would it even have got past a first reader, no less been dignified with high-priced hardcover editions and then mass-marketed paperbacks on both sides of the Atlantic?

Well let's look at a plot skeleton.

Mike Jerome, an English TV writer, gets introduced to a Real Scientist who introduces him to a farout idea: that as a moving object increases its speed, it decreases its rate of time-passage. Thus, the Professor tells Jerome, people

returning from high-speed space journeys would, in effect, time-jump into the future. Not being familiar with science fiction, where this effect is by now a largely discarded cliché, Jerome is mind-blown.

He immediately conceives a multi-season TV series based on the notion. He gets himself so excited that on his way home from the scientist's laboratory he steps in front of a car and gets walloped a good one. And he wakes up—right, in the future. To be precise, ten years to the day, in the future.

This is pretty unsettling to him. He pays his hospital bill, looks up an old pal (Pete Jones, the black jazz drummer) and is just about getting his bearings when, zap!, another ten-year jump. Society's changed a bit now, London traffic has got so bad that folks have just given up on travelling around and started to build self-contained mini-cities. Banking practices are different, there's a spy-scare going on and Mike is naturally suspected.

He runs around acting like a paranoia-thriller hero and just as things are approaching a climax—zap!

This time he's in a different part of the world as well as ten years into the future. He—

No, I'm not going to recite any more of it.

It's basically a fairly interesting idea, a sort of future history seen in snapshots taken at ten-year intervals, but as a fictional device it makes continuity of relationships impossible to maintain. Every time Jerome gets himself into a new setting and in with some new companions, we know that he'll shortly go zonking off into the future again.

What does hold the reader's interest is the puzzle of how these time-displacements come about, and so one slogs on to the end (unless one is a last-page-peeker), at which point—

—well, wait a minute, if you plan to read this thing, stop reading the review, because I'm going to blow the denouement right now. After about the fifth or sixth zap (I confess I lost count), Jerome wakes up back in the present, where he'd been hit by that car. Remember?

And the whole experience was...

...was...

...Great Klono grant me strength to say it...

...It was all a dream!

I might comment on the writing style, which is frequently crude to the point of amateurishness, the motivation of characters which alternates between stereotype and robotism.

And the John Smith Test. I needn't even say.

**WHAT ENTROPY MEANS TO ME** by George Alec Effinger. 191pp. \$4.95. 1972. Doubleday & Co.

Ever since Stanley G. Weinbaum flashed across the scientific sky nearly forty years ago, dazzling the aficionadoes of that period with his energy, his wit and his warmth, creating a swift sizzle of vivid short stories (some of which hold up to this day) and a few clattering novels (none of which do), and then dying tragically at the very outset of his career, we've been waiting for someone to come along and catch his mantle.

That's a hell of a heavy trip to lay on anybody.

It's like the Yankee Myth of past baseball days, which demanded that a new hero appear to continue the lineage of Ruth, Gehrig and DiMaggio, and it very nearly wrecked the career of Mickey Mantle. (The play on words was accidental, friends.)

Well, here in our own bailiwick we've tried Weinbaum's magical cloak on Robert Sheckley (but he wandered off into witty trivialities), Phil Dick (who shrugged it aside and became his own artist) and a bunch of others, and Effinger is apparently the latest candidate for the Weinbaum Laurels.

*Entropy* is his first novel, coming in the train of a bunch of well received short stories, and it has itself been the subject of some embarrassing oversell including an

extravagant rave by Theodore Sturgeon in the *Times Book Review*.

The problem, then, in approaching this book, is to keep one's own equilibrium. Can one judge at all fairly the first major work of a prodigy, a *wunderkind*? If the book is brilliant is it then remarkable or merely living up to expectations? If it's good—not great, not mindblowing, but a solidly workmanlike job—does that make it a failure?

To make it even harder to achieve judicial detachment, Effinger uses the technique of the book-within-a-book, itself a perfectly legitimate ploy dating back at least five hundred years to Shakespeare's plays-within-plays, and borrowed by other media to span movies-within-movies, comic-strips-within-comic-strips, paintings-within-paintings and so on.

It's legitimate, but it certainly makes the book hard to comment on. Effinger will finish a scene (or break off in the middle of one) and have his created-novelist-historian comment on his own work. Or he'll have a comment from his little sister. Or his older brother.

Another problem with the book is its heavy manipulation of symbols. Perhaps Effinger is unsure of his reader's ability to assimilate symbolism, or of his own ability to use it effectively. So after introducing a symbol, he has to go back to that framing-setting and explain it.

The giant advanced upon Dore, a heavy club swinging from his waist.

////

Oh did he really. Of course that club is a phallic symbol.

And of course there's a River, a Sword, a Quest, and so on.

The book shows some fine flashes to talent—the colonization of the planet Home where the novel takes place is told in some marvelous comic flashbacks, and some of the by-now-cliche aspects of heroic-allegorical-quest fantasy receive a deft and deserved roasting.

But there are some lengthy tedious stretches, especially in the quest tale, and I have just a sneaking suspicion that the alternation of flashbacks, present narration, and story-within-story is only partly art...and partly necessity. Because whenever a given sequence does extend beyond a few pages, the energy seems to slacken badly and a tedium to settle in.

So I suppose that, yes, like a rookie up for his first big league season, Effinger alternates some brilliant plays and some fine power and fast hands, with some puppy-clumsiness and some plain lapses in knowledgeability, attributable mainly to inexperience.

He's clearly got the makings of a fine ballplayer; within a few seasons he may be a star. And certainly we don't have the right to expect him to bat .400 and hit 75 home runs in his first year. Nope. He'll hit a respectable .273 and throw to a lot of wrong bases, but he'll make the team and he'll do better next year.

**WOLFWINTER by Thomas Burnett Swann. 203pp. \$1.25. ISBN 345-02905-4-125. 1972. Ballantine.**

Swann is the man, the blurb-writers keep telling us, who has carved out a niche for himself in the world of fantasy by delving into the world of Hellenic mythology, and who has produced a sparse trickle of tales of the nymphs and dryads, dolphins and centaurs and the other near-people of the ancient Mediterranean.

I've read a number of his books, and found them all to be well stocked with mythological lore, sensitive, fragile, emotion-drenched things, really very pretty in their own fey, gay way, but utterly lacking in any sort of drive, heft or muscle.

Reading Swann makes me think of something Jack Gaughan once said about illustrating: "Male authors are easier to illustrate than female because men write about actions and women write about feelings." At first blush a sexist remark, but upon further thought I think not—for

feeling and acting are equally part of life, either in the total absence of the other would obviously be unsatisfying, and any normal person lives a combination of the two just as any normal personality is a combination of what we sometimes think of as 'masculine' and 'feminine' traits and values.

In this context, Swann, although a man, is a thoroughly 'feminine' writer. His books are full of feelings and very nearly empty of action.

The protagonist of *Wolfwinter* is a young girl from the island of Lesbos; in the early pages of the book she mopes around because she's plain looking and nobody wants to ball her but she goes to an orgy and gets knocked up by a faun. Her father marries her off to an effete merchant but when her husband sees that her baby has horns he exposes the infant. The mother rescues the baby, runs away and finds some woods-creatures to live with.

This all happens pretty quickly; then there's a long, l-o-n-g pastoral sequence in which the heroine, Erinna, just revels in how groovy it is to be warm and cozy, loved and cherished and lusted after, hanging up chintz curtains in the sunny kitchen and cooing over her pretty baby boy while the smell of lavender wafts cloyingly about.

Well, I did make it to the end of the book, but that's more because I tend to get compulsive about finishing things that I start than for any other reason. And I was rewarded at the end when Swann goes into a sort of *grand guignole* horror fantasy with zombies and mummies lurching about and a giant sort of Shelob-like anthropophagous spider... but in truth it was really too little and too late to save this lace valentine of a book.

**PILGRIMS THROUGH SPACE AND TIME by J. O. Bailey. 341pp. Cloth \$11.25, Paper \$3.50. ISBN 0-8371-6323-4. 1972. Greenwood Press.**

Back in 1939, the year of the New York World's Fair and the outbreak of World War II in Europe, a young man named Jim Bailey approached another young man named Ben Abramson with a manuscript for a book. The book was—a history of science fiction; what an amazing idea!

Bailey had done an amazing job, but finding a publisher for such an outlandish manuscript might be even more amazing. Bailey was lucky to find Abramson (and the latter's Argus Books), for the very notion of scholarship in science fiction was thoroughly *outré* at the time. About the closest thing to this new book that had been published was Lovecraft's *Supernatural Horror in Literature*, and even that wasn't very close—supernatural was more respectable somehow than superscientific, and besides, Lovecraft's piece was only a lengthy essay, not a tome like Bailey's. And Abramson did publish Lovecraft.

Even so, the war intervened and Abramson didn't get around to publishing Bailey's book until 1947. And it was another five years before a copy found its way into my hands. (I remember getting it in the mail from Gregg Calkins in exchange for a couple of decade-old *Astoundings*.)

Thus, twenty-one years ago I plunged breathlessly into *Pilgrims Through Space and Time*.

The book isn't a history in the sense of recounting the development of science fiction in purely chronological form, although Bailey does divide his book into periods—before 1817, 1817-1870, 1870-1894, and so on.

More significantly—and I think all for the best—he divides each period into sections by themes: A. The Wonderful Machine; B. The Wonderful Journey (1. On the Earth, 2. Into the Earth, 3. To Other Planets, 4. Into the Future); C. Utopias and Satires; D. The "Gothic" Romance.

Who wrote what, what he had to say, what ideas were handed on from author to author, attitudes that developed, and so on and on.

A thorough reading of the book will give anyone a good grounding in the roots of science fiction and the background that so baffles many outsiders.

At the time I read the book that first time I found myself with only one major complaint, and that was that the book deals almost entirely with science fiction in books, and almost entirely with science fiction published prior to 1915. As a reader in the early 50s I was interested almost exclusively in science fiction published in magazines (where most of it appeared between the 1920s and the 1960s) and almost exclusively in science fiction published since 1926, when Hugo Gernsback crossed the Rubicon.

Skimming around in this 1972 facsimile of *Pilgrims* I found those defects still present but far less annoying. For one thing, I've long since learned that the pre-Gernsback period was rich with fantastic literature and that much of that literature really has a lot more to do with modern (serious) science fiction than does the giant-insects and super-monkeywrench school that Gernsback promoted.

In a sense, the advances of successive post-Gernsback editors—Harry Bates, Orlin Tremaine and even Mort Weisinger in the 30s, Campbell in the 40s, Gold, Boucher and McComas in the 50s, and the progressive book editors in the 60s—have all been in the direction of restoring many of the pre-Gernsback concerns for literary values and social consciousness, and away from the Gernsback emphases on sensationalism and/or detailed technology.

It's a strange notion to consider, but it seems increasingly likely that the whole Gernsback-magazine era of science fiction was a passing aberration from which we are only now recovering.

Well, as far as Bailey's book is concerned, you'll find the modern period and the magazines in particular given short shrift. If that's what you want to read about you'll have to wait for another book (or maybe write it yourself). But *Pilgrims* is, as Thomas Clareson says in a Foreword to the facsimile edition, "the intellectual and literary history of the development of science fiction."

Amen, and God bless J. O. Bailey.

**SCIENCE FICTION CRITICISM: AN ANNOTATED CHECKLIST.** Edited by Thomas Clareson. 225pp. \$7.00. ISBN 0-87338-123-8. 1972. Kent State University Press.

Speaking of Professor Clareson, here's a 200-page list of books and articles about science fiction, compiled by a professor of literature whose special field of study is science fiction and who is a big gun in the prestigious Science Fiction Research Association. It's a wonderful thing that Professor Bailey has lived to see this day!

Isaac Asimov wrote a delightful essay some years ago, called "The Sound of Panting," in which he pointed out the difficulties of keeping abreast of scientific literature. So many papers are published, he pointed out, that there are journals that carry nothing but summaries. And even these are so numerous that you can read summaries of summaries, indices of indices, trying to keep up. And if you don't keep up you're likely to blow your million-dollar research grant rediscovering something that that other fella at the next university just spent his million-dollar research grant to discover.

See?

Well, some sort of millenium is upon us. So much is being published about science fiction these days that we're starting to get our summaries and indices, and the Clareson book is a good one for starters.

Clareson lists hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of items: books about science fiction, periodical pieces, book reviews and so on. Happily, he also gives a paragraph-length precis of each item, and by checking out a few works with which I am familiar, I must say that I find Clareson's assessments scholarly, fair and restrained.

This is not a source to be read in its own right, but a most valuable guide to other works in the field. I applaud it.

**TWO PLANETS** by Kurd Lasswitz, trans. by Hans Rudnick. 405pp. ISBN 0-8093-0508-9. 1971. Southern Illinois University Press.

This purports to be the first English-language edition (abridged) of a creaking old two-decker originally published in Germany in 1897. It's an interesting volume for historical reasons—it stands with Greg's *Across the Zodiac* and Astor's *Voyage in Other Planets* as much as it does with the more obvious *War of the Worlds* by H. G. Wells.

