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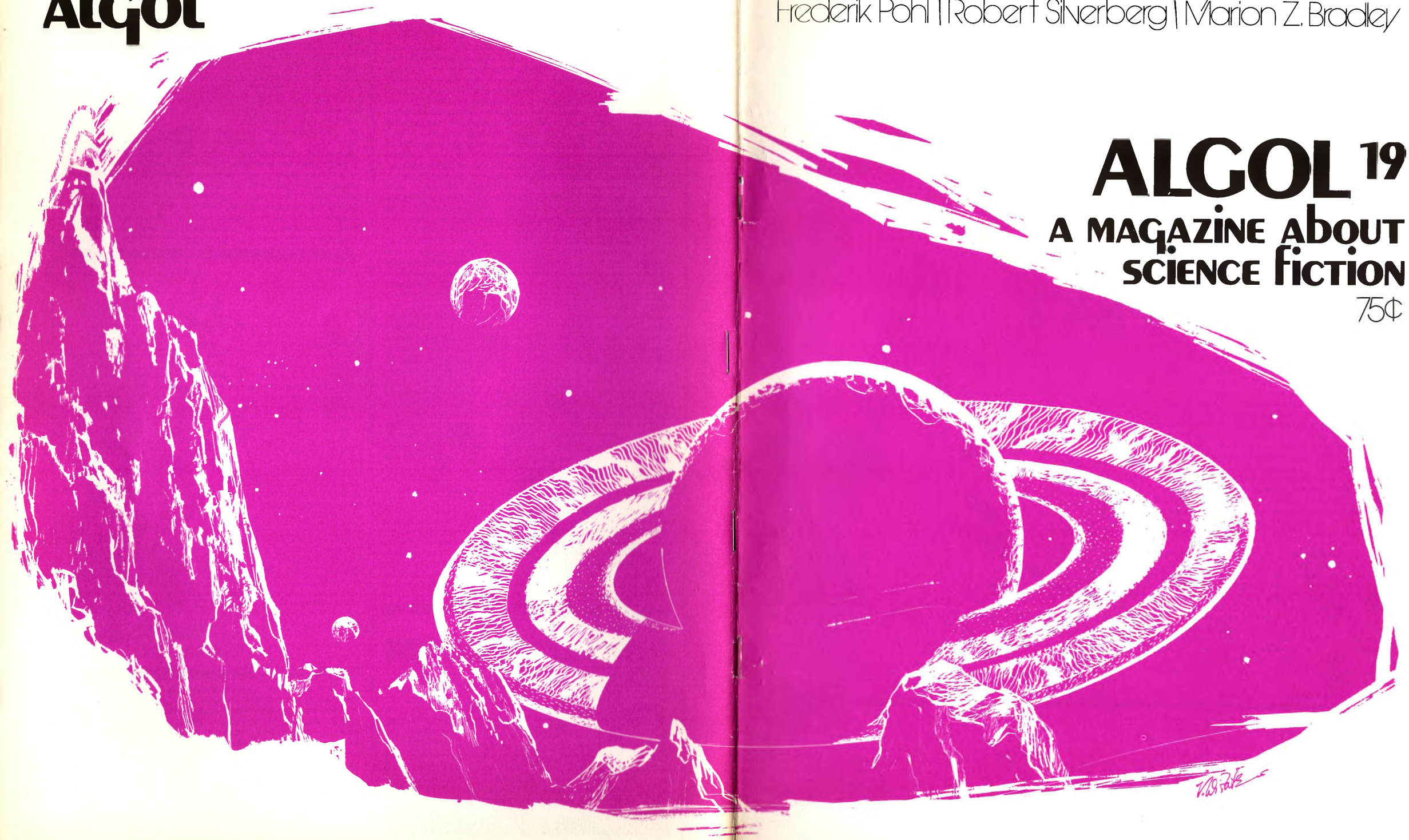
THIS ISSUE Ray Bradbury Dick Lupoff Ted White
Frederik Pohl | Robert Silverberg | Marion Z. Bradley

ALGOL 19

A MAGAZINE ABOUT SCIENCE FICTION

75¢



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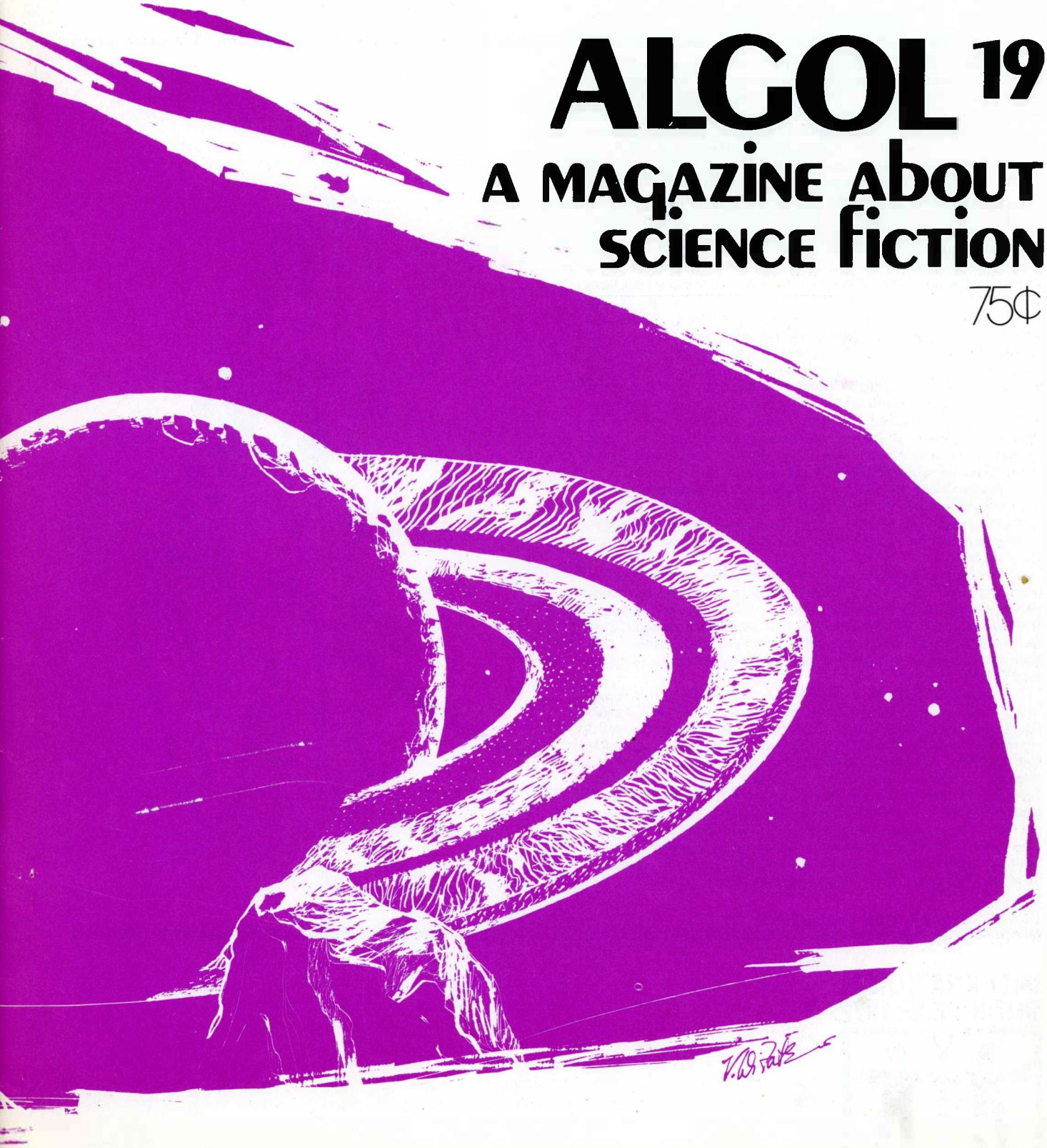


BETELGEUSE

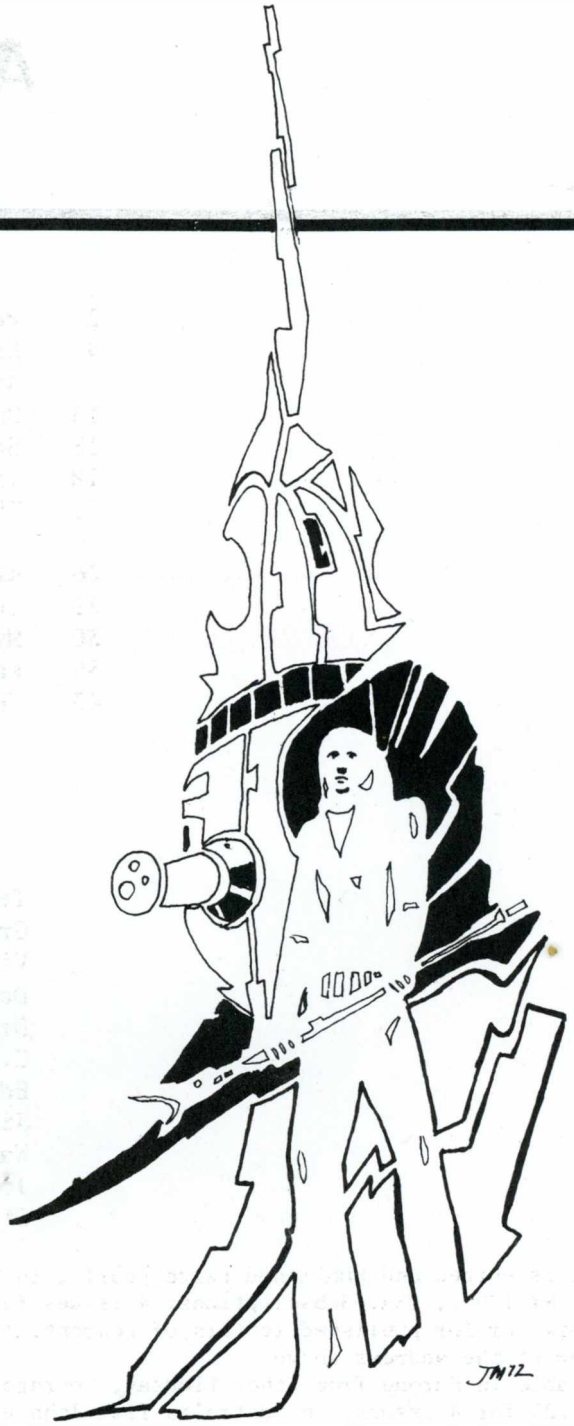
Change is the standard by which we measure progress. Change, for good or bad, is the catalyst by which we alter the present and shape the future. Without change, we would enter a universal physical and mental doldrums. In keeping with this spirit of change *Algol* reflects the physical and spiritual changes in science fiction. A new look for the magazine: typeset letters and contents which will spread throughout the magazine in future issue. A new subtitle which expresses the outlook of the magazine for interior contents and bookstore sales.