The story deals with the discovery of a Martian scientific expedition at the north pole of the earth. By stages the earth explorers are introduced to the Martians' ground station, then to a space station that hovers above the pole, and are finally transported to Mars itself. In due course a Martian protectorate is established on earth, various utopian measures are introduced but oppressive policies lead to revolt, and earth regains its independence.

Unfortunately, the book is a crushing bore, and I don't know how much of the blame for that lies with Lasswitz, how much with the translator, Hans Rudnick.

The characters all speak in a mechanical, stilted, Germanic sort of English. Long, boring speeches. Long, boring exposition.

I don't envy Rudnick—or any other translator. If he sticks close to a literal version in the new language he is accused of producing a stilted, unreadable translation. If he produces a more idiomatic, a freer version, he is accused of infidelity to the original, of introducing his own style in place of the original author's.

That's the dilemma Rudnick faced, and between the two courses he chose the safer, more conservative course of literalness. The result, though, is exchanges like this one:

"And how do you plan to increase the velocity further?" Grunthe asked.

"We hope to reach up to five hundred thousand kilometers. We will overtake light then, as I mentioned. And whoever traveled on such a projectile into space would, while looking back, see the times of the past emerge, for he would reach those light waves which left his planet before his departure."

"Thank you," Grunthe said and then fell silent. (page 75)

Dig it?

They're talking about "ftl"—faster-than-light travel. In 1897! Farout! Incredible!—If you can stay awake.

Good writing holds up. The Wells and Astor books that I mentioned before are still fresh and readable. The Greg, less so. This Lasswitz—yawn!

Read it if you can read it.

## CREDITS

Photos of Cordwainer Smith and Paul Linebarger courtesy Mrs. Genevieve Linebarger. Calling card and Chinese ideogram courtesy John Foyster. "Paul Linebarger" by Arthur Burns, "John Foyster Talks with Arthur Burns," "Introduction" by John Bangsund, and "Cordwainer Smith" by John Foyster all appeared originally in *Australian SF Review*; reprinted by permission of the editor and the authors. Background information on Cordwainer Smith courtesy the Baltimore *Sun*. Our thanks to Fred Pohl and J. J. Pierce for their help in providing information on Paul Linebarger. "Science Fiction As Empire" by Brian Aldiss reprinted courtesy the Instituto Nacional do Cinema, Rio de Janeiro. Photo of Andrew Porter by Linda Lufkin. Unretouched photo of George Turner courtesy the photographer. Photo of Astrid Anderson by Kim Gottlieb.



# MY COLUMN

## TED WHITE

Last fall, the latest flap to hit the SFWA was the publication of a 'proceedings' from a West Coast Nebula Awards Banquet program of several years earlier. The west coast membership of the SFWA, you see, began holding day-long programs before the actual awards banquet in the evening, while the east coast membership restricted themselves exclusively to a banquet. (Last year a day of programming was added to the New York banquet.) This seemed like a good idea at the time (and still does); another

idea which seemed equally worthwhile at the time was to transcribe the day's program and publish it for the total membership of the SFWA. Why, a few extra copies might even be sold (to Outsiders) for the enhancement of the always-low treasury.

Unfortunately, what everyone overlooked is that the SFWA is loaded with cowardly loudmouths—people who feel no compunction in expressing themselves from a podium—or even the floor—of a program, but whose moral courage stops

there. And when these worthies saw their words in cold (mimeo) print, the flap was on. Two of the worst resigned in a huff (no loss), and there was much talk about million-dollar libel suits and the moral turpitude of everyone involved in the publication of those 'proceedings.' (One of those who resigned quietly rejoined shortly thereafter, so that he could run for the office of president in the upcoming election; ah, SFWA!)

Just what was it that these people were discussing so openly that they feared retaliatory legal action would be taken against them? Agents. Literary agents and agenting. The problems they'd had with various agents.

Frankly, I was both surprised and amused by the turmoil which the publication of that discussion created. Surprised, because really no one said anything very bad about anyone—nothing like the truth of the matter, certainly, when one considers what could have been said—and amused that these fearsome creatures, these lords of creation, had not even the courage of their half-hearted convictions to back up what they had said.

Well, I don't propose to repeat anything that was said there. If indeed the publication of that volume was dangerous from a legal standpoint, then there is no point in compounding the crime. But I do want to talk about agents and agenting.

Every fan and would-be writer thinks he knows about agents. Every writer thinks he knows better. But in my experience very few people—including some agents—really know anything about what an agent is and is for.

What qualifies me to present myself as someone who does know? Not much: I lived in New York for eleven years, during which time I was intimately involved with publishing in various facets. For a time I worked for the Scott Meredith Literary Agency, Inc.; later I did a little agenting on my own. I have an agent. As an editor, I've dealt with agents (including my own). Something must have rubbed off, somewhere along the line.

So let's start at the beginning: What is an agent's function? Who needs an agent, and why?

For a writer an agent is a business manager. He is the man who negotiates contracts, arranges sales, and polices your property for you. And he does this in return for no less than 10% of everything you earn on the works he handles. (I say "no less than 10%" because although 10% is the domestic standard, 20%—or more—may be charged for foreign sales, where at least theoretically the agent is splitting his fee with an overseas agent, 10% to each. In fact many domestic agents deal directly with foreign publishers and pocket the entire 20% for themselves with the justification of air-mail expenses and whatnot. Anyway...)

Ten percent is not much. If an agent can negotiate a better contract for you than you could get on your own (and a good agent should), saving for you, perhaps, subsidiary rights of which the publisher would prefer to own at least 50%, then he has already saved you a sum larger than his fee. If he knows his markets, both foreign and domestic, he can make subsidiary sales for you which it would not occur to you to make. And he can negotiate far more freely than you to get you the best money for your work (after all, it's to his advantage—ten percent of \$2,500 is better for him than ten percent of \$1,500).

For some writers an agent is unnecessary. These writers have sharp minds for business dealings and keep themselves informed of every marketing possibility. Bob Silverberg is just such a writer. Yet Silverberg has an agent. Why? Because a writer's primary function is to write. If someone else can be found who can and will handle all the petty details of marketing, contract negotiations, etc., all for 10%, then it will probably be worth it, simply in the freedom it offers the writer. There's a lot of dog-work in attending to the business end of writing. It can interfere with one's writing. If a writer is like Bob Silverberg, he may initiate deals and turn them over to his agent for execution. The agent becomes an

employee, in effect.

Other writers simply don't have the expertise or the proximity to make their own deals. Most SF writers do not live in or near New York City—which is where almost all the editors and publishers are. They can't just pick up the phone, make a local call, and set up a luncheon date with an editor whereat a book might be sold. Some wouldn't feel comfortable doing that even if they did live in the New York area.

And a surprising number of authors are frighteningly naive about publishing. For years authors like Andre Norton and Thomas Burnett Swann have allowed their publishers to rip them off, selling them advance-publication serial rights, for instance (which means that the publisher makes the magazine sale and keeps at least 50% of the money—or, worse, turns down magazine serialization, depriving the author of all income from that source) which no agent would do.

Basically, then, most writers need agents. They need agents in order to deal with publishers (most writers are afraid of publishers and accept whatever contract is offered to them, not realizing the extent to which contracts are negotiable) and they need agents in order to realize the most value from what they've written.

Agents have other functions as well.

A good agent should also be a good editor. He should read everything his client sends him and should not market it unless he regards it as a professional work of publishable worth. That sounds obvious, but it is not. There are 'agents' who just act as marketing surrogates. These agents do not make value judgments on the works they handle; they simply submit them to likely markets and go right on resubmitting them until ultimately the work sells or the markets are exhausted. A writer can do this himself; he doesn't need an agent just to put his story in an envelope and mail it out. He needs someone who is on his side, but willing to offer appropriate criticism. He needs someone to police his writing to this extent.

When I began working as an assistant editor in New York, both for a magazine and for a paperback publisher, I quickly discovered that some agents could be trusted and some could not. Some agents regularly submitted only stories of at least minimal professional competence—stories which would eventually sell to the right market. Others could not be counted on to submit only minimally good stories. They handled absolute stinkers as often as not. And others were known for the fact that most of their submissions were tripe of the worst sort; they only rarely had a publishable story to submit. These latter agents' submissions were regularly consigned to the slush pile, to be read with the works of total unknowns. The better agents' submissions were ranked with submissions from known (and usually dependable) authors.

Now obviously an agent's reputation with an editor is only as good as the general level of the stories he sees fit to submit to that editor. A lot of would-be authors think that they need an agent to sell their stories because "otherwise the editors won't look at my stuff." Well, this is only marginally true. If you write well, any editor wants to see your stuff. How can he tell in advance whether or not you write well? If an agent known to him for quality material—an agent who submits only what he thinks is good—sends an editor your story, then you've received a sort of stamp of approval, and the editor will be inclined to give your story immediate attention.

If, on the other hand, your story comes in from an agent whose submissions are uneven or worse, then you've gained no advantage at all—you might as well have submitted it yourself. The fact that it came from an agent isn't going to sell your story anyway—your story must, ultimately, sell itself—the best it will do is get you a faster reading or make an editor initially more receptive.

So the notion that you need 'an agent' to sell your stories is not true. Most good agents are not willing to take

on totally unsold authors anyway—unless they recognize in your work some incipient flair of genius—and one of the larger agencies' rules of thumb is that you must make at least one thousand dollars a year from your writing before they will represent you. (Remember, their income from you is only going to be \$100 a year, if you're making a thousand.)

Now there are an awful lot of agents, most of them operating out of (or near) New York City. Thirty four are listed in the 1973 directory of SFWA members (which is to say that the SFWA's membership uses a total of thirty four different agents or agencies), of which at least four have no business calling themselves agents (their submissions are treated like slush or worse by most editors; the work they handle is not usually of professional quality). There must be at least five times that number scattered around the country.

How many of them are any good?

This is where the fur starts flying. We can immediately cross off quite a few. These are the agents who handle (and sometimes even advertise for) total unknowns of dubious talent. These so-called agents work on the shotgun approach: if they handle enough properties (stories), some are bound to sell. Some deal mostly in schlock—cheap sex books which sell for a thousand dollars or less, or their equivalents, nurse novels and the like—and are used as dependable sources by editors who publish lines of schlock on a yard-goods basis. Others are simply people who act as agents for their friends—the halt leading the blind. In both cases these 'agents' are incapable, by virtue of inexperience or incompetency, of acting as true 'business managers' for a successful writer. They are usually no better at negotiating a contract than you are (maybe less so, in fact) and their market knowledge comes from *Writer's Digest*, which you can read yourself for a more modest sum than 10% of your latest sale.

Then there are the agents who are Nice People, but simply haven't the head for business which a sharp agent must have. Often these are ex-editors or writers, well-versed in the field and knowledgeable enough to market your stuff intelligently, but lacking the cutting edge that makes an agent a better negotiator than you are. One such agent lost a client after admitting to him, "I haven't been in a marketing mood recently," after sitting on everything he'd sent in for six months.

There are also the 'shop' agencies, where one person lends his name to the agency but half a dozen faceless employees do the work. The best known is Scott Meredith. At the time I worked for Scott (about ten years ago), almost everything which went out of his office—all the correspondence, of which there was much—did so over his signature. Scott himself did not write most of those letters, and on occasion his brother Sidney signed them in an uncanny forgery of his name, although Scott usually (if he was there) read them all and sometimes required revisions. The turnover of 'desk men' at Scott Meredith was, and probably still is, high. The pay was low (about half what it should have been) and the workload required taking one's work home with him every night. Few have stayed with Scott for more than a year or two, and the list of well-known SF authors and editors who have worked at one time or another for Scott is as long as the list of his clients (there is some overlap). When his 'desk men' are good—like Terry Carr, when he was there—Scott has one of the best agencies in the business. When they are not, the agency is just a manuscript mill.

There are also smaller, one-man agencies. The best-known in the SF field are probably Robert Mills and Henry Morrison. Mills was for many years an editor (*Ellery Queen*, *F&SF*) and Morrison was the only Vice President Scott Meredith ever had. Morrison is my agent, largely because he asked me first (1965) and I had known and liked him from his days with Scott. I know writers who swear by both agents and I know writers who will have nothing to do with either agent.

And that leads us in turn to the final criterion for an agent: does he satisfy you?

Obviously not every agent will do the same kind of job for every author. Authors have different needs, different attitudes and different approaches to writing. Some authors want to make their own deals and then turn them over to their agents for the detail-work. Others want to place all responsibility for what happens to their work in their agents' hands. Obviously some agents are better for some authors and others are better for others. I wish there was a rule of thumb, a yardstick that would be universally applicable. But there isn't.

If you get a bunch of professional authors together—at an SFWA program, or anywhere else—and ask them about agents, each and every one will have at least one horror story to tell, and—equally likely—at least one past or present agent for whom he feels only respect and admiration. What makes for an interesting discussion, however, is when one man's Best Agent turns out to be his neighbor's Worst Agent.

Here's an example (all names deleted): An up and coming author published a story in a magazine a few years ago which really turned an agent on. The author was young and had no agent. The agent offered to represent him on that one story only, because the agent said he was convinced it was good and ought to find a good book publisher. The agent submitted the story (a short novel) to one hardcover publisher and several second-rate paperback houses—all unsuccessfully. When the story was finally published as a book it was because an editor remembered its magazine appearance and requested the manuscript. At that point the agent had been unable to sell it for more than a year.