"A magazine about science fiction" clarifies exactly what *Algol* is about. When I began publication nine years ago, I originally chose the name *Nova,* I rechose *Algol* when I learned there'd already been a *Nova,* published by Al Ashley in the 1940's. *Algol* is not a well-known word in the SF lexicon; its real meaning descends from the Arabic for ghoul or demon, the name given to a variable star which ancient astronomers thought was a blinking, cosmic eye peering back down their telescopes. Of late *Algol* has stood for ALGOrithmic Language, a computer language based on use of Boolean mathematics. It's a good name for a magazine connected with SF: a language for the infancy of robotics joining us to learned study of the cosmos and finding its roots in medieval speculation about the surrounding universe. And, effective this issue, Beatle-Juice reverts to its original spelling, Betelgeuse. Like Algol, Betelgeuse is a variable star. Befitting an editorial, Betelgeuse is a red giant, perhaps the first thing to be noticed in its neighborhood.

Change is the primary means by which we measure progress. That change can befoul our air or send a vessel to the moon. As long as *Algol* changes and grows I'll never become tired of publishing it, of engaging in the creative process that sends it into your mailboxes twice a year.

And, as change must be a constant, it comes as no surprise to learn that Mike & Susan Glicksohn's *Energumen* will soon cease publication. Mike gives as their reason, "fulfilling one's objectives." It's been apparent for several issues that their fanzine had reached its creative limits and, like some mind-created universe, was beginning a process that could only result in permanent stability or total implosion.

Energumen exploded on the fannish scene with its first issues, issues that helped bring about an expansion of the artistic boundaries that fandom and presumably the post office would allow. Within issues its artistic daring had been replaced by equally high standards of editorial excellence. Fandom recognized this and awarded *Energumen* the honor of a Hugo nomination for Best Fanzine not once, but twice. But *Energumen* reached a plateau of excellence within the first five issues from which it neither climbed nor fell. "The challenge is in getting to the top, and staying there long enough to prove it wasn't a fluke, not in maintaining your position interminably." Mike had proven *Energumen*'s success no fluke, and he's ended their run along the top of the world.



CONTINUED ON INSIDE BACK COVER

ALGOL 19

A MAGAZINE ABOUT SCIENCE FICTION

CONTENTS

2	Betelgeuse: editorial	Andrew Porter
4	Experiment Perilous: The Art And Science Of Anguish In Science Fiction	Marion Z. Bradley
13	On A Book Burning	Ray Bradbury
15	Science Fiction As Social Comment	Frederik Pohl
18	Traveling Jiant	Robert Silverberg
21	The Overseas Scene: An Australian Viewpoint	George Turner
26	ALGOL's People: George Turner	The Contributors
28	Lupoff's Book Week: books	Dick Lupoff
30	My Column	Ted White
35	Random Factors: letters	The Readers
43	The Penultimate Truth	Meet Your Mailing Label

ARTWORK

Terry Austin.....30
Grant Canfield.....38
Vincent DiFate.....Covers
Dany Frolich.....20, 28
Dian Girard.....14, 39, 41
C. Lee Healy.....35, 36, 37, 40, 42
Eddie Jones.....34
Jim McLeod.....2
Walt Simonson.....43
Joe Staton.....12
Steve Stiles.....25

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EXPERIMENT PERILOUS: THE ART AND SCIENCE OF ANGUISH IN SCIENCE FICTION

"I see you came here determined to suffer, and nothing on Earth is going to stop you."
Gladys Schmitt: CONFESSORS OF THE NAME

Much of the controversy about New Wave versus hard line or traditional SF reminds me very much of a discussion about art which takes place in a historical novel. The discussion takes place at a Saturnalia in decadent Rome. The hero is listening, reluctantly and with a hangover, to some very, very bad poetry written by a friend; when he finally objects, the friend gives in gracefully and says, "Oh, well, skip the whole thing: I don't really know why I wrote it." Whereupon the hero asks him, truculently, to explain why he *did* write it, and a third party bursts in with the quotation above, cites the rotting state of the culture as an excuse for the decadent bad art of the time, and asks, in rage, if our hero expects the writer to write like Euripedes. The hero retorts in anger that this also is a good question: why *doesn't* he write like Euripedes? And the third party snarls, "Because he lives in the fourth year of the reign of the Emperor Decius, that's why!"

Much the same sort of attitude seems to be floating around the world of writers today: the idea that almost anything which a writer chooses to do can be explained, can be excused, by the state of the world and the society in which he lives. On the one hand, we have an earnest little stream of writiers who would go along with such people as McLuhan in stating that the novel as an art form is dead and that we must conscientiously follow along in burying the corpse as swiftly as possible, and proceed to the next step, which they may call non-novels, multimedia experiments, nonlinear presentations, etc. They may do it well, as with John Brunner's enormous jigsaw constructs in STAND ON ZANZIBAR, or they may do it poorly.

On the other hand we have the mainstream apologists, who complain that whenever they attempt to apply the artistic disciplines of the mainstream -- realistic characterization, modern stream-of-consciousness techniques, or stylistic experiment -- to SF, they are at once condemned as New Wave. These people are all too apt to grow defensive, and, if one criticizes the effectiveness of their techniques, or even whether these techniques are really valid in SF at all, they tend to accuse the critic of wanting to thrust all SF back to the level of the Gernsback era.

There are some would-be writers, of course, who attempt to circumvent any attempt at a disciplined and critical inquiry into just what they are doing, and how effective it is, by assuming that the critic just doesn't understand what they are doing (or isn't capable of understanding) and that if he did understand, he would automatically praise it. I don't think we need to bother unduly about this last group; maybe to understand all is to forgive all, but I doubt if any critic could accept the theory that to understand all is to *approve* of all!

A great deal of the controversy over the New Wave in SF seems something like a replay of a controversy which was raging, quite seriously, back in the days when I first began writing SF in the late 40's and early 50's. For the benefit of newcomers to the field, it was: Is Sex Valid in SF?

Strange as it may now seem, there was a day when it was actually questioned whether something

MARION ZIMMER BRADLEY

as basic to human nature as sexuality had any place in the field at all. And, strange as it now seems, there were actually valid arguments on both sides -- not only on one side, as some might feel. It was argued, and with some justice, that sex was being adequately and well treated in the mainstream of fiction. SF, as the fiction of ideas and of technology, had other fish to fry, many writers felt; what the heroes and heroines did in bed was not really a particularly valid part of the genre at all. A few critics felt that SF was "almost obscenely sexless." Others apparently felt that like the meals the hero ate, unless they played a valid part in the story, the bedroom behavior of the characters occurred offstage and was no more relevant than any other biological process.

By the time I entered the field, the battle was at least partially won. I felt -- and feel -- that all the controversy over sex in SF was justified and valid. Back in those days, there were some people who took a substandard SF story, threw in a lot of not-very-well-written, not-very-interesting, and thoroughly irrelevant sex, and managed somehow to promote the story as brave, new and daring just because they had managed to do something new and different. And, wouldn't you know, when anyone pointed out that this was a poorly written, completely unconvincing story, they complained that the critic was just a prude who was kept from a true understanding of their genius by his distaste for the sex in the story.

Alas, we are now seeing a replay of this situation. It may seem, to the serious writer, that there cannot justly be a discussion of whether psychological realism, intense attention to the plight of man in technological society, careful characterization, and a new or experimental style in writing have a place in SF. He may feel that all the tools of a writer belong in SF just as they belong in any other type of fiction. Whether he uses them well or badly, he may furiously defend his right to use any or all of these techniques; and chances are that the more badly he uses them, the more violently he will contend that onyone who criticizes them simply does not understand what he is trying to do with them.

This puts the critic in the classic double bind. If he disapproves too violently, he is accused of not understanding; if he accepts too readily, he is in the same predicament of the people who were afraid to admit that the Emperor in the fairy tale was naked as the day he was born. And if he has the intelligence, integrity and discipline to say firmly, "Yes, I knew what this writer is doing, and I simply do not like it, do not approve of it, and do not think he is doing it well," there are all too few who will listen in the same spirit in which the criticism is made.