I knew the people involved (I told the editor who was handling the story, in fact) and I mentioned it to another of that agent's clients. That client was a rabid fan of the agent and convinced that he could do no wrong. He actually went to his agent's office and, on some pretext, examined the agent's file, verifying to whom the manuscript had been sent. He read the list of publishers to me, and it was a disappointingly motley list—the only hardcover publisher queried had been Doubleday, and the paperback houses were headed up by Paperback Library. He (the client) felt this justified the agent's contention that he'd tried hard to market the story. I felt that it did not. If in fact the agent had been impressed by the story and had wanted an impressive sale in order to impress the author and gain him as a client, it was a sorry performance. No one had been impressed and the author went soon after to another agent, with whom he remains quite happy.

What does this story prove? Only that agents are human and prone to failure as often as the next guy. A 'chemistry' is wanted between author and agent, and it was lacking there, despite best intentions on everyone's part.

In my own shoptalk with lots of different writers, I've been forced to the conclusion that no one can, with certainty, recommend an agent to another writer. There is not one agent that I know of who performs the tasks I described earlier with total adequacy for all his clients. I know of no agent whom I could unhesitatingly recommend in this regard. There are agents who perform well for some of their clients and there are agents who perform well for none of their clients. It is easy enough to spot and avoid the latter. The former have to be found on an individual basis, through trial and error.

And about all I can say to you, if you're still looking, is Good Luck.

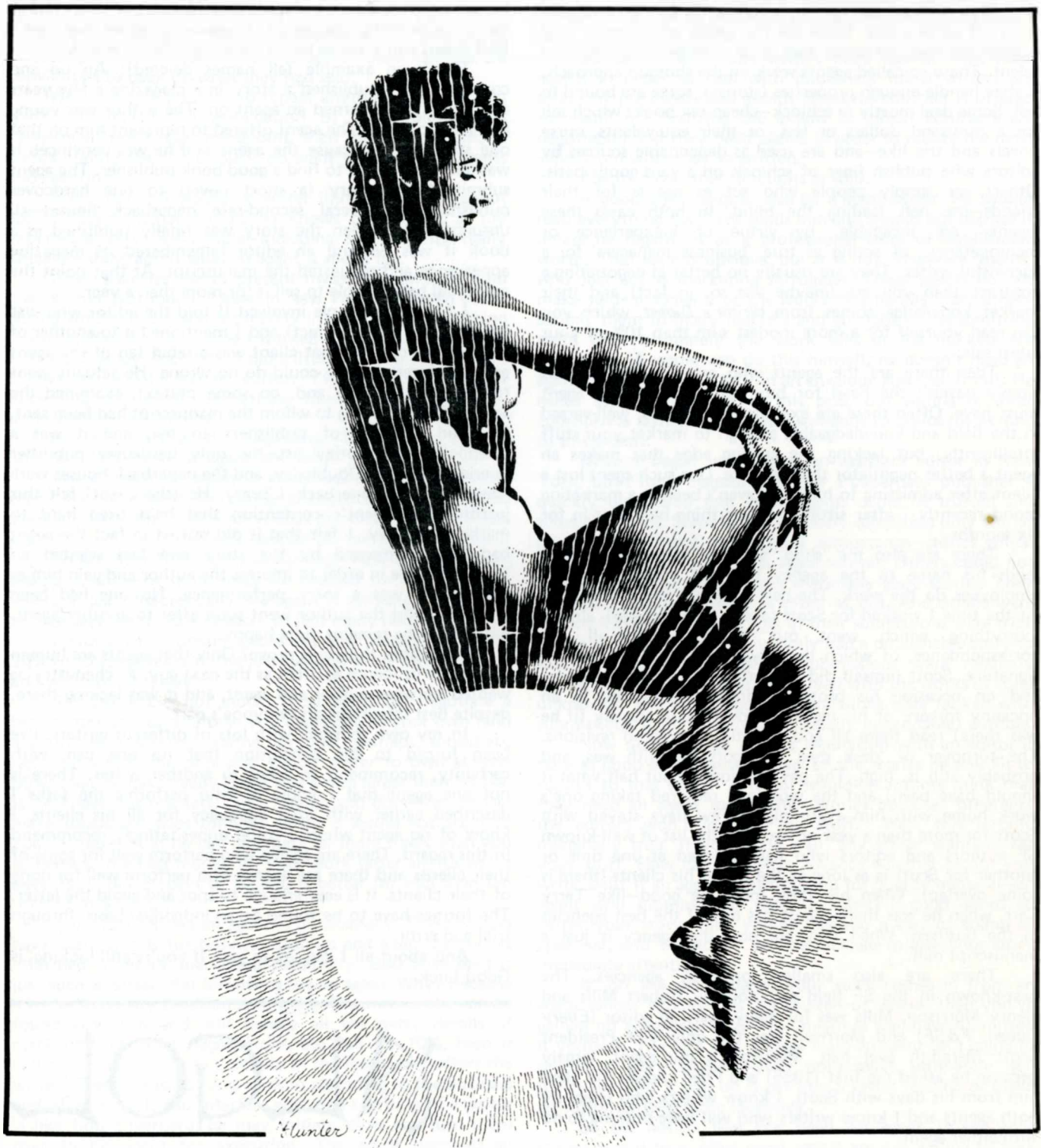
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# ALGOL

SOME FINAL THOUGHTS: I'm not completely happy with the look of this issue. The press of material has created a crowded look which I've attempted to get away from. The typesetters' bill lists 44,000 words of type -- much more than I thought would be in the issue. Next issue will return to a less crowded format, allowing greater use of white space than this issue has seen.

There are few copies of issues 16,17 & 18 left. They're available for \$1 each, first come, first served. This issue's pressrun increases to 1500; hopefully it will remain in stock longer than last issue did. I project none left of that issue by the time this issue is in the mails.

Next issue ALGOL will be publishing advertising, to defray rising costs. Advertising rates are available on request. --Andrew Porter



James Blish  
Treetops  
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Re the discussion of the supposed destitute state of the SF writer: Some time back, SFWA circulated a survey aimed, among other things, at determining the average yearly income, from writing alone, of its members. No results have yet been published, and when they are, they won't show figures for individuals, though they may show the two extremes. It is my guess, though, that the average will be higher than many people seem to suspect, and that there are more SF writers making quite a decent living from the field than the complaints suggest.

To enlarge their number, I'd like in the meantime to proffer a few rules of thumb. Many writers expect too much, and too early. Modest financial success in this field seems to depend mostly on (a) having been working in it for no less than 10 years, (b) having been reasonably prolific during that period, and (c) having produced among these works a majority, be it no more than 51%, which has staying power. In other words, independence is a product of royalties and reprints. It's nice to get an advance of \$3000 on a book, but not so nice when the publisher pulps it six months after publication because the returns are exceeding the sales. Far better to get an advance of half that for the same book, have it stay in print for 15 years, and go through as many foreign editions. Similarly, to have received 5¢ a word for a short story from Campbell may pay a month's bills, and is no good to you thereafter if it drops dead; whereas 1¢ a word from Bob Lowndes was a drop in the bucket, but if the story then turns up in one anthology after another—usually at advances exceeding the original payment, and with a pro rata share of the books' royalties as well, then you have a property, not just a commodity.

In other words, the present support of a writer depends importantly on his past. I tried going full-time free-lance over two (non-successive) years, and failed both times because I had no royalty estate worth noticing, and hadn't been around long enough even to guess what proportion of my short pieces was going to pay more than the prices of their original magazine sales. But I learned; I wasn't going to try such a venture again until (1) my writing income for a given year exceeded my job income (already in five figures) for the same year; and, (2) my royalty and other secondary-source income grew larger than my original sales total for the same period. It took me 27 years to get there, and other SF writers have done financially better than I have without having played it so safe—but without a similar viewpoint and similar prospects, I'm convinced, it's better to have a regular job and moonlight the writing.

When old hands in other fields tell beginning writers that an essential attribute for the job is patience, they're usually taken to mean the patience to sit through long jobs of work, plus perhaps also through many rejections of the work afterwards; but there's more to it than that. It also means the patience needed to find out whether your writing is going to return you nothing but one-shot fees, or instead can generate an income.

I just got a royalty cheque of £6.37 (about \$15.00) for the Danish edition of *A Case of Conscience*. Tiny? Sure; but that's in addition to the Danish advance, and without experience you can have no idea of how these residuals mount up. And lest I be suspected of choosing an obviously atypical work, I'll add that all but one of my 39 books thus far are still in print somewhere, and more than half of them in major markets; and this week I also got a copy of my 90th anthologization. And these figures are a long way from setting any records—I know at least 15 living SF writers who could top them with ease. But at best I think they support my suspicion that some of the moaning you've been hearing and printing has been premature.

Murray Moore  
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A quick reading of Ted White's 'poverty' column could give the impression to someone who has no particular reason to like him to

## RANDOM FACTORS: *the readers*

assume that all he was doing was bitching about the fact that he, TW, is obviously worth more than he gets. If it were that simple I too would mentally suggest that he either search for a better paying job, editing books or digging graves, or shut up. But the message of that column wasn't that simple, although I do think he managed to do a little personal bitching on the side. That's okay, that's the way he is. Then in the second paragraph of the latest column TW the man again succumbs to TW the writer and undoubtedly injures a couple of fans by putting down everyone who spoke to him for a couple of minutes about his 'poverty' column.

Again ok; everyone exhibits what seem to be eccentricities to everyone else. It just seems to me that if the proposer of the publishing scheme can't keep from a minor antagonistic action now and then, there isn't a bright future ahead for his article leading to the establishment of a vast publishing empire, or even better income for SF writers.

It is a great idea, though, involving if not the assent of the best-selling authors then the unified cooperation of the majority of the less popular SFWA members. University presses don't strike me as being a very good source of aid, because my impression is that such institutions publish for merit rather than money, which is what the White Proposal would involve. I should think that several dozens of quality books would have to be issued and distributed extensively to put any pressure on the publishers and I should think this situation would be in contradiction of the aims of a university press. Quicker and more direct results might be forthcoming if the SFWA were to offer a major publisher a package of a dozen major books at the terms of the SFWA.

If Sol Cohen is doing little more than marking time with his magazines, perhaps the SFWA could buy his line from him for a reasonable price, since they are reported to be worth so little in income of everyday income.

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Barry Malzberg  
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The let's-publish-books idea of Ted White's column has been kicking around for about five hundred years or so, I think, anytime more than one writer gets into an enclosure the talk will get around there. (Didn't Perry Chapdelaine get close to getting such a venture together two or three years ago and whatever happened subsequently? It just vanished.) Won't work though. Writers don't publish books, Ted, nor do writer's organizations. Publishers publish books. Once one begins to publish books one becomes, ipso facto, et seq and by definition a publisher with all that that entails. And we know what that entails. Don Wollheim's letter is a good one. I don't want to be a publisher and I wouldn't trust any writer in SFWA including myself to pass editorial judgment on my work.

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Poul Anderson  
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Ted White's proposition that SFWA go into publishing on its own is interesting, and may conceivably someday be practical. I'm afraid that at present it just isn't. There are two major hurdles to overcome first, capitalization and organization.

I don't know how much capital it would take to start, but do know damn well it's more than SFWA could raise in the present state of its treasury (which, I hasten to say, is not in bad shape at all, as such things go; it's merely that such things seldom go very far). If, for example, we withdrew the Nebula series from the present publisher, we'd also withdraw it from that publisher's facilities for production, distribution, and promotion. These are substantial, because they are used for many books each year, science fiction being indeed little more than a sideline. SFWA would have to do almost the same amount of work for one lonely little set of offerings.

I have no inside information about DAW Books, and wouldn't pass it on if I did; but it seems pretty clear that even a shrewd and experienced man like Don Wollheim, working in close cooperation



with a big outfit like New American Library, can't be onto any Golconda. There simply isn't that much demand for science fiction.

And Wollheim can at least keep control of his own operation and steer it onto the right courses year by year. As it is now constituted, SFWA could not. It's too loosely organized, and contains too many rambunctious individualists, for that. I am urging the members to incorporate, which seems to me a minimal first step for the settling of numerous problems. But at best, this will take time, and it may fail to come about. Unless and until it does, a venture like publication is impossible. Simply consider the legal difficulties, when there is not one artificial person to hold responsibility, but some hundreds of live ones!

What, then, can be done? Well, SFWA tries to do something about individual members' complaints, and succeeds oftener than many people realize—because usually such dealings have to stay confidential. However, it's no use pretending we have the clout of, say, United Auto Workers. Nor do I personally feel that the outfit should do everybody's work for him.

Individuals can help themselves. They don't have to sign bad contracts. Every clause in every contract is negotiable. The writer can make a point-by-point comparison between what he is offered and what is in SFWA's newly issued model contracts. (The Authors Guild has lately sent out a really elaborate one of its own to its members, an excellent document but perhaps more formidable than a humble science fiction book requires.) Then he can politely suggest changes. Probably the publisher will grant some and balk at others, but there's never any harm in trying. Currently, SFWA Vice President Norman Spinrad is researching the matter of just which house is wont to concede what things to whom, information which ought likewise to prove very helpful.