Too many writers -- and our younger writers are far more prone to it than some of the others -- are far too ready to say, when the so-called New Wave is attacked, that the critics are trying to retain pulp standards of fiction, to keep SF isolated from its rightful place in the media.

But there is and must be a valid controversy about what can legitimately be introduced into SF in the name of bringing it up to date, and the reasons are historical. Look back at where and why SF originated and why it has always been a special case among even the fiction of escape.

It was that, all right. It was as much a fiction of escape as the Western or the soap opera.

EXPERIMENT PERILOUS: THE ART AND SCIENCE OF ANGUISH IN SCIENCE FICTION

But it had one thing which differeentiated it from the Western, the soap opera, the horror story (this, without articulating it, is why SF lovers have always rebelled against being identified with weird or fantasy lovers) or even the mainstream thriller; *it was a fiction of ideas*. Its whole philosophy of escape was based, not on the commonplace escape theme of getting away from one's own commonplace life into one more exciting and entertaining, but on the escape into a realm of ideas, of the mind. This is why SF appealed to intellectuals, in a way that no other fiction except perhaps the "classic puzzle" detective story has ever done.

For, after all, most escape fiction *turns off* the mind. The housewife escapes from her dirty dishes into a soap opera or confession magazine where she can commit vicarious adulteries or suffer miseries which can make her return contented to her dishpan with the smug belief that after all, she could be worse off. The trapped office worker or tired commuter finds vicarious exciting life in the mountain-climbing, cave-exploring, tree-swinging life of the Talbot Mundy hero or the Tarzan jungles. The schoolboy or schoolgirl finds compensation for the dullness of his algebra homework by standing on the deck of a windjammer with Horatio Hornblower or someone like him.

SF, at least in the simpler forms, has this appeal as well. The action SF, always in the lower echelons of the pulps, was often an analogy to Westerns, and the reader was simply brought under a red sun or seven moons, to shoot it out with Bems instead of bandits. But even on this lower level, the unintelligent reader usually could not cope with this stuff. His imagination, stunted in childhood by a bad school system and the limitations of his brain, found this stuff -- I quote from many of the people I knew in my teens -- "Just too weird," or "crazy" or "too fantastic." Instead of being excited by the strangeness, he felt frightened and threatened, and went back with relief to the shoot-out at the old corral.

Thus, even at the most primary blast-the-Martians level, SF acted as a sorting device to distinguish, among pulp readers, the thoughtful, imaginative and articulate from the dull seekers of escape. If you doubt this, pick up a copy of the 1943 PLANET STORIES, surely the least sophisticated of the adventure SF magazines -- and turn for a moment to the readers' columns. The letters are literate, highly imaginative, and intelligently critical of the inner cohesion of the stories. Contrast this with the letter column of the average Western magazine, whose letters repeated, ad nauseum, every month, almost the same letter: "I sure do like your magazine. "Gunfight at the Old Tavern" was a great story. Keep up the good work. Loyally yours, Joe Blow."

And this is only the lowest strata of SF readership. When you get into ASTOUNDING, GALAXY and the like, you find an audience even more intelligently demanding of the highest criteria of their chosen fiction. It must have been many things; but above all, it must have been *ideas*. These readers were not looking so much for vicarious experience of life as they were seeking food for thought, new ideas, and, yes, a sense of wonder.

The plot, or the idea, or even the gadget or gimmick, was often the hero. The hero was often the most replaceable part. Many readers of SF, when questioned, admitted that they read almost no other fiction; their other reading, if any, was usually nonfiction or technical-professional material. To say this is not to put down SF automatically, or even to call it bad.

My own entry into SF and later progress as fan and professional writer were fairly typical of that era. I was an omnivorous reader from childhood -- I don't think a day has passed in the past thirty-two years in which I have not read at least one book, unless I was in the hospital in a coma. I gravitated to SF because before I was sixteen I had exhausted three school and two city libraries and was starving for something new.

SF interested me at first because there was something relatively new to think about; the people involved in SF had more interesting lives than the various people in sea stories, teenage novels, detective stories. I was not especially interested, at that time in my life, in dates, dances, and the other trivia of teenage novels. Nor could I get interested in the sordid realism of stories about the gutter or the poor; I lived there and felt that most of the writers were romanticizing it from outside. SF then fed my hunger for ideas, and SF fandom fed my hunger for contact with people who were more interested in ideas than in beer, dancing, fast cars and the price of cheese. (I was seldom more angry than when some "insurgent" fan of the 40's sneered at young fans for staying in the hotel to listen to Lester del Rey when "right across the river, Cincinnati was wide open and roaring." I never could see it and I can't now. The lure of sex and liquor are great -- but by God, they're available anytime; the opportunity to listen to intelligent intercourse comes but once or twice a year. Which is why I seldom waste time drinking at conventions -- I can do that at home -- and why snogging and the more obvious joys of interpersonal relationships are ancillary to the renewal of old ties with congenial companions.)

As an omnivorous reader of all kinds of fiction, when I began to write the stuff, I felt that there was something lacking in much SF, which I had enjoyed in the better work of the best writers. The people in SF often seemed like pegs on which to string a plot. Heinlein's BLOWUPS HAPPEN is a classic, and very good, story of vintage-1941. I challenge anyone, without looking it up, to even tell me the names of the characters, let alone anything about them personally.) The unforgettable thing about Lester del Rey's NERVES, in the same time period, is the way in which his characters emerge from their surrounding ideas. It was a real story, not just an SF story. I liked them both, but I liked the del Rey effort more.

If I ever thought about what I was doing when I began writing SF, it was influenced by this consideration. The first SF story I ever wrote, which was never published because it was referred to as a "character sketch" and had little plot, was submitted first to my creative writing teacher in college. He praised the characterization quite highly -- "The thoughts of the Moon pilot are extremely appropriate to the situation" -- but then demanded sharply, "but why waste your time on so fantastic a situation? Are you afraid to deal with real-life problems?" He suggested that for my next story I concentrate on some actual, genuine problem, such as a girl on a dateless Saturday night, or a child facing the death of a parent.

My reaction was "Oh God, why bother? These have been written ad nauseum." At the time (1948), I firmly believed that man would go to the Moon someday. He apparently didn't, and resented my attempting to figure out how a man, or in this case a woman, might feel if she did. At the time I simply did what all misunderstood adolescents do; decided once again that although I might be young and foolish, criticisms of my folly were often so far beside the point that I need not listen, and tuned him out.

My first published story came into the same category. It was called FOR WOMEN ONLY, and published in a brief-lived magazine in 1953 named VORTEX. It was not a good story. It was about an android female who actually gave birth to a child, when this was illegal. But it had something never before attempted in this kind of story. Instead of caring how the scientific miracle happened, I concentrated on how the android woman *felt* about it. It was a slight story and died without a ripple. But a couple of years later I wrote CENTAURUS CHANGELING.

At the time I couldn't understand -- I was more modest then than I am now -- why after this one story, many professionals accepted me as a fellow pro, while other fans and I myself still thought of myself as just a fan with a little success. Now I realize that I had done something quite new: many writers had explored mutant children and the birth of something strange and fantastic, but I was the first to explore in SF *how it would feel* to be the mother of such a sudden strangeness. (Not until ROSEMARY'S BABY did that idea get into the mainstream.)

I was not, of course, the only writer exploring this new departure. Theodore Sturgeon went further and made history with his searching and intense exploration, in a SFnal context, of a variety of emotional experiences. I just happened to be riding the wave of the time. SF had suddenly discovered empathy and characterization. This was before it discovered sex. It had not yet grown gonads, but it had discovered that even the hero of an SF story could bleed when cut, cry when hurt.

My own field has always been the combination of SF with adventure fantasy, a field even more given to careless characterizations and action without much human feeling. My own SWORD OF ALDONES I feel was not a very good book. Nevertheless it won a place on the ballotting for a Hugo (although in a Midwestcon speech I implored people not to vote for it) and every time I attend a convention I am still mobbed by people who still have a sense of goshwow about it. Having a natural share of curiosity I have tried and tried to figure out *why* anyone liked it. I know why I liked it, of course; otherwise I wouldn't have written it. Could this be why other readers like it? Where was my head when I wrote it?

I explored one theme, rare before and since in SF and even rarer in fantasy or sword-and-sorcery; the idea that, as the hero has more capabilities than the average man, he also has more capacity to feel strongly about what happens to him. Lew Alton, in this book, is living with the knowledge that years ago, saving his people from an extra-dimensional horror, his young and much-beloved wife had been killed in the crossfire. The usual "hero," needless to say, usually regarded this sort of catastrophe as just part of the scenery. Conan's various girls get stabbed, eaten by dragons, or strangled by Bems with monotonous frequency; he never seems to remember the litter of bodies in the wake of his sword. The villains seem to care even less. Yet I reflected that one side's evil rebel is the other side's valiant freedom fighter; the villain of any given story would be the hero of his own. If they happened both to genuinely love the girl who died, the seeds of a resolution of their blood-feud lay in that very fact.

EXPERIMENT PERILOUS: THE ART AND SCIENCE OF ANGUISH IN SCIENCE FICTION

So I seem to have originated the villain who is not evil or wicked, but just the hero of the counter-establishment. I hoped, actually, to provoke comment as to whether the villain was not a better man, fighting for a more worthy cause, than the hero, and the hero simply a good man fighting misguidedly for a lost cause. Robert E. Lee is a hero, but nevertheless he fought on the side of tyranny and slavery.

I was also sick and tired of the hero who took all his slashes and scars for granted. In most books the interesting scars on the faces of the heroes are just what the old manuals on how to write SF used to call "a tag of character;" it never occurred to anyone that a scarred hero might actually suffer self-conscious agonies about how messed-up he looked. And also, Lew Alton had lost a hand, and I went right out of the hero tradition by making him resent it and even have trouble actually handling things.

I'm citing my own book as an example merely to note the characteristics of the time when I began writing. Poul Anderson explained it much better in a Detention speech when he raged against the kind of people who were defined as "spacemen" or "engineers" but no one ever saw them working as spacemen or doing any engineering. Theodore Sturgeon, in a sharp criticism of Ayn Rand, referred to the kind of characters who had "speech glands and sex glands but no sweat glands" and said that in summation, characters should "displace water when they bathe." I tried always to bear in mind that the people in my books were *real* for the duration of the book; that they got hungry and thirsty, bled when they bumped into things, and would take time off to look admiringly at a beautiful sex object, even when -- or *because* -- there was a BEM outside waiting to eat them up.

This may seem very elementary to today's writers, reared on a tradition of literate editorship and the discipline of good narrative fiction applied even to pulps and paperbacks. But it was criticized, and criticized severely. The criticism seemed to run along such lines as "Who cares about the personal troubles of the characters? Only the science ought to be important in SF. If I care about a man's troubles with his wife, I'll read an ordinary mundane novel." Another critic laughingly summed up the problems of the "new style" SF story, as compared to the old style where the hero simply had to save the world, as a hero who has Martians attacking him, sand in his spacesuit, and a letter in his pocket saying that back on Earth his wife is leaving him; to cap it all off he has a toothache.

Was this criticism just carping at a new style, and the critics trying to force us back to the old pulp standards? I think not; there were some stories which went so far into exploring this new thing, SF about real people who bled when they were cut, that they lost sight of the original raison d'etre of SF, as outlined above; to feed the sense of wonder, the hunger for new ideas, the need for something strange, beautiful and new. Ray Bradbury, a fine enough writer to belong in any mainstream, occasionally went so deeply into his stories about the feelings of a small boy in a small town that they jumped right outside the field entirely, and in such stories as THE FIREMAN, or its later incarnation, FAHRENHEIT 451, became vicious social satire and criticism which was less SF than even George Orwell's 1984. His anti-science, anti-technology attitude went so far that at times he was accused of writing anti-science fiction. Margaret St. Clair wrote some funny soap opera parodies about a young couple called Oona and Jick. They were terrible, and anyone reading them would have wondered if characterization hadn't gone *too* far. And Judith Merrill wrote two tremendously moving stories which were hardly SF at all -- SHADOW ON THE HEARTH and DEAD CENTER -- but simply dealt with domestic tragedy in a slightly futuristic setting.

This is not even to mention floods and floods and floods of post-bomb stories, reflecting little more than the gloomy attitude of that day's SF writiers about where we would all be if This Went On. These floods were seldom even tear-jerkers; just eyewash. They had no plot, but relied heavily on atmosphere and character to make their point. And an ominous preoccupation began to be seen: the first shadows, perhaps, of what was to be expanded into a school by the worse and less competent writers; a preoccupation with STYLE.

A good writer can do what he pleases to tell a story. The controversy about sex in SF centered mostly upon the bad writers who concentrated on sex for its own sake, not to tell a better story, but to hide how poorly a bad one was told. Very few people criticized Theodore Sturgeon, no matter how far out the sex in his stories, because they were good stories and the sex belonged there. No one has ever complained, at least in my hearing, that the meticulous and excellent characterization in Poul Anderson's stories obscures the plot -- because Poul does not neglect plot for atmosphere or characterization. But just as there are writers who used sex to shore up a story which could not stand alone, just as there were writers who created fascinating characterizations to divert attention from their weak plots and flimsy command of situations, there now began to be writers who allowed a

"beautiful" writing style to distract attention from the fact that they really had neither a story to tell nor a point to make.

And here, alas, the critics of the so-called New Wave have had to break on the hard rock. Criticize a writer's style, or his over-use of style, and you are accused of wanting to drive us back to the pulp days when only plot and action were important.

All this controversy has been obscuring the real point; that in most writers, style cultivated for its own sake is a vicious a misuse of art as sex-for-its-own-sake -- or that disgusting cliche of Victorian writers, pages and pages of descriptions of the weather and landscape. Style for its own sake, for the sake of "beautiful writing," becomes merely mannerism; an affectation. No one objects to style -- beautiful, poetic, haunting or harsh -- provided it is used simply as a way of making a story more effective. Theodore Sturgeon once wrote a story about a girl and a unicorn. It was written in the kind of poetic prose which I usually dislike intensely. Nevertheless the point the story made was so genuine, so truly felt, so given to emotion, that I now think of the lyric style simply as an indissoluble part of the story.

It is also true that writers, especially intellectuals (and with the exception of a few old-style action-pulp hacks, writers of SF are mostly intellectual in background), like to experiment with new things. Sturgeon (I use him so often because he is both prolific and versatile) experimented, sometimes unsuccessfully, with various styles. He was, as far as I know, the first person to tell a story in the second person singular, at least in SF. (THE BULKHEAD.) And remembering only his successes, most people now forget his constant experimentation and how often, comparatively speaking, he failed.

What many of the new wave writers and even more of their critics dislike to realize is this: we are in the middle of an era when it is not easy to write at all, it is difficult to write well, and in an age of media, McLuhan and messages, it is almost impossible to write in a way that will satisfy all the voices which clamor about us. The older writers may have found an uneasy peace by saying "Since I cannot please everyone, I may as well please myself, and try to please my readers and the guy who signs the checks as well." The less confident among us will ask, as I often do, with real self-searching: "Has the world changed? Is the kind of fiction I write really so far out of date? Should I fold my tents and my typewriter and get a job doing something else?" The more arrogant simply lash out at the New Wave and condemn the new writers wholesale.

The younger writers have an even more difficult task. They grew up in a world where writing was a skill little regarded by their peers; I am often astonished that anyone, these days, musters the self-confidence and the inner quiet to write at all, and we cannot expect them to write in the same way as what I once called "the generation that learned to study with the radio off." For good or evil, and I refuse to debate which, we live in a world assailed by multimedia and they will write it, or try to, as they live it. A fourth century Roman of the decadence could not write like Euripedes. Euripedes, the decadent Roman said, questioned everything -- but not the very condition of being human, the very value of the human state. And in decaying, collapsing Rome, with the Goths at the gates of the city, nothing else seemed, to the intellectual, worth questioning at all.

Likewise, the Depression-firmed intellectuals of the 1940's questioned everything -- but not the very existence or continuance of society and the world; in the 1970's, between atomic bombs and a poisoned and polluted world, the younger writers must question this, too.

When they reach SF it will not be the strange thing it was to us. Back in those days the very act of technology was in itself exciting. We saw science making great strides to change the face of the universe for the benefit of mankind. That kind of innocence about our fiction of ideas and technology has gone, probably forever; some people still have faith in technology, just as some people still have faith in Christ, but it is not the old charismatic miracle thing.

And in a world of technology, where a Moon flight is not SF but rather a headline, we must reach elsewhere for the sense of wonder; the New Wave is reaching in all directions.

SF has come a long way. From all technology and no character, it has come to a point where its basis is very often to show the effect of technology upon character and the quality of life. If it also feels it must reflect the continuous assault upon the senses which other media feel compelled to compete, this is also valid. But it is not, just because it is new, therefore above all criticism. The analogy with modern art holds: not just to do a new thing, but to do a new thing *well*. Perhaps Andy Warhol's celebrated film showing 24 hours of the Empire State Building had to be done -- once -- to explore its possibilities. But it is not enough simply to protray, with an unmoving camera's

eye, the confusion of the world we live in. This is not even good mainstream fiction, and as SF it fails abysmally. Philip K. Dick has one, and only one, plot: some little person shoved relentlessly around by a great crack in the world, revealing THEM behind the clouds, cruel, relentless and dispassionate. This is not, though he appears to think so, a new plot or idea. Thomas Hardy outlined it explicitly in a poem once, beginning

> "If but some vengeful God would call to me
> From out the lowering sky 'Thou suffering thing,
> Know that thy misery is my ecstacy
> That thy soul's failure is my blossoming;'
> Then could I bear it, clench myself and die..."

and ends, bewildered, that even this is not possible;

> "Those purblind doomsters had as gladly strewn
> Pleasures about my passageway as pain."

Phil Dick falls down as a writer by my standards simply because, nowhere in his books, is there any person who stirs enough emotion in the reader -- or in this reader, anyway -- to give a continental damn whether his heroes suffer ecstacy or anguish, whether they die gallantly, or escape to fight another day! Phil is a conscientious writer. He must have felt *something* for his characters. But somehow he never communicated this feeling. I have the impression that they are simply Phil's surrogates for Suffering Man in a Hard World; they came there, like an operatic tenor, just to suffer. Puccini once wrote to a librettist who was not making a character come alive for him, "I cannot feel that this man is anything more than a *signore tenore*. Do we want only a *signor tenore*?" As that hero of opera was only a "Mister Tenor," most of Phil Dick's characters seem to me to be only Mister Protagonist.

Failure of character can be as grave a vice, even while over-emphasis on character can cause a writer to neglect plot and the all-important art of story-telling. The emphasis on style can be an even greater fault. A few books I've read recently have far-out style, but the style is so subordinate to what the author is doing that I only raise my eyebrows, later, and think, "Hey, that was damned well written." If I am conscious of style at all, I usually feel that the writer is overdoing it -- that he is "writing" -- i.e., he is playing the game of Being A Writer at the expense of his primary job, which is to tell us, or show us, something rich and strange.