And after all, editors and publishers are not uniformly the idiots and monsters of auctorial folklore. In fact, the vast majority are extremely decent, intelligent people. They put up with a lot from us!

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**Roy Tackett**  
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Albuquerque NM 87107

Considering the smallness of the SF field I am constantly being surprised by the complaints of those who proclaim themselves as SF writers that they can't make a living of it. Of course not. But why do they limit themselves to the classification of SF writers? Better they should try to emulate Silverberg.

I've been wondering for ages what kept the magazines going and Ted White just revealed it. They can't afford to stop publication and refund the subscriptions. Science Fiction forever, after all.

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**Robert Bloch**  
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Noted Sandra Miesel's request for information regarding strikes in Screen Writers Guild. Briefly, here's the story: In 1960, shortly after I arrived in Hollywood, a strike was called which lasted about five months—terminating when a compromise was reached which, for most writers, never made up in the following five years what they'd lost in those five months on enforced idleness. When renegotiations were in order, a strike was averted by another compromise—quickly accepted by those who remembered the previous disaster. This coming year the Guild faces another contractual termination, and a strike is quite likely in view of the sorry situation.

While minimum writing fees have been raised after each strike or threat of strike, it's a completely meaningless victory, for less than 1% of all writing is done for minimum scale in either films or TV! By far the greater part is done for maximum—and that figure is not substantially any greater than it was in 1960! In other words, while everyone from ditch diggers to sewer inspectors have upped their incomes, tied their wages to cost-of-living increases, and bitched loudly because they have 'only' increased their pay 40% since 1967—Writers Guild members get what they got 13 years ago. When they get it, that is. Because, between reruns of old movies, reruns of old series, usurpation of more prime time for sports, longer programs, etc.—there are now only about half as many jobs available, even at those 1960 figures for TV. And far fewer films being made. The Guild has achieved a 'Mickey Mouse' pension plan (its base income, after fulfilling stiff requirements for minimum 10-year employment at age 65, is a magnificent \$1,440 a year) and an equally 'generous' insurance plan which seemingly, if one reads the fine print, pays off only if you don't get sick.

So much for the efficacy of WGA negotiations and/or strikes. Bear in mind that WGA has achieved this much—or this little—only because it has a weapon SFWA cannot command: i.e., after the first sale to TV or films, a writer must become a member in order to continue working for any producer who hires 'union' labor here or abroad, which in effect means all of them. So a writer must join, and if his Guild votes to strike, the writer must cease work. Only because of this has the Guild managed to do anything.

To imagine that SFWA, with its voluntary membership system, and countless non-member competitors, could achieve effective reforms through strike or boycott is, to me, going against all precedent. I would dearly love to see action taken and results obtained, for God knows, many SF writers are being paid not as little as they received 13 years ago, but as little as they received 40 years ago in some magazines. But it will require a special dispensation of providence, in my opinion, as well as a concerted effort on the part of SFWA.

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**Jack Wodhams**  
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M. Zimmer B. had a lot to say about style, but style should never be conscious. It is the struggle to write in a certain style that cocks up many potentially good writers. An outstanding example is our own John Bangsund, who drips sweat to achieve a stylistic excellence that wraps his meanings in charming bouquets of verbiage.

Effort to create literature is one of the most fruitless spendings an author may indulge. 99% of accepted literary teaching should be tossed straight out the window. The all-too-familiar crud-cult of literature as art has to be kicked up the bum by anyone who intends seriously to write. An absolute first precept is honesty. Anyone who tries to write like Bradbury, Asimov or Ballard, is a copyist, and is, at inception, an imposter. Anyone who writes as he thinks he ought to write, or has been told to write, is acceding to a self-deception that rules out truth and precludes originality.

A writer's endeavors should not be bent towards receiving applause, nor towards the obtaining of accolades for fashioning meritoriously meticulous assemblages of vocabulary. There is an ancient illusion that is still very much abroad, an illusion that the word 'art' renders literature in some way compatible and comparable to painting. It is a most unrefined error. This is to say that a masterpiece of literature may not raise two bucks when placed on the auction block (not as a rarity, but as literature) and assuredly could hardly hope to fetch the price of just one Velazquez. The values between the two forms of art are totally different. Yet many writers persist to manifest the Rembrandt syndrome, to pursue and get lost in the stylistic brushwork of shading and flourish, to result maybe in a prettily colorful canvas that is a still-life so complete as to be paralytic.

Literature is communication, and this is what a writer is most essentially bound to do—communicate in the way he best knows how. And just as essentially he must attempt cogency as he defines it, must abide by his own distinctions of relevancy and pertinence. This unto thine own self be true, eh? It is not easy. It is not easy to forego pretension, for the literary world is overfull primed with expectancies, and has a gush that would distort an accurate conveyancing of meaning into some kind of mystical experience.

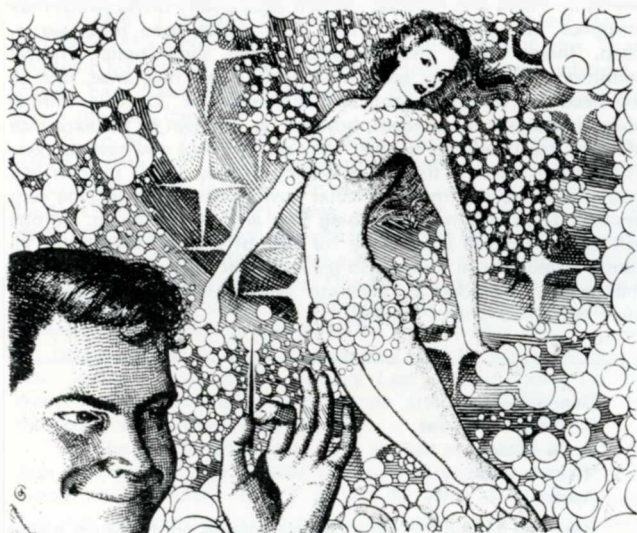
The amateurs pretend, to 'rise' to an established standard, while the pros despair of the crud fakery that would precisely confine them to a 'stylistic' format. Style is what is left after the writer has done his own thing in his own way, with heart and mind and faith, as his integrity dictates. Being honest does not pay, of course. It rarely does. A writer can get a lot of rejects this way—and I know whereof I speak. I have become obstreperously bedamned if I will alter my method, abuse my knowledge and sense of fitness, foul my style, hack, to accommodate directives to 'achieve'? market conformity. If editors fail to recognise a Lautrec when they see one, then this is their lousy perception.

As you may know, I have quit the Scott Meredith Agency. They didn't seem to be doing very much for me, and feedback was so meager and platitudinous, that over the years I find I have been increasingly isolated from the scene rather than complemented into it. Having an agent is like having an interpreter to talk around a wall—he is an intermediary who can translate as little or as much, as conscientiously or as uncomprehendingly, as he might care to.

Really, it's bad enough battling obtuse editors straight, without adding the handicap of yet another opinion from a separatist

go-between, whose reliability as a promoter must ever be suspect when performance persists ineffectual. Ah me, flunkys ever wield their master's sword poorly, and the tougher the fight, the more the aggravated old expert had best pitch in to ply his own lively cut-and-thrust.

Tiresome and depressing. And revaluation of the Aussie dollar, combined with the devaluation of the U.S. dollar, markedly reduces the attraction of the Yankee market from this end, especially that of the magazines. Disenchantment assails.



Jacques Sadoul  
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Oh! shades of Hawk Carse! How a ray-gun would be useful sometimes... It seems that my Rio speech was badly misinterpreted. First the symposium was held the last week of March 1969. The first speeches were written and read, then, starting with Harry Harrison, the last ones were improvised. I never write a speech, I only tried to say some humorous sentences about the great pity of SF in France at the time. Of course, my close friend Georges H. Gallet, first French fan, is a true amateur and I didn't speak of him in referring to editors who hated SF.

Now things are evolving rapidly. Three years ago Gerard Klein launched a high priced SF series which is quite successful. In 1972 Gallet and Bergier started a new popular series which seems to start well, and another publisher will publish a new high priced series in the first months of 1973 (modern SF, Lafferty, Dick, and so on). The popular series, Fleuve Noir, publishes 5 books monthly by French authors, some of them rather good. You can appreciate one, *L'empire du Baphomet*, in the DAW books series, by Pierre Barbet.

About the prozines the situation remains bad. There are two: *Galaxie* and *Fiction* (F&SF). They sell around 13,000 per issue. There are many fanzines but scarcely of great interest. There is also a little prozine made by fans (sales around 5,000) *Horizons du Fantastique* which publishes some interesting pages on SF.

I finally got the rights to edit and publish an anthology of Nat Schachner. I read 45 stories by him and was helped in my final choice by Georges H. Gallet and Jacques Bergier. It will be: "Ancestral Voices," "Cold," "Worlds Don't Care," "The Revolt of the Machines," "The Eternal Wanderer," "Beyond Infinity," "Redmask of the Outlands," "Intra-planetary," plus one more perhaps. Gallet will translate the stories.

I received a huge mass of mail (a total of 2 letters) asking me where and when my book about the SF illustrations in the pulps will appear. The book will be titled *Hier, l'an 2000* (Yesterday, year 2000) and will appear around the 25th of March, 1973 at Editions Denoel, 19 rue Amelie, 75/Paris 7<sup>e</sup>. It will be a hardcover book (size of *The Great Comic Book Heroes* by Pfeiffer) with 8 pages in four colour, and 164 pages in black and white. The price will be around \$14.00.

Now I'm working on a big history of modern science-fiction (1911-1971) all through this year. The book will be edited by Georges H. Gallet (Editions Albin-Michel) at the beginning of next year.

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I was intrigued by George Turner's remark that Kurt Vonnegut isn't really a SF writer because he has "a healthy contempt for the genre" and "simply uses the trappings" of SF. I wonder how much of Vonnegut's 'contempt' for SF is the work of his publishers, and how much of it is his own. It seems unlikely that Vonnegut would contribute a story to *Again, Dangerous Visions* if he hated SF completely. His introduction to *Welcome to the Monkeyhouse* (where he freely admits he wrote "a lot of science fiction") indicates that people who hate SF are really being hypocrites. Vonnegut wrote, "I asked him [college professor] what the very lowest grade of fiction was, and he told me, 'Science Fiction.' I asked where he was bound in such a rush, and learned he had to catch a Fan-Jet. He was to speak at a meeting of the Modern Language Association in Honolulu...three thousand miles away." Vonnegut has always said that SF is the literature of machines and technology, and the obvious implication is that in a world where people are dominated and profoundly affected by machines and technology, SF is not "the lowest grade of fiction," but very important. I agree with George that Vonnegut 'uses' the 'trappings' of SF, rather than, let us say, developing them and extending them, but then so do other SF writers. I also get the funny feeling that George thinks there is something more to SF than its 'trappings'—yet I think if one took away all the SF 'trappings' from a novel like *The Left Hand of Darkness*, I doubt if it would be science fiction anymore. (In fact, I doubt if there would be much of the novel left.)

Ted White's column was interesting, as usual. I can't help wondering, however, how much of the magazines' problems are caused by low sales, and how much of them are caused by low prices. Paperbacks may sell more copies than the magazines, but they are also higher priced. I rarely see 75¢ paperbacks anymore, and 60¢ ones seem obsolete; 95¢ and \$1.25 seem the average these days. And many of them don't have any more wordage than one of the 60¢ SF magazines. The obvious solution to the magazines' problems is for them to raise their prices, and their number of pages, to a more profitable ratio. A 95¢ magazine, with 200+ pages (which could probably squeeze a complete novel into each issue, along with the regular stuff), would seem to be fairly priced.

Franz Rottensteiner implies in his letter that Stanislaw Lem is a good critic because he has sold a 700-page book on SF which has been translated into several languages, sold a lot of copies, etc. I agree with Franz that Lem is a very interesting critic (even though I disagree with him as often as anyone else) but I don't think the sales of his books have anything to do with his real worth. Also, I am curious about this book Franz mentions, *Fantastyka i Futurologia*; is it just about SF? The title of it seems to translate "Fantasy and Futurology." Does it contain material on these two subjects as well? While, Franz says, it would probably be impossible for any SF writer to sell a 700-page book purely on SF, things would be somewhat different if the book contains substantial amounts of material on fantasy and futurology, and was marketed as such. Perhaps Isaac Asimov could sell such a book, if he wished.

I must admit that I am puzzled by Franz's comment that the level of fan reviewing is better the further you get from the centers of pro activity (i.e., reviewing is better in England than the U.S., better in Australia than England). Why is this (supposedly) so; What effect are pros supposed to have on fan reviewing? Franz has never said. I would guess that he thinks that the presence of pros inhibit the fan reviewers from writing anything negative about them. Yet, after reading all the negative and highly critical reviews, etc., in *SF Review*, the early *Beaboheas*, etc., it doesn't seem like too many fans are inhibited to me—in fact, a lot of them seem to like tearing apart authors. A far more logical explanation for the "lower level of reviewing" in the USA might be that in the USA there is a much stronger fannish tradition than in England or Australia, and thus the best fan writers are more likely to turn their talents in that direction, rather than writing serious articles and reviews of SF.