Like sex and character, then, style is all very well when integral to the story; when used and cultivated as an end in itself, it becomes a gimmicky game for the benefit of the writer's ego.

Norman Spinrad once said that a New Wave writer could be identified by asking a writer if he defined himself as an artist. This is a confusion in terms, since he evidently thinks of art as synonymous with a particular type of self-conscious artifice. Many fine painters don't think especially about art and have no artistic theories, and Somerset Maughan, one of the great masters of English prosody, said that the best style was to have no detectable style at all. Many intellectuals, put off by the phonies and pseudo-intellectuals who define themselves that way, will have six tantrums all at once if you call them intellectuals.

The goal of the true artist is to focus attention, not on his position as an artist but upon the work of art he is creating. Perhaps Spinrad is right after all, at least if you define the New Wave writer as one who is self-consciously eager to be recognized as a Great Writer.

I once wrote an angry and outraged review of a book by Samuel R. Delany, because before every chapter he printed an excerpt from his diary telling where his head was at while he wrote it. This Look-Ma-Little-Sammy's-Writing-a-BOOK approach frankly got my goat, but there were those who jumped on me with both feet for my lack of understanding that this is a valid way to write a book. I stick to my guns. I am interested in the work of art which Delany was trying to create; his thoughts and inner ideas have no place except insofar as his whole world-view will be woven into his creation. The book was laid in an allegorical future. His 20th century thoughts didn't belong there, constantly wrenching us back to the present. A book is a fragile enough construct in this day and age. If the game of book writing is worth the candle, it must be played through, like a chess game, on its own board; when the player gets on the board with his queens and pawns, he's likely to crowd them right off. We do not interrupt a tennis match every set to remind the spectators that this is only a game and that after all they should really be about the business of fighting racism and air pollution. If at the end of the book Delany has made himself, as an artist, interesting enough for

me to want to know where his head is at, and if this is multiplied enough times, then perhaps the artist may step from behind the scenes and allow us to meet the author. But I don't want the composer strolling across the stage while the characters are singing their duets, to take a bow. When he reminds me at the head of each chapter that while I admire, or criticize the book, the game, I must after all never lose sight of clever Chip as he writes it, I lose interest in the game for the game's sake and have not yet enough interest in Delany for Delany's own sake. I think I can be pardoned for saying that Delany, at least in this book, wanted to be a writer, rather than concentrating on his writing.

Maybe this is simply the Ellison Syndrome. I admire Ellison's work far more than I can tell, I know how great a writer he is, but I would prefer to hear it from other lips than Harlan's own.

Is this just a part of the sickness of our time, that we are taught to think more of the rewards of art than of the art itself? I am far from indifferent to the rewards. I don't mean just cashing the checks; but above and beyond those rewards there are other things I value also. I gasped with astonished delight when Heinlein recognized my name; I nearly wept with delight when I was introduced on the floor at St. LouisCon and got a spontaneous ovation which lasted a full minute; I choked up to a point where I could hardly speak when a girl came to the masquerade as one of my characters; and I actually cried when Ursula LeGuin, to whom I wrote one of the three letters I've ever written to an author, wrote back and told me that she had read and enjoyed my books and to some degree been influenced by them. I still blush with pleasure (I'm not exaggerating; people have seen me do it) when someone asks me for an autograph, and I am always surprised. But if I had *asked* for these rewards, if I had circulated large amounts of propaganda amounting to what-a-great-writer-I-am, this would be spoilt. In this post-Hitler age, I know that people would believe anything if I told it loud enough and long enough, and I could never be sure whether they were reacting to the propaganda or to what I had told them. So for me the "rewards of art" are rare and I can still cherish them with spontaneous and unspoiled pleasure. I am not eager to sicken, even on the honey of adulation.

This, I think, is one place where both Old and New Wave must meet and find what is real in the new as well as the old; the art and science of making the reader feel, of sharing and communicating both art and anguish. Maybe every writer comes here to suffer. And, unfortunately, all too many will have to suffer in vain, many of them at the hands of their fellow artists, and the critics of their work -- because critics suffer from unevenness of quality as much as do writers. There are some critics to whom a New Wave writer can do no wrong, as long as his work is formless enough and experimental enough to be different. And there are a few critics, alas, to whom any experiment in style or format seems so threatening that a couple of out-of-syntax sentences starts them muttering formless threats about the 'Milford Mafia.' Where the critics are so ill-informed, the casual reader is even worse off; I sometimes think -- and have publicly stated -- that all critics should take an examination every few years to find out whether they still like SF, or whether they are simply destroying everything because they are now bored with everything in it -- or because nothing matches, in their mind, that thing James Blish wrote twelve years ago. Critics should read, in all humility, such cautionary tales of their profession as THE POOH PERPLAX, and realize from this that *at best* critical writing is often the six blind men who went to see an elephant. At worst...well, SF survived Old Wave style criticism, we got sex into SF, and we got it accepted that we could have character too. Even between the rigid resistance of those who hate New Wave, and the inane acquiescence of those who just *lahve* it, we will probably survice this too and acquire a flexible format.

But let us not let our distrust of critics make us arrogant in rejecting their criticism. A writer needs self-confidence -- and humility. He needs artistic freedom -- and he needs discipline.

Like all metal to be tempered, and all art, he needs both the hammer and the anvil. Out of this, if he is both lucky and serious, he may forge something lasting. I don't give a damn whether he calls it art or something else.

Apollo, patron God of artists, said "Know yourself."

But another writer about art said, "Life is short and the art long; decision dangerous, experiment perilous..."

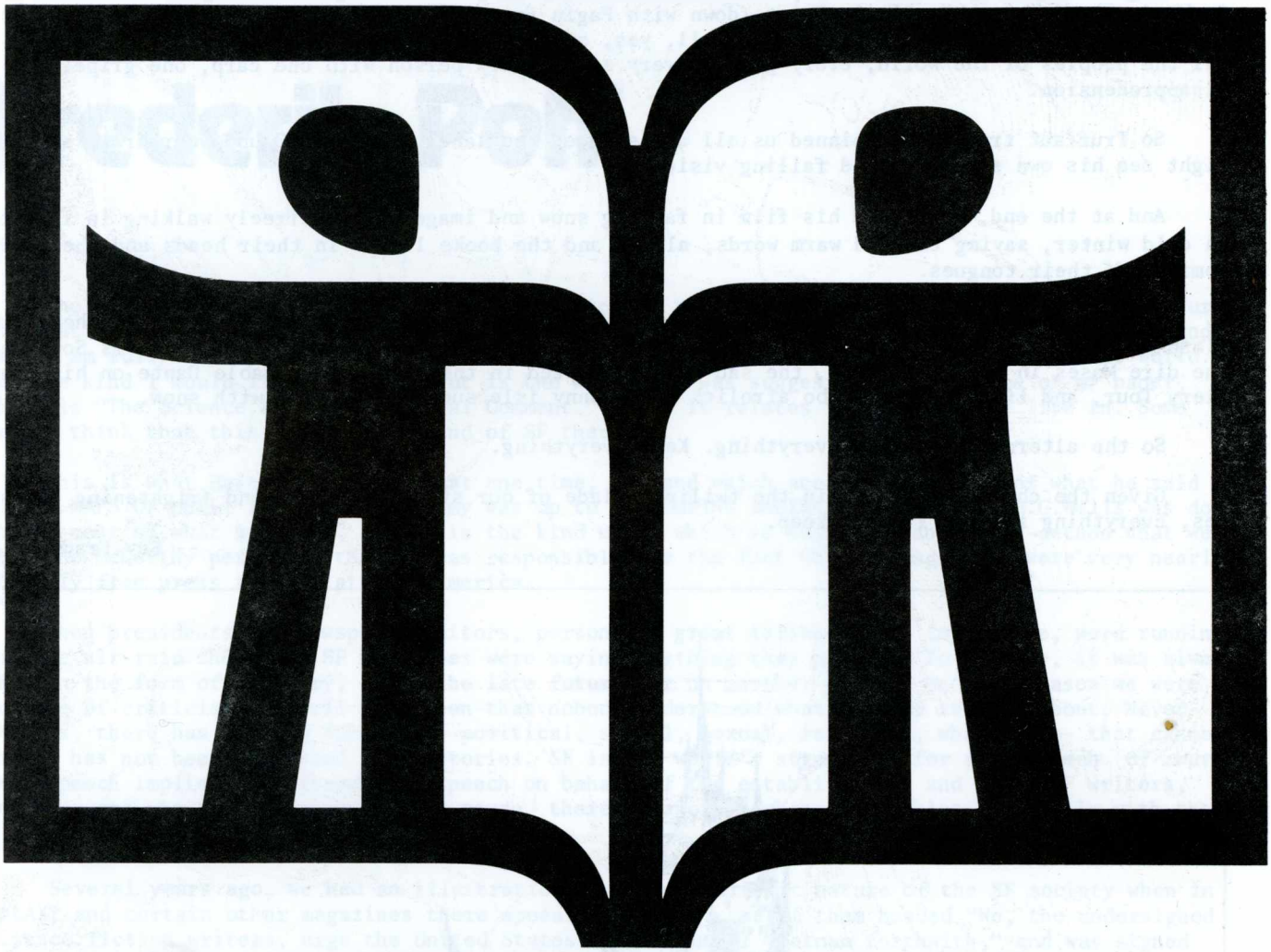
Perhaps the perilous experiment separates the artist from the hack. Maybe this is what Norman Spinrad meant.

-- Marion Z. Bradley, 1972


STATON

1972 is International Book Year. The International Book Year symbol which appears below was designed for UNESCO by Michel Olyff of Belgium. The linking arms symbolize international cooperation through books while the uprights and sturdy figures convey the important role of books in national development. IBY's theme is Books For All, and Ray Bradbury, in celebration thereof, has contributed the following observation...

RAY BRADBURY



on a book burning

In the film "Fahrenheit 451," based on my novel, there are several scenes in which my Firemen burn books. They toss volume after volume onto the flames and douse them with kerosene and we watch the beautiful curling and blackening of the paper and the type. There is a grotesque loveliness in watching our old dreams go up in fire.

But above all, the scenes of such books being destroyed appeal to us in yet more secret and terrible ways.

For Truffaut, the director, has been careful to trap us in our own prejudices.

That is, he has tossed at least one book onto the pyre that is the sort of book that each person in the audience recognizes and to himself cries:

Yes! Fine! Burn *that* one!

And then we catch ourselves and know that the film has made a powerful point, and a strike against every man, woman, and child in the audience.

For there into the flames go the books of Henry Miller (hurrah!), Genet (Bravo), Mein Kampf (great! Bum, Adolph, bum!), Brendan Behan (a bore), Simon de Beauvoir (down with women's lib), Marx (too far left!), Joseph McCarthy (too far right), Pope Pius Xllth (too Catholic!), Franklin D. Roosevelt (a super-Wasp!), Malcolm X (a n-----!), Philip Roth (a Jew!), Nabokov (a sex-fiend), Savanarola (an aesthete; too fanatic, too religious!), Mao (that for your little Red book, sir).

And so on down the line. There bums Balzac (dirty!), Mark Twain (frivolous), Little Black Sambo (anti-black myth), Oliver Twist (down with Fagin forever), Freud (the catholics hate his confessional), until at last we have burned all, yes, all the books of the world in order to satisfy all the peoples of the world, every group, every sect, every person with one carp, one gripe, one misapprehension.

So Truffaut trapped and pinned us all and stamped the label: PREJUDICED upon our brows so each might see his own stupidity and failing vision.

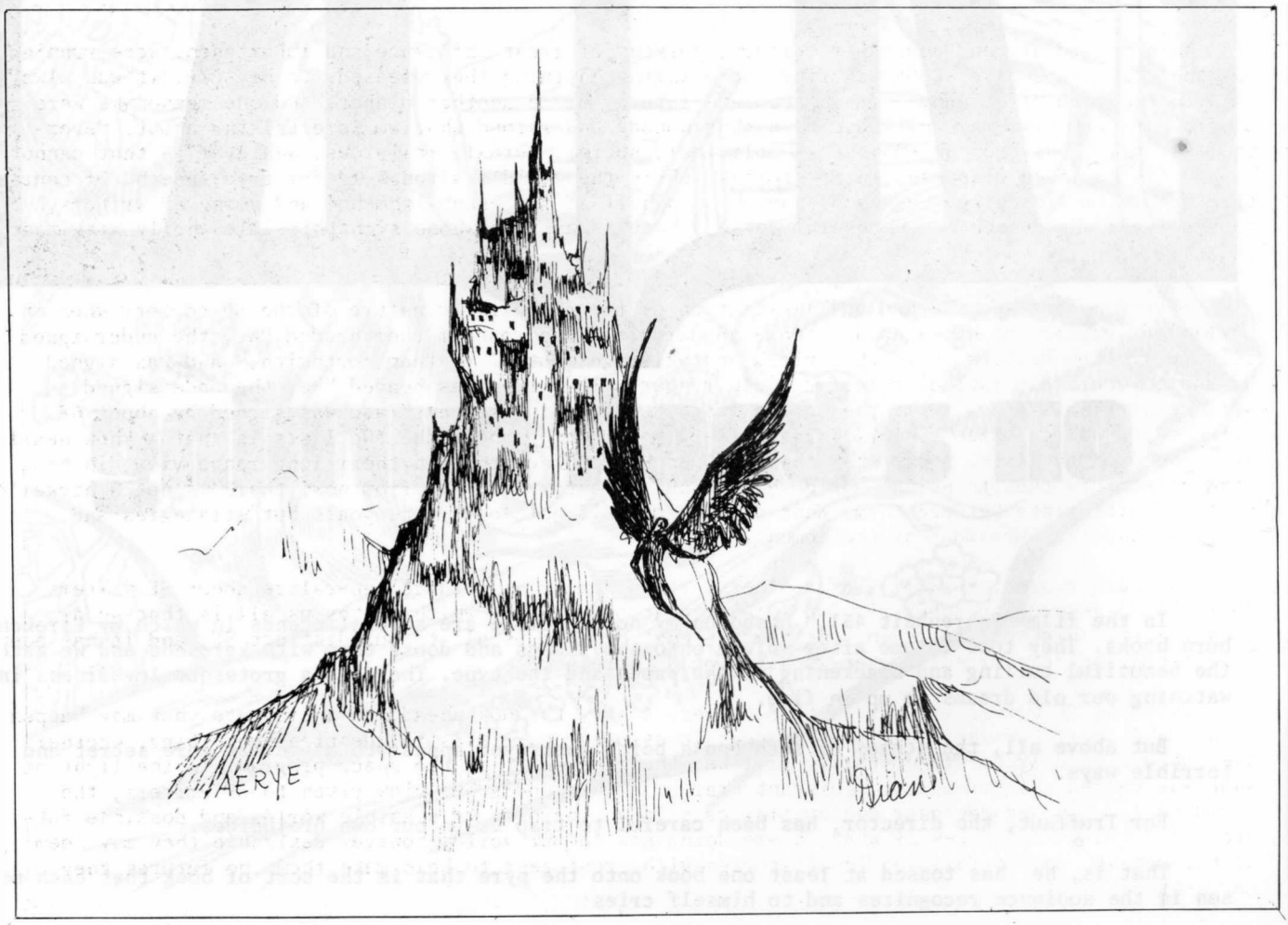
And at the end, dissolved his film in falling snow and images of men freely walking in forests, in cold winter, saying the old warm words, alive, and the books locked in their heads and the words coming off their tongues.

And the books not burned after all, and we with another chance, walking in winter, to hear the blasphemous Balzac, the dread Genet, the terrible Dickens, the awful Song of Song which is Solomon's, the dire Moses in the wilderness, the sad Christ tempted in the desert, miserable Dante on his Grand fiery Tour, and Little Black Sambo afrolick on a sunny isle suddenly covered with snow.

So the alternatives: Bum everything. Keep everything.

Given the choice, standing in the twilight glade of our strange, lovely and frightening libraries, Everything is what I would keep.

— Ray Bradbury



Science Fiction As Social Comment

Frederik Pohl

The trouble with talking about science fiction is that no two of us agree on what this feature is. What I propose to talk about is only one kind of SF. I would like everybody to know beforehand that I am fully aware that there are some 4,000 kinds, probably one for every writer in the world. But the kind I would like to talk about is the kind that was suggested as the theme of my paper, which is "The Science Fiction of Social Comment." SF as it relates to the world we live in. Some people think that this is the only kind of SF there is.

This is what Heinlein, at least at one time, did and which accounts for much of what he said in NEW MAPS OF HELL; it is what Bellamy was up to in LOOKING BACKWARD; it is what H.G.Wells was doing in most of what he wrote. And it is the kind of SF which in that miserable half-decade that we call the McCarthy period in the US, was responsible for the fact that SF magazines were very nearly the only free press that existed in America.

When presidents and newspaper editors, persons of great influence and importance, were running for the air-raid shelters, SF magazines were saying anything they pleased. To be sure, it was always said in the form of allegory, or in the late future, or on another planet. And one reason we were so free of criticism may well have been that nobody understood what we were talking about. Nevertheless, there has been no subject -- political, social, sexual, religious, whatever -- that cannot be and has not been discussed in SF stories. SF is the world's stronghold for free speech. Of course, free speech implies also freedom of speech on behalf of the establishment; and among SF writers, for everyone who defends an unpopular cause, there is another whose sympathies lie wholly with that which is popular.

Several years ago, we had an illustration of the pluralistic nature of the SF society when in GALAXY and certain other magazines there appeared two ads: one of them headed "We, the undersigned science fiction writers, urge the United States to get out of Vietnam forthwith," and was signed by about 70 writers including half a dozen ringers. The other was headed "We, the undersigned science fiction writers, urge the United States to stay in Vietnam," and was signed by about 68 writers and half a dozen ringers. What is very interesting about the two lists is that I know nearly everyone on both lists. And I know them well enough to know that in their long range view, in the kind of society they think the world should have a century or more from now, there is not a nickel's worth of difference between them. What divides them is not long range goals but strategies and tactics, and the questions of the moment.

For this reason, as well as for others, it is almost as hard to generalize about SF writers as it is to generalize about SF. But I think that one quality which unites us all is that we are questioners. This quality is in some measure what has led us all to our distinct SF, and it has been stimulated and reinforced by what we have found there.

To be an SF writer is to be a time-binder, to try to look ahead, to anticipate what may happen -- not what *will* but what *may* -- given certain assumptions. It is to question everything, whether the subject be church, state, family or like, the mini-skirt or the space program. In the light of what was called the "view from a distant star," in this God's eye view given to SF writers, the world we live in becomes only one special case in an infinity of possible worlds and possible futures. And the consequences of what we are doing now to our world, however desirable they may seem at the moment, can be followed in SF stories with great zest to help make them the futures they may produce.