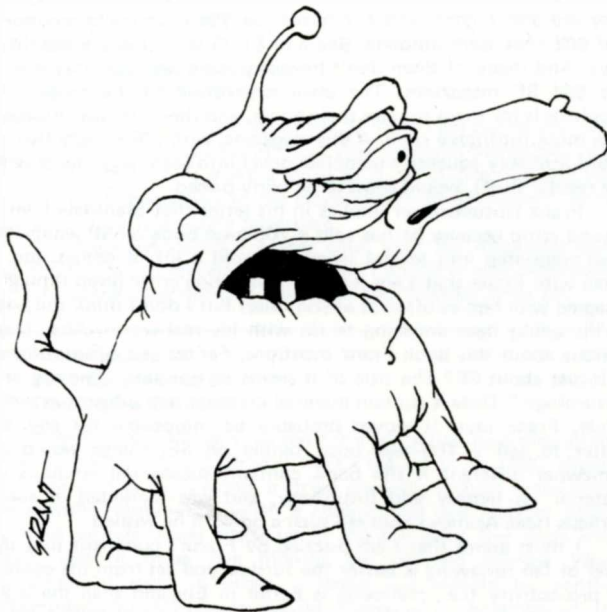
Australia's supposedly higher standards of reviewing are largely a myth. The main difference in the USA is that the best fan reviewers are scattered over dozens of fanzines, rather than concentrated in one place, like in Australia. Hence, the illusion that fan reviewing is better in Australia than in the USA. The same reasoning goes for the fan reviewers in England.

*[Magazine production problems are a lot more complicated than low prices and poor distribution. Every time prices are raised, sales fall. Whenever sales fall, distributors become even more*

reluctant to carry the small circulation, awkward sized digest magazines. There are other factors, including paper: a publisher like Ace Books buys paper for a dozen books each month, each with a press run of 100,000 or more copies. Naturally, they get a good price on the paper they buy. Smaller publishers with a lower volume pay a correspondingly higher price for paper. F&SF and the other magazines are using the same printer because the price is good: it's a paperback printer utilizing its presses and binding abilities because there's a market for their capabilities. Analog is printed at Rumford Printing, in Concord, New Hampshire, a printer which formerly printed F&SF. But they raised their prices: F&SF couldn't meet them, although Conde Nast evidently could. Once again, a larger organization has resources that smaller publishers simply can't provide.

I don't know of any sure answer, nor do I think the publishers know of any. The rapid assimilation of new technology by the publishers may hold an answer, but once again the small publishers won't have the financial ability to adopt an expensive, if successful solution.

I think the reason that Australian reviews have been of such high quality is that the final products have been dispensed from so few sources, fanzines which have sprung up in the last decade with little of the stigma associated with the longer tradition behind American fanzines. Respectable critics and reviewers haven't been afraid to appear in ASFR or SF Commentary because these magazines are seemingly part of the little magazine literary heritage, rather than the boisterous fannish fanzine heritage so apparent in the US. The incredibly literary presentation and style of ASFR created an image which appeals to the more serious contributors to SF. I don't think it's dawned on fandom that Australians can create crudzines, too, just like the rest of us. Geographical and postal isolation has certain advantages.]



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I am somewhat put off by George Turner's pompous tone ("as SF reviewer for our most literate Melbourne daily...") and don't feel that the intellectual content of his prescriptions for the improvement of SF reviews justify his snottiness. To say that "nearly all fan reviewers have one bitter lesson to learn—that their personal reaction to a book is not a fair basis for praising or damning" is nonsense. To praise or damn is to evaluate. And to evaluate in literature is to exercise personal opinion. Of course, opinion may be more or less naive, or the reviewer may be more or less literate in the expression of his opinions—but opinions they all are, nonetheless. Anyone who considers himself an objective reviewer, as Turner apparently does, is fooling himself.

Turner also says of the book *Science Fiction Hall of Fame*: "Any competent critic could mine it for a ten thousand word article." This sentence has helped to illuminate, for me, the

dissatisfaction that I have with so many of the articles that show up in *SF Commentary* and similar fanzines. Too many people mining works, digging away forever and ever, far into the night when everyone else has gone home. And what are the products of their labors? Fool's gold, usually.

I also wanted to note Jerry Lapidus's comment about writers who "write because they have to," the italics being Jerry's. This is more bullshit. It's all the more irritating because I've heard it used so many times, often as an excuse for not performing adequately, either in writing itself, or some other area. No one has to do anything. There are, however, certain basic bodily drives which may influence the decisions we make. Our bodies need food, water, sleep, shelter from the elements. When these basic physical conditions are satisfied, some more social needs may arise, such as the need for friendship and sexual satisfaction. There is nothing obligatory about these needs, however, as is shown by the existence of hermits and celibate people. They aren't things you have to have. The same is true for the act of writing. It may satisfy psychic and creative desires and in a particular environment may become very important—but it's not something that anyone has to do. No one will wither up and blow away for lack of writing. Writers, of all people, should be in touch with the reality of the world, and part of that reality includes an accurate assessment of the particular importance and rank of writing.

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*Algol 19* (complete with that depressing photo which makes me look like the prim-lipped president of a society for the suppression of something) arrived to cheer my convalescence from a perforated ulcer. Grog and dissipation, of course. The thing burst at a small party with John Bangsund, Robin Johnson and other fan stalwarts in attendance; a stiff upper lip carried me the necessary two blocks home but there it became unstarched and all was drama and Dr. Kildare stuff. So here I am with a New Year resolution—no grog or tobacco for the rest of my life. (Actually the doctor made that one for me.)

But, scanning the letter column of *A 19* I am moved to make one for myself: I resolve that I will give up baiting Franz Rottensteiner, in *Algol*, *SF Commentary* or elsewhere. For one thing, it is becoming too easy; one can rouse him to heights of tantrum (masquerading as dignified protest) with little more than a lift of the literary eyebrow, particularly if one lifts it at Stanislaw Lem.

His defence of the status of Lem as critic (though I have always felt Lem capable of manning his own battlements) leaves me bitterly cold since it is based on a work as yet unseen and rammed home by his unsupported statement that Lem is a major critic. (And nobody else is any good at all, so there! As for Blish and Knight, away with them!)

Now Lem may well be the Wilson-Empson-Leavis that SF is waiting for (though not, I fear, with bated breath) but what I have seen of his critical attitudes has provided more insight into Lem than into the subjects discussed. But this is always the fate of the critic who argues from a pre-determined position instead of investigating from grass roots—and there are signs that Lem does just this. That can be just bearable in a reviewer, not at all in a critic.

While wondering with some curiosity about the content of the vast but unseen *Science Fiction and Futurology* let me look at the few cuttings of Lem in critical posture that have come my way. All of these appeared in Australian fanzines but there is sufficient even in this restricted selection to allow the reader pause for doubt.

1. A review of a Japanese collection (*SF Commentary 23*) closes with the following: "...if we may judge from just this one example, its (Japanese) SF is even more of an institution for retarded people than Western SF." So much for Western SF and the people who read it. But it shows us where Lem stands—way up there, looking down his nose. Hardly a tenable position, I feel, for any critic, let alone one who wishes to communicate with the lowly. And a 1500 page critical work on the contents of an institution for the mentally retarded should be a curiosity for display on all the coffee tables of the land. However, we mustn't make too much of a singly unwary sentence. Let us reserve judgment—but let us not forget that the readers are the people he was talking about as well as the writers.

2. An article on Jorge Luis Borges (*SFC 20*) is perfectly

acceptable. Since it says exactly what every other commentator says about Borges (see the various introductions to Borges collections) one can only yawn and pass on.

3. A review of *The Left Hand of Darkness* (SFC 24) presents the barely credible spectacle of a 'major critic' (Rottensteiner's term) completely misunderstanding what a perfectly straightforward novel is about and actually becoming confused between plot and theme, with little indication of understanding the structural roles of either. Every reviewer makes the occasional error of haste or prejudice, but this particular error concerned his grasp of basic techniques. And this, in a critic, is a serious matter. Crucial.

4. When I pointed this out in a letter Lem replied that we considered Mrs. LeGuin's novel from different points of view. That I attacked his critical premises went without comment, whereas it should have been more important to him than any disagreement about the book itself.

5. In SFC 22 appeared an essay, "Sex in Science Fiction," which contained some interesting opinions, some peculiar misunderstandings (notably one about the cultural implication of *Lady Chatterley's Lover*) some confusing fuzziness about his definition of pornography, a healthy contempt (mostly justified) for the dealings of SF with sex and a total failure to understand how such a state of affairs had arisen. One had the impression, because of these things, that he set his attitude first and argued from the general to the particular with selection only of what would support his determination to blast and destroy. Works which display an adult attitude towards sex—notably *Last and First Men* and *The Wanting Seed*—received precious little attention, apparently lest they contravert his sweeping assertions.

6. The article referred to in 5 evoked an answer from Philip Jose Farmer and they battled it out—with a certain raised-hackle venom on both sides—in SFC 25 and 29. What emerged on Lem's side was a determination to defend his position by ignoring every thrust he couldn't parry, such as Farmer's expressed doubt as to Lem's understanding of what he read (cf 3 above). A critic should acknowledge any major point made against him and reconsider his position accordingly (cf 4 above).

7. In *Scythrop* 26 (for a change of venue) appeared an interview which was much the same as all other author interviews because the questions asked make it pretty hard for them to be anything else. But, very early, we came upon this (as a *raison d'être* for *SF and Futurology*): "Then, as a writer of science fiction, I am very interested in why the genre has attracted so little serious attention—why it is considered so unimportant." For God's sake, when did this interview take place? 1930? Does Lem really know so little of the state of the art? And later on comes this: "Just as a scientist achieves his most precise results by experimenting in an artificially created environment, so I can best understand what is happening on Earth right now by creating a science fiction novel." Ponder that one, friends. No prize is offered for spotting the erroneous statement, the false deduction therefrom and the implied solipsism.

Add to all this Franz Rottensteiner's statement that Lem considers Philip Dick the most important living SF writer and one can only hope that his reason for thinking so is startlingly good. It will have to be both original and unexpected to hold water.

Since this is a letter and of limited length, I have been unable to give these points the discussion many of them deserve. I can only confine myself to pointing out a few of the stumbling blocks to be overcome before Lem-as-critic is taken at Franz's shrill valuation.

None of the matters referred to are ultimately damning (save perhaps the matter of technical understanding, and even this is one in which all critics show the occasional blind spot). Lem may be all that Franz insists he is, but the proof is not so far with us and the endless promotional campaign begins to stick in my gizzard. It smells of idolatry, which is always suspect.

For myself, I think Lem is pretty good, perhaps even amazingly good, but full acceptance of him may not be swift or easy. Our only full length experience of him so far has been *Solaris* which, while not the masterpiece trumpeted by worshipping Darko Suvin, is certainly a major SF novel which has not had the appreciation in the West which it deserves.

But it is a novel which interposes barriers between itself and the reader. My own initial reaction was uncertain, but re-reading has convinced me of its value and I have written of it at length in an article which I trust will appear soon in an Australian fanzine.

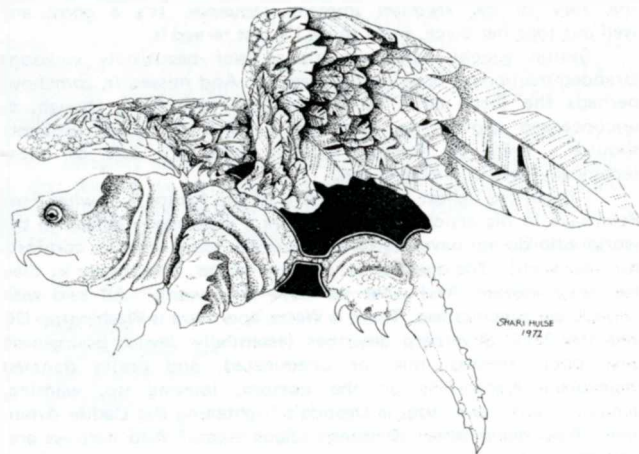
All of which means that I wish Franz would stop bellowing his advertising slogans and let us make up our own minds about Lem, who appears to be a SF personality of importance.

I am not prepared, for all my generally genial feeling towards Lem-the-novelist, to accept him as the critical answer to SF's prayer

simply on the say-so of his agent. Nor am I prepared to accept his contemptuous dismissal of people like Blish and Knight as being anything more than the noisiness of a man whose combativeness overrides his appreciation of when to shut up.

I suppose I should, for the record, take note also of his dismissal of George Turner "who, aside from his blind spot, makes an excellent reviewer for a newspaper, I am sure..." This is apparently a body blow of stunning force, for Franz has seen fit to repeat a version of it in SFC. George Turner, who has laid no claim to be more than a newspaper reviewer, remains stolidly unshattered in his refusal to be overawed by the unproven.

Ah, well, that New Year resolution didn't last long, did it?



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The cover is professional, something I wouldn't be surprised to see on a newsstand or in a college bookstore. I understand the reasoning behind the subtitle *A Magazine About Science Fiction*, but the wording seems awkward; an alternative doesn't come to mind, however.

Marion Zimmer Bradley's essay is literate, calm, open-minded, and effective in presenting a moderate point of view. Her conclusions, while implied from the beginning, are not pounded into the readers brain, but are rather helped in their formation by her great ability to turn a ramble into an engrossing narrative on the development of SF and the necessity for constant revolution (or innovation, as she might put it). She may be right that any movement to inject new creative approaches into art is, on the one hand, welcomed with naively open arms and, on the other, rejected as unnecessary frill. She may be right that, after the initial controversy has worn away, the 'new wave' is ingested in the main body of its progenitor, leaving room for the next inevitable tide. I am not certain she is right, but her ideas have the feel of truth. Her thoughts on the foundation in ideas of SF, however, are true only as far as they are presented. She believes that SF appeals to intellectuals because of its preoccupation with ideas, leaving other popular forms to the 'escape' audience. This may be true, but she forgets to add that all good fiction is fiction of ideas, and that, if the more perceptive readers of the pulps gravitated to science fiction, the most perceptive ones left the pulps altogether (or never investigated them) to devote their adult literary lives to reading Fitzgerald, Faulkner, and perhaps even Proust and Joyce. This is the foremost reason that experimentation and innovation must be nourished in the SF field—science fiction also deserves the attention of the most perceptive readers, not just the 'working class' intellectuals. Not that SF must be 'respectable,' but that it be written with respect. Which, in the end, is what Bradley herself says.

"Amid the clamor of present day SF criticism, the voice of George Turner provides a refuge of calmness and clarity." That sentence ought to be in some conspicuous place for the benefit of the more uncouth members of the SF critical world. In the few months since I became aware of George Turner, I have continually increased my admiration for his sane views and the friendly encouragement he has offered to science fiction. He's not unaware of SF's shortcomings, but he doesn't make them his critical doctrine like a few other 'overseas' writers do. His patience and sense of humor are his most obvious assets, but the insight he brings to the

genre should not be overlooked. If only he would write more about science fiction: his long range viewpoint is invaluable. I look forward to his SF novel.

**Andy Offutt**  
**Funny Farm**  
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Marion Zimmer Bradley's article is fascinating. She sounds like someone to talk with for hours. If I could remember to shut up a bit. But then she also sounds as if she's someone quite capable of (A) telling me to hush, it's her turn, or (B) rising and departing in the face of my *studium immane loquendi*. It's a good and well-put-together piece, and I think I'll just reread it.

Staton sought paths in his—as ever—beautifully well-done stranded-merperson drawing on page 12. And missed it, somehow; perhaps the (little girl?) up on the rock isn't there enough, or unconcerned enough—no, now that I think on it, she probably shouldn't even be there. I'm not sure. It's one of those technically-beautiful near-misses.

I think the ugliest high-certainty of the future is in what Fred Pohl says in his article: "But there are a great many others in the world who do not have [culture, education, super creature comforts for nearly all]. The question is: do they matter. The answer is: they feel they matter. And what we have they want." All said with remarkable succinctness. There is Watts, and there is Washington DC and the NYC Silverberg describes (essentially Jewish bourgeoisie over poor, restless, mis- or uneducated, and pretty damned malevolent blacks/PRs on the bottom, looking up, wanting, aching...) and there, too, is Uganda's frightening Big Daddy Amin, and... how many other Africans/Indians etcetc? And here we are, waiting rip-ees.

Tying Fred's article to Silverberg's was an accident, and I don't want to leave without saying that I am more than enjoying the T-J series.

I had no idea George Turner's article was going to be the issue's biggy, the high point. Here's a person of the male Australian persuasion, astanding wa-ay over there, and in lovely civilized languages and nicely-turned phrases he bedazzles me with an incredibly thorough—incredible because of its brevity and multi-pointed salience—look at SF. From atop Olympus as it were, or as seen via some sort of refraction-reflection from one spot on the planetary surface to that nearly diametrically opposite. And with lovely, too-civilized-to-be-Ameddican lines such as "Claims for genius have been made here and there, but fail on examination" and "Reviewing, with a few honourable exceptions, is firmly in the hands of people who wouldn't know a hawk from a handsaw. Criticism is rearing its scholastic head, but to date has produced nothing significant" and "...readers who persist in trying to load entertainment products with values they do not possess" and "It called itself the New Wave (it always does)." and others, others. A strange feeling, reading Turner. As though he were writing a history of SF and fandom up to 1970 ... in 2072.

I keep telling myself I don't like this goddam White and his goddam writing, but ... it won't take. Why must he make me want to slide an arm over his shoulder and suggest a drink? Just because he's so beautifully, outspokenly, ornerily honest and gloriously indiscreet? Why should I so much enjoy the over-whichd writing of someone like that? I have to mention Coulson's letter along with White's articles of this time and last. For a moment Buck rocked me back; I thought he was going to say more than he did, and he got the information in confidence. (Besides, seeing my name in a NY fanzine without castigations is... strange!) But yes, what he says about my making more money than the vast majority of SFWAers (bearing in mind, please, that 4 or 5 make as much as the rest taken as a whole, and I'm not among that 4 or 5). But it must be added that the love is involved here, too: I'd be making a damnsight more had I remained Head Muthah of the three a.j.o. insurance agencies I closed; and that less than half my income comes from SF. I've just sold my first cloth book, and apparently I'll have either 2 or 3 new paperbacks out before June 1973—but that still won't change the picture. Less than half, in both volume output and income. Which I want to change. (Sorry I said 'which!') I think you get rich writing SF by knowing nothing about it, leaving the label scrupulously off, and selling to... oh, Knopf. Otherwise—you know. Maybe some well-off fan'll buy you a beer at a con.

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SF has been rather style-less for decades, save for a few like Andre Norton. Style is an essential element of fiction, but it cannot stand alone. Now that we've done some experimenting with pure style, like a swimmer clutching a float-board and practicing his crawl-kick up and down the olympic pool, we are ready to discard the float-board and use that new skill as a tool to go somewhere; to use it in concert with the other story-elements rather than by itself.

Mr. Turner's contention that a 'classic' must of necessity be un-dated, not tied deeply to its own time and setting, illustrates what I believe to be either a lapse of memory or colossal ignorance of what a 'classic' really is. Mainstream numbers Chaucer among the classics, yet we can hardly understand a word he says without learning what amounts to a foreign language. Each item on the mainstream 'classics' list is a classic only by virtue of being the best of its time, not our time. Its relevance to our time lies not in its innate popularity among our modern readers, but in the fact that the 'classic' is a milestone, a landmark in the literary heritage.

Our 'classics' are the books which are landmarks in the development of an idea or a concept which is as yet alien to mainstream fiction. They are conceptually important works, the foundation of understanding of some outlandishly alien notion subsequently picked up and elaborated on by other authors. These second and third generation authors are totally incomprehensible to one who has not been exposed to the original 'classics.' The 'classics' of SF are not modernly enjoyable reading. But they are basic education.

*Slan* is a classic as is *The Demolished Man*. *Seetee Ship* and *Seetee Shock* are still classic, the first word on the subject. *Star Trek* will be a classic also, because it is a first as well as an outgrowth of many last words. And Wilson Tucker's *Time Masters* will remain a valued classic, one of a kind. But Marion's Darkover Series is also a classic, as much a pioneer as the Lensman Series, and even less 'dated.'

It is almost impossible to talk to a neo unless he's read these works. How can they not be 'classics'?

**Richard Brandt**  
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Two of the major classics of SF were published in the same year: Bester's *The Demolished Man* and Sturgeon's *More Than Human*. I...expect *More Than Human* to survive longest and attain true classic status, the reason being *The Demolished Man's* success derives largely from its distinctive style, while *More Than Human's* asset is the humanity of Sturgeon's story. Bester gives no great insight into the emotions of his characters, but explains how they are motivated by their own psychological quirks. They have no emotions, only neuroses. Sturgeon gives all his creations human qualities; no matter what powers they have, Sturgeon's people are not free of humanity.

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I can see your point about people burning themselves out with hyperfanac. It seems to me that one of the reasons why Melbourne fandom has lasted so long is that it is very loose. Getting a Bruce Gillespie or David Grigg fanzine is just the same as getting one from overseas because you haven't seen any of the contents before, didn't help produce it and didn't do anything to shape the direction of the fanzine or its editor. I am sure that after the WorldCon here in '75 there will be a decline in activity but not to the same extent as with other places simply because we won't have been as intense about the whole thing.



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I must take issue with one short item in Lupoff's review column—his brief note on *Clarion II*. I have not read the book and therefore can offer no opinion on it, however, even after reading the notice, I still don't know whether to buy it or not. As far as I'm concerned, if an anthology has one good story in it that I haven't previously read, I feel the expenditure on same was justified. Mr. Lupoff, instead of saying whether he thought there were any good stories therein, or at least indicating there were stories he liked, has given out a group of 'grades'—based on, for all I know, whether the authors knew how to spell. Mr. Lupoff indicated there were three stories he would grade in the 'A' category and states only that 'normal' (implied) student exercises should not be published, leaving unanswered the question of whether the three 'A's should have seen print.

In his review of *Driftglass*, he indicates there is at least one fine story—why not in this? Or, alternatively, indicated there were no stories worth reading. I have read *Clarion I*, and was pleased enough to feel my money was well spent, but just barely—certainly it was not good enough for me to buy *Clarion II* on its strength alone (my pocketbook can only support a certain number of gambles on unknown material). Thus, for me, the space devoted to the review was wasted, and could have been used to better purpose on some other book, especially as this review was definitely out of character. Mr. Lupoff generally puts over, with no uncertainty, whether he liked or disliked a given book, along with occasional criticism based on some kind of objective value scale. This is valuable to the SF reader, even though he may disagree with the opinion presented. (Back in the days when S. E. Cotts was doing reviews for *Amazing*, I found that if he didn't like a book, I could be sure the book was at least readable and sometimes brilliant.)

About the SFWA publishing books: if they are all of the quality that has marked the Nebula Awards series, I'm all for it. In so doing, they would reduce the amount of good literature the other publishers would have available (there's only so much of it), presumably lowering their sales in the long run. The other publishers would be forced to either drop their SF line or start offering some better deals and a little more respect for the finer material.

#### LUPOFF'S BOOK WEEK IN PERSPECTIVE:

Maybe it's time for a brief look backward, to the origins of "Lupoff's Book Week." That should give us a better perspective of what "LBW" is all about, and how it operates.

Back on July 17, 1964, I published the second issue of a small and informal fanzine called *OPO*, for the short-lived Fanoclast apa, Apa F. In that issue (my file copy reveals) there was a brief item titled, "Lupoff's Book Week." In a prefatory paragraph I proffered this succinct statement of purpose: "Mainly for my own future reference, here is a list of some fairly recent reading..."

There followed a list of some ten books, each with a comment ranging in length from a single word to a short paragraph. Couple examples: "*Lepidus the Centurion*: ...a very dull story of a Roman Legionnaire revived in Victorian England. Too bad." "*Bomba the Jungle Boy*: Yecchhh!" You can see that these were hardly definitive critiques, or even reviews. It was just my reading list. *OPO* 2 does not say why I was keeping that reading list, but unless my memory is failing it was for the sake of *Edgar Rice Burroughs: Master of Adventure*, a book that I was then researching. The idea was to immerse myself in the kind of books that Burroughs would have read, both as a boy and (assuming that he looked at the same kind of thing that he wrote) as a young man.

Within a reasonably short period of time the comments in "LBW" had lengthened considerably, and Andrew Porter had taken to collecting, editing, and reprinting them in *Algol*. A while later yet and there was no more *OPO*; the reviews were thereafter written and submitted to *Algol* in more conventional form.

Looking through some desk drawers this morning I came across *Algol* 12, from March 1967. Although the Burroughs book had been published in '65, I find that my reading was still largely concentrated on that turn-of-the-century era. "LBW" in that issue concerns roughly 20 books, with the following dates of writing or publication: 1924, 1965, 1965, 1937, 1902, 1905, 1906, 1908, 1899, 1899, 1905, 1894, 1883, 1917, 1902, 1946. (Plus three undated entries, but they're all by Kipling, so judge by that.)

The name that occurs most frequently in those entries is John Kendrick Bangs, an American humorist contemporary with Burroughs. I doubt that there was much influence between the two (if any) but Bangs turned out to be the author of a lot of fine stuff,

much of it fantasy, and to this day I track down every book of his that I can find, although there aren't many left and they tend to be devilishly expensive when they do turn up.

But a point that I want to make here is that "LBW" started pretty modestly, and I think I'd like to get it back onto its original basis. That is, here are some books I've read lately, and here's how I feel about them. Readers may find my comments of interest, and may wish to add their own comments in the letter column of the next *Algol*, whether those comments are in agreement with mine, amplification, disagreement or whatever.

I'm no Zeus-like authority sitting up on Olympus and sending lightning-bolt judgments down to earth. It was Zeus who did that, wasn't it? Poseidon? Aries? Well, whoever.