One of the turns in this world that we follow with great zest, one which had a theme built in cataclysm, is technology itself. SF has been quite good in predicting the consequences of technology and it looks as if it will go on to do equally well in the future. The first consequence of technology, which is the one we buy when we pay its price, is the increase of grace and leisure that it provides for all of us. The second consequence of technology is anger. It is the anger of those who see this grace and leisure around them but do not have it for themselves. And the third consequence of technology is a progressive and accelerating degradation of our environment. It has been a great many years since SF writers first began to see these developments blooming on the horizon.

Wells' "Sleeper" woke to a world that contained them all. Wells was able to see, and the rest of it is a product of his insight, that the world might indeed get better as time went along; but that while some aspects of it were getting better -- like labor-saving machines, or medicine and better food -- others would inevitably get quite a lot worse, as indeed they have.

I spoke of the degradation of our environment a moment ago, and there should be no question for any of us that this has taken place all through Europe, North America, all through most of the world. We have seen how completely we have begun to filthy-up the one and only planet we have to live on. The world's rivers are sewers; the lakes are becoming bogs, and some of them are well on their way to becoming marshland with little water content at all. Please don't think I exaggerate, because this is not my own opinion; it is what I have learned from listening to those who know. I listened to a dozen experts in a Technical Symposium On Water Management in Minnesota a few months ago; technicians from Europe, California, the Midwest, the East, and Canada reporting on developments as far afield as Hawaii and Lake Baikal. And one by one, they got up to describe what attempts they were making to find a way to keep the waterways they were dealing with from being destroyed. And, one by one, they said they were failing.

Our environment cannot support the continued assaults we make on it. Our air is destroyed to the point where a big debate lies between those who think it will generate so much carbon dioxide that it will be enough to melt the icecaps and drown us all on the one hand, and those who think it will generate so much particulate waste that will go up so many feet, and we will all freeze. There is an intermediate school which holds that we may merely replace the free oxygen in the air with a sort of poison gas which will kill us all. And these are the optimists.

I could go on (and I have often enough) for hours talking about the marvelous things we have done to our world. The black rain in Boston where the smog was so intense that Boston's air pollution arguments could not be enforced. They could not see the tops of the chimneys to tell which factories were polluting the worst. I could talk about rivers in America so filthy that you can't operate a speedboat on them, because the spray that comes over the windsheild will give you a disease. I can talk about noise pollution and even -- God help us! -- volcano and earthquake pollution. Because the earthquakes that have occurred in the Ganges plain and the Colorado are man-made, not natural. But the basic pollution is people pollution! All of these are stale effects. They are simply overwhelmed by the amount of our own waste products that we have put into our world.

Recoupment powers of the environment are vast but not inexhaustible. And there are too many people for them to cope with. Out of every 100 lbs. of living matter on the Earth, whether that matter is redwood, bacteria, or whatever, 2 lbs. (2%) is part of some human being. What is most disturbing about these assaults on the environment is that we don't know a great deal about the threshold effects of so many of the things we are doing. How much DDT can we put into the system, before we throw out the bugs that destroy the plants that feed us? How many parts per million of 24D or other weedkillers can we drop on tropical gricultural lands before they turn into a species of brick called "laterite" and never again produce crops?

I ask these questions, but don't feel badly if you don't know the answers, because neither do I, and neither does anyone else. If you think that I am painting too black a picture of what humanity is doing to its one and only present planet, I won't argue with you. I won't even laugh at you. I'll just say: come back in ten years and tell me if you still think so then.

So much for what we have done to our world. What about what we are doing to ourselves? We have had beyond question that increase in grace and leisure that we want when we buy technology. It's there! It's real! It's coloured TV in a living unit, it is jet flight to London, it is the credit card economy, and electrical can-openers, and stereo records of the greatest musical performances of all time. It is all these great things that we can have. Culture for everyone and education for everyone, or for almost everyone.

For all of us. But there are a great many others in the world who do not have these things. The question is: do they matter? The answer is: they feel they matter. And what we have they want.

There is a phenomenon in sociology called "the gradient goal effect." It is what parents call Christmas Eve Fever. Here you come to something you want very badly, the more desperately, urgently, and aggressively: you want it right now, or better still -- yesterday!!!

The people who were the have-nots of the world were a reasonably quiet and passive lot at one time, when they had no hope. But now that they see what a human life can be like they're no longer passive. Please don't consider that I am saying they should be passive; there is no mild judgement involved here. We are telling everyone in the world, in every country, that it is right and proper that they should have all the fruits of technology; all the blessings of broad education, travel, luxury, pleasure. It is not impossible for a man to transcend his social environment. I can think of maybe two people who have done it -- Christ and Buddha -- but it is rare and it is difficult. And most of us do what society tells us that we should do -- particularly we want what society tells us we should want. Our society has told us to want certain kinds of things very much, and it is no accident that in America's urban riots the outcome of things which are taken first in the looting are those appliances which are most heavily advertised on television.

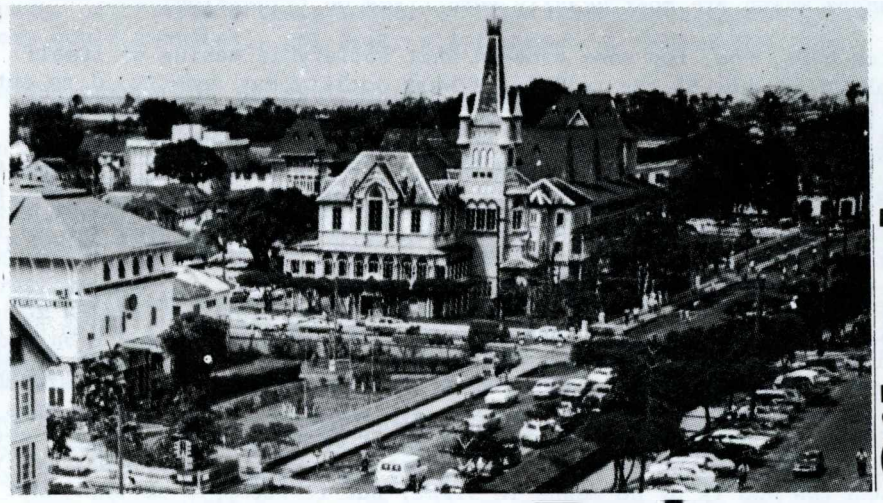
I could go on here, too, for some time on what society is making of itself. But what I am really talking about is what SF can tell us of what society may come to. I am optimistic enough to feel that by my knowing what we are getting into, the human race can help itself to survive these crises which lie ahead. I am vain enough of SF to think that through reading and writing SF we can learn something about the possibilities open to us. I don't think that by reading SF or by using the RAND Corporation's topic procedures or by reading tea leaves or gazing into a crystal ball, or any other way, by knowing what disasters lie ahead can we avoid them, because they cannot be avoided. Is there then any use in knowing what is going to happen, if we cannot prevent disasters?

I think there is a use and it is a most important one. Once a woman becomes pregnant she knows perfectly well that nine months later there are going to be some hours which no mother that I have known has described as particularly pleasurable. But, they can be made more painful or less painful. And the first step in doing something about them is to know that they are ahead. Although there is no way to prevent the catastrophes that lie ahead for the world -- mass starvation being one of them -- it should be possible to minimize their long-range effects. It seems to me that the human race is at present wracked by a sort of a postulation of slow and difficult labor into a new kind of world. And the end is by no means in sight. But it seems to me that what we are collectively giving birth to is a new kind of man in a new kind of world, and that those of us who read and write science fiction will have had some idea of what he or it will be like before anyone else.

I spoke of H.G. Wells a while back, and here, as in almost everything in science fiction, he has anticipated me and all of us when he said in one of his novels: "We have suffered like animals long enough. It is time we began to suffer like men."

-- Frederik Pohl

TRAVELING JIANT



ROBERT Silverberg

SYNOPSIS: Last issue we joined Bob and Barbara Silverberg on their winter vacation in sunny Surinam. We watched as our intrepid spice freaks ate and treked their way through string beans in hot peanut sauce and fried noodles, the streets of subtropical Paramaribo, Indonesian food, and the shores of the mighty Marowijne River. While traveling the length and width of deepest Surinam they came under the sway of Eugene Balgin -- "call me Boggel" -- licensed tourist guide and interpreter. Thereafter, the Silverbergs entered upon the river Marowijne and there discovered Surinam's bushnegro population; they also discovered why Boggel didn't join them in their daily swims in the river: piranha. When we left the pair they had returned from their tour of the interior and were preparing for the second half of their vacation, in the neighboring state of Guyana.

Weekend in Paramaribo. More indonesian food. Sunday morning Boggel drove us to the airport. Sentimental farewell. He got us through the bureaucratic red tape with his usual efficiency. When he heard we were going to Guyana, he warned us not to walk around Georgetown after dark. Remembering the long walks we had taken late at night in Paramaribo, never once having felt worried, we were apprehensive about his talk of crime in the neighboring country. Was he just putting down Guyana out of patriotism? We made the short flight to Georgetown. Leaving the airport via bus, we started talking with a white businessman from Trinidad who had been on our plane. He asked us where we were coming from, and we said Paramaribo. "Oh, you'll find it very different here," he said, and began telling us about the bicycle-mounted rip-off gangs who swoop down on tourists and instantly relieve them of wallets and watches. He advised us to walk facing the traffic and glower at anyone who might seem to be contemplating an assault.