Maybe I've gotten a little overbearing in recent columns, or maybe some of the readers and/or subjects of reviews have over-reacted, but I'm not here to get in fights with anybody. It's on the basis of "Here's a book I just read—I dug it, and here's why." Or "I didn't dig it, and here's why."

Either way, gang, I'm much interested to read opinions of others, certainly including the authors of the books. But let's keep it on that level if we can, okay? If we have to bloody our knuckles, there are lots more important things to do it over than whether we happen not all to like the same story-book.

—Dick Lupoff

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I wasn't going to enter into any kind of a dialogue concerning [Dick Lupoff's] reviews of my books, but last issue I insulted him almost as hard as I could and he didn't seem to take much offence so maybe there's more to him than I thought, and I'll do a few lines which I hope he will find of interest.

It seems to me that one of Dick's difficulties as a reviewer is that he does not discuss what an author actually said but what Dick thought he said or wanted him to say. I used to suffer from the same problem when I was younger—if I was going to get into an argument I would try to think up in advance all the things my opponent would say, then I rehearsed really devastating answers to them until I was word perfect. Unfortunately, however, the other guy never seemed to come out with his predicted lines and this used to annoy me so much that—so as not to let my good answers go to waste—I would kid myself he had said them, then let go with my carefully prepared barbs. These arguments generally turned out to be most unsatisfactory because both sides rapidly drifted out of contact with any common ground.

Now the opening of Dick's letter is, I think, an example of a similar thing. He says I made a statement that I did not write about disintegrating marriages, whereas in fact all I said was that the books of mine he could have read at that time were not about disintegrating marriages. I pointed out that they were about difficult marriages in which most of the trouble sprang from the fact that the partners were unable to separate from each other and take the easy way out. In triumphantly refuting what I didn't say, Dick quotes from the opening of another book (*The Ground Zero Man*) which—and here's the interesting part—is also about a marriage which cannot be ended while the partners still live. Even the sentence which Dick plucks out of context to prove that I was writing about a disintegrating marriage ends with a point blank statement that the man cannot bring himself to make a move towards another woman. Hell, what more can I say? Perhaps there's a communication difficulty over the use of the word 'disintegrating.' To me a thing which obstinately refuses to come apart isn't disintegrating.

Having said all that, I'd better get in quickly and point out that although I stated that none of the books Dick had read at that time featured a failed marriage, I did not claim that such an event would never be mentioned in any of my stories. If I go on writing long enough, and selling long enough, I reserve the right to deal with any subject I think has dramatic interest, from divorce to the problems of chiropody among the hundred-toed inhabitants of Altair IV. I say this because Dick has promised to review *Other Days, Other Eyes*, in which a marriage does break up, and I don't want him gleefully running about claiming it proves everything he said all along.

Perhaps I could best sum up this section by responding as simply as I can to the two slightly plaintive little sentences in Dick's letter at the bottom of page 13. "Why Bob Shaw keeps writing of disintegrating marriages, I do not know." Reply: Dick, an imaginary

situation in which two people are so emotionally bound up with each other that they would die rather than separate—a situation which I admit having used rather repetitiously—does not constitute a ‘disintegrating marriage.’ You saying that it does will not influence all the other millions of users of the English language. ∴ “Why he denies that he writes of disintegrating marriages I do not know either.” Reply: With the reservation that I can write about a failed marriage whenever I want to achieve a particular literary objective, as I did in the case of *Other Days, Other Eyes*, the sole reason I denied your statement that I repeatedly deal with ‘disintegrating’ marriages is that in all but one of my books the exact opposite has been the case. There is no ulterior motive in my saying these things, Dick—I merely want to convey to you that, as I said above, a thing which obstinately refuses to come apart cannot correctly be described as ‘disintegrating.’

Further down in your letter you astounded me by saying four separate highly complimentary things about *The Ground Zero Man* and my writing, but you indicated you were unhappy about the scientific logic of the book. Would it ease your mind on this point if I mentioned that I got the help of a professional physicist in working out the science? And that the book prompted Greg Benford, whose qualifications as a professional scientist are well known in fandom, to write to me and say, “The thing which impressed me most was the sheer believability of the scientific background”?

An interesting point about the writing of science fiction crops up here. When we face up to it, practically all SF stories are scientifically impossible. They nearly all contain things which preclude their likelihood of ever coming true, but the writer works by minimising this aspect and playing up the plausible bits. We forgive the use of an utter impossibility like time travel provided that the author does a bit of fancy prestidigitation in getting the boiling point of alcohol right or in hinting that he is reasonably familiar with the writings of Minkowski. All the writer is doing is signalling to the reader that he is aware of the impossibilities or problems and entering into a tacit agreement that neither would benefit by destroying their favourite form of literature. Some writers are very good at this. People like Sheckley have a wry, knowing way of presenting the essential impossibilities so that you can almost hear them saying, “You and I are well enough read to know this is all balls, but lots of other people won’t know, so let’s go ahead with the idea and get some fun out of it and out of the people who take it seriously.” Perhaps one of the most difficult things in writing SF is acquiring the knack of getting readers to go along for the ride, of making that subtle personal approach which gets them on your side. For me, Kurt Vonnegut is completely unable to do this. I am one of the apparently very small band who don’t like his stuff, and it’s not because it contains an exceptionally high number of impossibilities but because he doesn’t give me the right kind of wink when he is presenting them. He always tries an oblique approach, often by having a commonplace scene and then inserting the thin end of the wedge in the form of a reference to a newspaper story which mentions the departure from the easily acceptable. You’re supposed to think to yourself: Newspapers often bungle stories, but wouldn’t it be fun if they were right just this once? I gave away my copy of *Slaughterhouse 5*, so I can’t check on it, but I think I quit reading it at an early stage in annoyance at the same gimmick being used again—which, I suppose isn’t really a good enough reason to stop reading a book. But it happened, and therefore I doubt if I would ever be a good critic.

General comments on *Algol 18*: Bester on writing was full of fascinating insights—you did a good job of work in getting hold of it—but Ted White’s article was the most interesting thing in the zine. He always is good when writing about something he knows as well as the SF publishing scene, and when he added in the raw personal stuff about the economics of his job the result was engrossing and disturbing. Probably the reason publishers have the upper hand is that all writers, in the initial stages anyway, approach their work with love and thereby put themselves at a tremendous disadvantage. Anybody who will do work for nothing will always find an employer. Even in later years the writer still finds it difficult to shake off his early conviction that the publisher did him a favour, and he never gets into as favourable a bargaining position as a plumber or a dentist. Ted’s best way to make a lot of money out of SF would be to start disliking it as much as the smart young men he mentioned, and he couldn’t do that.

FROM A LATER LETTER: I’ve been in fandom more than 20 years and to me it has always been a place for having fun and making friends. I have always watched with bafflement as some fans cut up other fans, then were cut up in return, and that’s why I

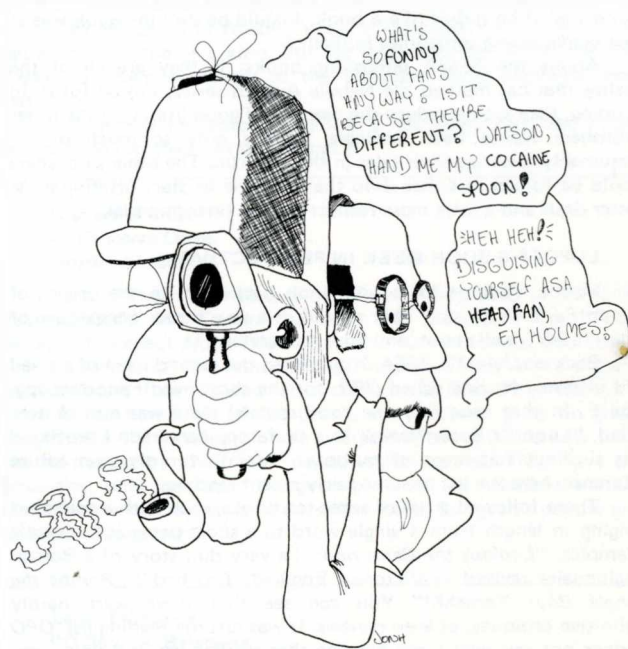
wished to avoid seeing myself mixed up in the same sort of thing.

Finally, however, I had to have a look [at *Algol 19*], which has been in the house for a few weeks. As a result I have to agree with all the fans who said I overreacted. It still seems incredible to me that anybody who is reviewing a book in a fanzine should make asides about the author’s private life, but, as somebody said, a postcard in reply would have been enough. More than enough, perhaps. When you sent me the issue with Dick’s review in it and said, “Now you’ll have to write something for *Algol*,” I would have been better to resist the lure.

The trouble is that insults start the adrenalin flowing and the pen moving faster. Interestingly enough, this is at the core of the whole issue. The reason most authors who deal with human relationships usually portray difficult marriages, etc., is that it is much easier and more interesting to write about people in conflict. The sting of argument stimulates the glands. Writing about people who are in agreement is boring for the author, and not so good for the reader either.

In future I’ll watch out for this when I’m reading fanzines. In this issue, for example, Alex Eisenstein expresses astonishment that a “man of Belfast” should criticize somebody from the U.S. on a point of “etiquette.” This seemed to suggest that my being born in a city in which the international revolutionary movement is currently having a go at a democracy makes me into a substandard being, and I might have taken offence—but what would be the point? It’s too easy to make enemies, too difficult to win friends, and life’s too short anyway.

[And that, gentle readers, is the very end of the Great Bob Shaw/Dick Lupoff International Marital Controversy.]



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The worst things I can say about the issue were the nudity, the occasional dirty words, and that mysterious symbol in the extreme lower right of the inside back cover. Apparently a Canadian symbol of political or nationalistic meaning, I didn’t see the place for it as it appeared on the page. The art was good this issue, except for the Staton drawing and the third Girard drawing (which would have been good had they not contained nudity).

Poul Anderson talks about critics. My feelings toward critics are that most of them don’t understand science fiction and that in most cases they don’t really want to. That is: they don’t have an open mind toward other ideas of what science fiction is or is supposed to be about. They judge it in terms of comparisons to mainstream stuff they’re acquainted with and demand that science fiction be like mainstream fiction in order to have any justification for being called good fiction. In fact most critics have an out-and-out contempt for science fiction as a genre, its writers, and

its readers. They look down upon it 'intellectually.' But there are some critics, like Darko Suvin, Blish, del Rey, Sturgeon, Miller, Leiber, Claeson, and others, who are exceptions to the general rule. Anderson mentions Sturgeon, Miller, Blish, and A. J. Budrys, whom I've unfortunately never had the opportunity to read anything by. But, as he states himself, these are the exceptions. And I think Franz Rottensteiner also recognizes what Anderson does in this regard. It's unfortunate that Rottensteiner should make the remark he did, and it's equally unfortunate that Anderson should respond with the kind of remark he made in the last sentence of his printed letter. I know, however, that he takes fandom more seriously than we're given to believe by that statement.

Jack Wodhams talks, without mentioning it by name, about 'the new wave.' Obviously he's on the side of that wave. And he has his points. But I've seen only one good thing about the new wave, and that's that the authors of those pieces tend to strike blows in them for liberal social causes whereas the older writers tend to take conservative positions or no positions at all, generally as a rule. There are many exceptions on both sides. But this even one good point about the new wave is more than offset by all its bad characteristics, none the least of which is its pseudo-science or non-science masquerading as science. Most of the new wave science fiction isn't really science fiction at all but fantasy. A lot of it may be good fantasy, but it still has no place masquerading as science fiction especially when so many publishers and critics around can't tell the difference between the two.

Marion Zimmer Bradley's article was extremely worthwhile. For a fantasy author, she knows more about the history of science fiction than a lot of science fiction writers do. But since science fiction, by definition, is fiction that has something to do with science, and since by tradition (going back to Verne) the science in science fiction is hard science as opposed to the soft sciences of psychology, politics, the other social sciences, and...er, religion, then the new wave, not being a part of this kind of literature, does not, I submit, belong in science fiction. What M. Z. Bradley said about science fiction as a particular kind of escapism, which it is—escapism, is absolutely true, and for this reason the new wave stuff doesn't qualify as true science fiction.

...I agreed with some of [Lupoff's] book evaluations and disagreed with others. But the one I got angry about was his review of *Clarion II*. Has he become that uppity since he became a pro? And has he forgotten what it was like being a non-pro? I don't know. But I believe the whole Clarion institution is one of the most needed and vitally productive things around in the science fiction world, I believe it does worlds of good in terms of encouraging new writers, I believe it helps to break down the remaining thin barriers between pros and fans, I believe it positively aids in the development of science fiction as a genre, and besides Clarion II was held at Tulane University in New Orleans. Three of the stories in the book are by local (New Orleans area) fans, and one of them is by the prime mover behind the founding of NOSFA, Rick Norwood. And I know for a fact that the scores the stories actually got were on the average higher than those Lupoff gave them in his review of the book, and they were given by people like Damon Knight, Kate Wilhelm, and Harlan Ellison, who've written more and better science fiction than Lupoff.

*[It certainly is a Wonderful Thing. Yes.]*

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Interesting biography of Turner, but that picture must be thirty years old. Why run it? Wish the picture of the Lupoffs had been of better quality. Why is it Harlan always looks like the nicest guy in the world in a picture, and when you meet him he is the nicest guy in the world?

*[I didn't know when I got it, but apparently the picture of George Turner was much retouched. George has confessed that the picture was greatly doctored, and that he usually hangs from the ceiling and drips green on too inquisitive visitors, photographers included. The photo we used last issue was taken by a large Australian wombat, leased from Australian fan Ron Clarke for the purpose, which climbed up onto that crowded ceiling with George and dared his ire, not to mention his green.]*

*Harlan looks nice in pictures, and is nice in person, because he knows if he doesn't, and isn't, Isaac Asimov will mention him in his ethnic humor addresses at fan conventions. Besides, Harlan is Short, and chronically paranoid about the situation.]*



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Nice to see two rational articles on much the same subject by Bradley and Turner. Aldiss and Ballard were the most important advocates of the 'new' literature and I think they had more right than anybody to make the attempt. Both had already proved their ability to write conventional SF with highly personal and original approaches. I'm afraid what they attempted in the late sixties was far too personal. Aldiss' *Barefoot in the Head* is far too complex for any kind of casual reading but since Aldiss has already proved that he has an important personal viewpoint the book cannot be ignored. Since *Barefoot* is so personal there is no way Aldiss can expect anything near universal acceptance of such a difficult work. He's got to decide for himself whether he wants to communicate with ten people or a million. I opt for a higher number than ten.

A writer like Silverberg will affect more people more strongly with more truth than any piece of New Wave work... his recent *Dying Inside* is the most perfect SF novel I've ever read. There's a good story on the surface level for the casual reader and enough levels to satisfy the most discerning critic. The whole meaning of the novel changes when one realizes that the first-person protagonist isn't particularly bright.

Though I don't particularly appreciate their experiments I do believe Aldiss and Ballard have the right to be considered seriously. What I particularly object to are the experiments of young authors who haven't proved their ability to write a comprehensible work. One writer I abhor in particular is Barry N. Malzberg. He uses a great deal of New Wave style but he doesn't seem to be saying anything that Clifford Simak or any of a number of authors have not already said. If he could prove his ability to use the regular tools of a writer well I might make a stronger attempt to dig into his work. Harlan Ellison is the only writer I know who got away with the silly self-indulgences of the New Wave.

Although I agree with many of Marion Bradley's standards of good fiction I must disagree with her evaluation of Philip K. Dick. I



think her emphasis on empathetic characterization is too strict: too much a rule rather than a guideline. Dick has strong and justifiable reasons for making his characters into puppets. One of his major theses is that men are puppets, so his characterizations are necessary. Any other approach would destroy the unity of both his philosophy and his works. Dick's personal view is important enough that he is obliged to ignore a few standards. The measure of an artist is his ability to understand which standards he can legitimately discard.

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Ah! The Day Fanzines Went Public! That's a phrase that came to mind while I was thinking of the differences between you and The Boy Wonder. While Michael looks at *Energumen* as a child-surrogate (a fact I think he admitted to in an editorial once), you take up *Algo!* as a piece of clay to be shaped. If you liked the way the thing stood up after six months, then the new issue is just an adjustment of the minor details of the last. If the work hasn't stood, then the work is scrapped, and a new *Algo!* springs forth. Michael thinks that the child must remain the same, but it can never. So rather than pursue the change winds, Michael feels he must drop it. Child killer!

Ms. Bradley's article is rather difficult to comment on. You look at it from all angles, like a jeweler looking for a fault line so he can crack it open. Like a finished gem, it has a major facet: the parallels between the introduction of sex in the '50s and anguish in the '60s. Minor facets include: an Asimovian look at the Early Bradley, an excellent defense of SF as nonescape literature, little hints on what constitutes characterization (O, Marion how many of our authors still need it!). Early on, she makes the telling comment about the critic who first demands characterization, then criticizes the stories that drop plot and idea to push some brand of characterization. He will, and has been, screamed at by the artist, who says that you can only have one at a time. I can agree with her when she points to Poul Anderson as an example of what she wants, and I can with pride point out new authors like F. Paul Wilson, and S. Kye (Sky Bolt) Boulton who will join his ranks.

The role of Science Fiction was summed up in a quote by Philip K. Dick which appeared I know not where. To paraphrase; "The role of science fiction is to read a news story that says the number of garbagemen is steadily increasing, and then writing a story where everyone is a garbageman." In this way, today's minor happening is tomorrow's major trend upsetting the world.

Reading Silverbob's journey into Guyana was a bummer after the excellent first half, but it made me reread the first part, and Bob's thing for the native breast draws a chuckle. It's things like this, Bob Shaw, that a reviewer is interested in. In reviewing a Silverberg book about two years ago, I think it was Budrys at *Galaxy* who quickly dismissed the book as being minor, but listed the adjectives used by Bob to describe the breasts of the female character.

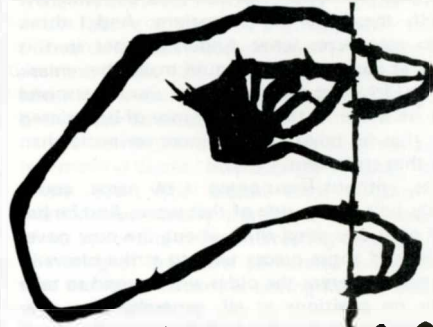
Ted White comes up with another of his rip-the-back-off-the-clock-and-see-the-inner-workings articles. As a person who was taking apart clocks and radios at the age of ten, I find this to be just as heavy as Ms. Bradley's article. The point about *F&SF* going to the same printer that does almost every magazine in the field is very interesting. If all the 'second string' magazines (not counting *ASF*—it's first string) could visit the printing plant at the same time, maybe a peace treaty could be signed, tying themselves together to get better distribution, and better visibility on the newsstands. If all five magazines (we must hold our judgment on the new *Vertex*) got together, the prospects of all would improve.

SFWA Press sounds good. I don't, however, think the University presses are the answer. One big fat problem would be terrible distribution, and secondly, the matter of cost for the buyer. I would first go to any company that publishes now, then the University presses. And for a paperback reprinter, the most obvious company is DAW Books, which has the best distribution I've ever seen in a house with an SF line.

As to the problem in who's going to be published, I think the best answer would be to have the Hugo award winners publish (if they want) their next work for SFWAP. You might ask why not the Nebula Award winners? But then you have the possibility of people buying and selling Nebula ballot votes. The idea has obvious merits, and either the present or the next SFWA administration should send out communications to publishing houses, and generally get cracking about it.

It's evident that Franz Rottensteiner wants to make a career

out of knocking over outhouses and stirring up hornets. Just reading his letter, I picture him snarling as he typed it, and I picture him with a facial tic as he reads Poul Anderson's reply. It's not a pretty picture.



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Bradley's and Turner's articles covered much of the same ground, though Bradley's was vastly superior (Turner implicitly admits this in his postscript; since his article wasn't written for *Algo!*, he can be excused to a point). I thought Bradley quite perceptive—except where it comes to Philip Dick, whose writing she obviously fails to understand. If a writer's function, as Bradley claims, is to tell us "something rich and strange," then Dick fills the bill. Dick does not simply portray "the confusion of the world we live in." Possibly it seems that way to readers who have never seen the confusion behind the facade of orderliness in life (if you can keep your head when all about you are losing theirs, perhaps you don't really understand the situation...)—but Dick does not merely see the confusion; he manages to penetrate it and come out the other side. His characters do get confused, do despair, do get pushed around—but they also usually come to terms with themselves, with the world; they learn how to survive, they find the courage within themselves and in each other to keep on in life and affirm that, yes, life, despite everything, is worth the living, worth the price. That's something Bradley has failed to grasp about Dick's writing, and the fact that so few have grasped this concept is perhaps a reason why so few SF writers match Dick's brilliance.

Possibly many readers are not taken by the notion of 'merely' surviving and finding joy in the company of their fellow humans. Perhaps the U.S. mentality demands the larger-than-life hero who never loses; perhaps Dick is not a typically 'American' writer. I say this because his outlook seems much closer to the Canadian, the kind of thing Margaret Atwood discerns in *Survival*, her thematic survey of Canadian literature. (See also S. Glicksohn's forthcoming monumental, astounding Ph.D. thesis.) Did you know, by the way, that even Canadian television dramas are decidedly different in tone from American ones? (The U.S. message is "Never take the law into your own hands, even if you are in the right. Obey legitimately-constituted authority and all will turn out for the best—magically, if need be." The Canadian message is "Life is never simple or easy. There are seldom simple or easy solutions; even the authorities can't do everything. Resolutions of problems are usually ambiguous.")

Well, I wanted to blast George Turner's ridiculous, intellectual cop-out, self-contradictory statement that science fiction is "without definable meaning," and tell you why John Campbell was the Hubert Humphrey of SF. But I see I've run out of space.

*[I don't think there's really a "U.S. Mentality" in science fiction. The idea of a U.S. Mentality is one that's personally noxious*

to me. I'd rather tend to think the attitude of most fans—not readers, but fans—is a global village mentality, a very open way of looking at things. I also don't think you can speak of Canadian versus American attitudes towards science fiction, or any other aspect of life. In the last several years I've seen, all too rapidly, the worst aspects of high density, urbanized existence surfacing in those places where I would have expected some measures would have been taken to prevent their occurrence, i.e., the metropolitan areas of England and Canada. The "this-can't-happen-here" approach which typified Canadian observers of America before 1970 has nearly disappeared. It's not a good thing; merely another symptom of future problems as we all rush headlong toward the 21st Century.

The election of David Crombie as Mayor in Toronto is a good sign that the "if this goes on" problems are recognized for what they are in the last great North American city to emerge as a megalopolis, but beware of a backlash against the change that has characterized Toronto for the last decade. A complete halt to the processes of change in Toronto will merely shunt that great city onto another possible universe of development, for the worse I think. I guess science fiction is where you find it.]

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MZB's notion that she "originated the villain who is not evil or wicked but just the hero of the counter-establishment" is a bit much! I'm in Atlanta without my reference books so I can't swear she didn't predate Anderson's *The Broken Sword*, but I'm fairly sure that she came along after Eddison's *Worm Ouroboros* and Verne's *20,000 Leagues under the Sea*.

At the risk of sounding holier-than-thou, I must say that I can't think of any book I would want to see burned except the ubiquitous *Wine of Satan* by Laverne Gay—I have never read it and don't intend to, and I never met anyone who had or would admit it, but every used book store seems to have three copies in varying states of decay taking up space on the shelves...

Oddly enough, when those pro- and anti-Vietnam ads came out in *F&SF*—I don't remember seeing them in *Galaxy* myself, but they were doubtless the same lists—I found that most of my favorite writers were on the 'anti' side, so I am not so sure I agree with Pohl's contention that the difference is merely one of current tactics. I don't think you can separate the means from the ends that neatly. Still, I agree with him in general, except for the notion that melting the icecaps would "drown us all"—not everyone lives in New York, after all. The generally quoted figure for the rise in the water level of the oceans due to melting of the icecaps is 30 feet. Enough to make the coastal cities unlivable, but hardly enough to drown anyone, since the rise would be quite gradual.

[Actually, the rise in the sealevel from melting of the icecaps—Greenland, Antarctica, various glaciers—would top 300 feet, not 30. I think you'd better stay in Atlanta; according to my maps of the continent that city will no longer be merely the capitol city of the south, but also, due to its position in the Georgia highlands, a coastal port of some capacity. Some areas of the world won't be affected too much, but we'll have to write off much of Europe and the industrial northeast US.

A more immediate threat is evident in Great Britain: the areas around the North Sea are sinking while the coast of Scotland is rising. Small fishing towns of the 15th century are already gone, while it's been predicted that London itself will have slipped beneath the waves in only ten centuries.]

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Some are indeed fortunate to work in a job which enables them to enjoy both high wages and high 'job satisfaction.' However, writing SF at least has the advantage of being able to be done in combination with one's 'ordinary' job, though obviously things would take longer to do, comparatively speaking. A man who is in this position is fairly fortunate.

From what I've seen in the letter column, I wonder whether SF writers in the States get paid comparatively low wages? The scale of salaries over here seems to vary widely, from the little I know of it. Perhaps in the States it's not so much not being able to do SF writing full time, as not being able to afford to do so. It seems a little ungrateful to complain that it's not economically viable to write SF full-time, in view of the above.

WE ALSO HEARD FROM: Paul Anderson; Dick Geis; Michael Izak; Richard Brandt; C. Lee Healy; Gene Wolfe; Akitsugu Tashiro; Laurine White; Alison Weir; Fredric Wertham; Jerry Lapidus; Grant Carrington; Alpajuri; Barry Gillam; Ursula K. LeGuin; Gerard Giannattasio; Andrew E. Porter; Bernard Zuber; Philip Cohen; Leigh Couch; Bruce Gillespie; Sueellen Vazquez; Tony Thomas; Joy Hill; J. R. R. Tolkien.

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