Well, nobody ripped us off in Guyana. But the whole place had a creepy, oppressive air of impending apocalypse. There might have been as many as fifty foreign tourists in Surinam when we were there, but I think we were the *only* foreigners in Guyana who hadn't come there on a business trip. People kept asking us why we had come. After a couple of days, we didn't know.

Georgetown itself was a beautiful city, spacious, ornate, bright, with some splendid huge wooden buildings and one of the most handsome cathedrals (entirely wooden) I've ever seen. But the crime thing has everyone paralyzed. We strolled in the famed botanical gardens, wandered down a leafy grove, and were met by an incredulous policeman astounded at our bravery in going off the paved path. Bandits, he said, lay in wait there. Just last week, man, they attacked a couple, took everything they had, would even have had connection with the woman if they'd had time. Had connection, he said.

Guyana is 55% East Indian, 45% black, with none of the other minorities (Indonesian, Creole, Bushnegro) that leaven the Surinam situation and prevent racial rivalries from boiling over. Here it's one bloc against another, banging head on. The blacks control the government and the civil service, bu the Indians run the economy. Beyond the civil-service stratum, the black population is poor, ignorant, restless, and pretty damned malevolent. The Indians are scholarly, gentle, bourgeois, and frightened. The blacks do the ripping off, of course. The whole situation is very much like that of New York, substituting the Jewish bourgeoisie for the Indian one; the rhetoric with which each side denounces the other is identical here and there, and the effect, that of a city in terror, is pretty similar too. Well, crap, we didn't fly thousands of miles to get into the same mess we have here.

Please note that no racial hostility was directed at us. Ehite faces are scarce in Guyana, now that the British have left, and we were regarded more as curiosities than as symbols of colonialist oppression. The only thing approaching a hostile incident was a few mumbled words from a Hindu laborer, and I think he was upset by my beard and lonish hair, not by the color of my skin. The tension in Guyana is wholly black-vs-Indian. But it seeped into everything and made our stay an ugly one.

We tried to get away from the lovely but frightening capital city by signing up for another jungle tour. But this is a country where tourism is unknown, and we couldn't get into the interior at all, though we spent three days making various approaches. What we did do was take a train-ride through the country, via an archaic narrow guage railway, and treat ourselves to an all-day picnic on a huge island called Leguan, in the mouth of the Essequibo River, which is about twenty-five miles wide at the mouth. Leguan is entirely populated by East Indian farmers who grow sugar, and who are quite friendly, but the place is hot and flat and dusty, and the outing was looking like a bummer until a group of natives adopted us. They took us to a secluded cove where we managed some skinny-dipping, and when we reappeared they treated us to liberal swigs of potent local homemade rum. (Astonishingly, the local term meaning "moonshine" is "dark night.") Our chief host then insisted on presenting us with an eighteenth century Dutch pipe, in perfect condition, that he had found on the beach. When we got back to town we found a similar one, in worse whape, on display in the national museum. We had a pleasant couple of hours with the dark-night boys, discussing politics and such by the shores of the Essequibo. They also warned us against the horrid, discourteous people who live in town.

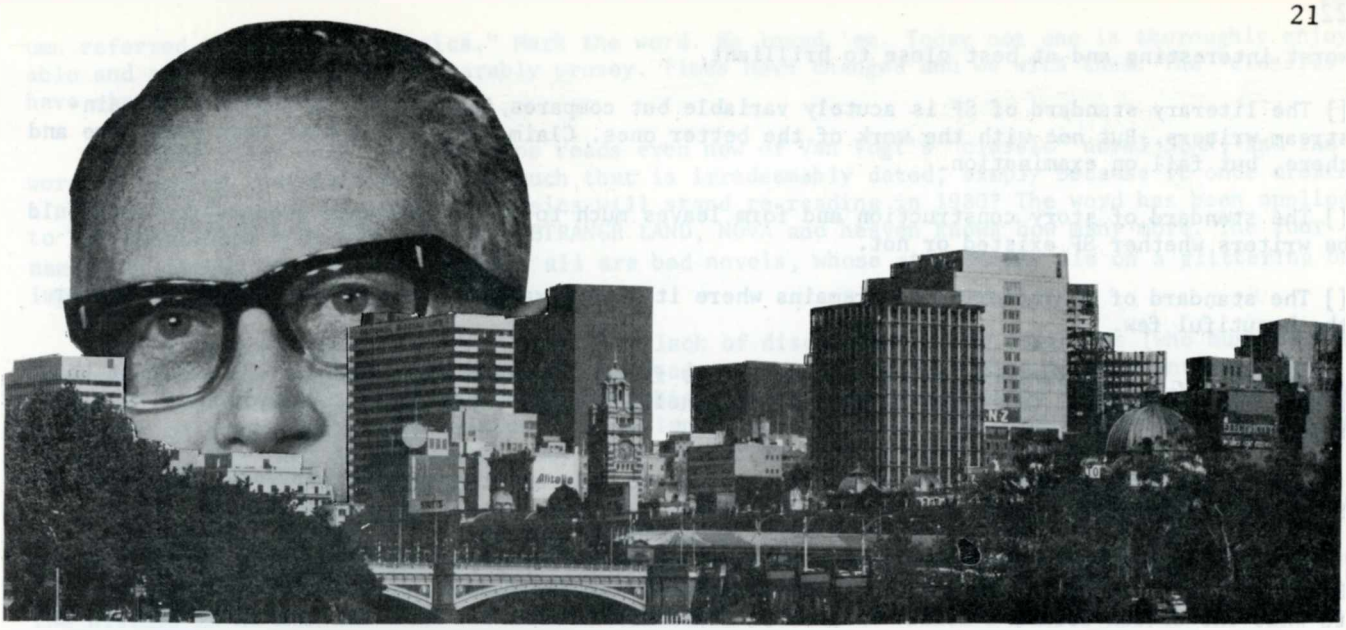
Next day we hired a jeep and visited an American Indian village far out in the brush. Not nearly as interesting as the Amerindian village we'd been to in Surinam, because these people are wholly Christianized, wear clothes, speak English, etc., etc. But we did get a chance to swim in another river, this one unique in our experience. The water is tinted deep red by falling leaves somewhere far upstream, and the effect is like swimming in chilled Burgundy. You look down and see your legs, scarlet, beneath you, and it's a miraculous sight. We may also have been attacked by microscopic parasitic organisms while swimming there, but even so it was a gorgeous experience, and the parasites don't seemed to have harmed us any worse than the piranhas.

The other two days, though, we were stuck in Georgetown, gloomily using up the hours by visiting bookstores and churches, and keeping a wary eye out for the bike-powered rippers-off, none of whom we ever saw. Well, there were always those marvelous Indian restaurants, you say? Hah. The local Indians eat at home. One night we ate out with the Trinidadian businessman and his upper-class Hindu date, and we went to the one Indian restaurant in town, a shabby cafe. It was the first time she had ever eaten Indian food away from home. Nearly all the restaurants in Georgetown are Chinese greasy spoons. We sampled one,but otherwise we ate mostly at our hotel, thereby violating one of our own tenets of tourism. The last night we actually discovered a first-rate Chinese place. The waiter, naturally, tried to kite the check up by two bucks, but I happened to notice. I rarely check a waiter's arithmetic, but this time I was so bored that I did.

And finally home, leaving out a lot of other grim details about Guyana, such as the nitpicking bureaucracy and the problems in cashing checks. I suppose any experience is valuable experience, but I don't think I got much out of Guyana except bad karma and a couple of pleasant swims. Surinam, though, was a different deal. I commend it to you all. And don't forget to ask for Boggel.

-- Robert Silverberg


FROLICH



the overseas scene; AN AUSTRALIAN VIEWPOINT

by George Turner

Time was when "the overseas scene" meant American, period; outside the US SF was an occasional trickle. But for about twenty years it has meant, for the average reader, America and England. Today the US still dominates the field in sheer bulk and ballyhoo but some of the best, some of the worst and much of the unclassifiably extraordinary SF emanates from England.

I propose to treat here only of these two countries: they *are* the overseas scene.

There is, however, sufficient SF being written in Russia, France, Germany, Italy, Poland, Japan, South America and a dozen other areas to make specialization possible in these alone. Only a small proportion, however, reaches the English-speaking reader in translation and so, English speakers being notoriously monolingual, only such a specialist is really familiar with this output. I propose to do no more than mention its existence, for two reasons. One is that, despite search, I have been unable to discover anything in this body of work which is significantly different from that served up in English. The other is that available translations are so uniformly inept as to make their authors seem naive and incompetent. I refuse to believe this, particularly of two such supremely literary nations as Russia and France, and prefer to pass the subject by until better justice is done them.

The peculiar and mostly inadequate contributions of stage and screen must also be evaded here, together with the infiltration of the various fields of art, for sheer lack of space. One must stop somewhere. I propose then to describe, however, fragmentarily, what the newcomer to SF readership will discover if suddenly exposed to the medium. This in itself is a task for Heracles. Or perhaps Tantalus.

The newcomer will find that:

[] "Science fiction" is a phrase without definable meaning, describing a tangled skein of sub-genres and sub-sub-sports and offshoots, ranging from a tiny number of truly "scientific" tales through fantasy to straight action stories with a slightly off-beat background.

[] There is little science in SF. That day is nearly dead. America's Hal Clement is almost alone in the writing of really science-based novels and stories, which seems a pity because this is a vein which can never really be exhausted. Probably it is just too damned difficult for any but the scientist.

[] A bad 80% of all the SF and/or fantasy published is not worth reading. The remaining 20% is at

worst interesting and at best close to brilliant.

[] The literary standard of SF is acutely variable but compares favorably with the work of mainstream writers. But *not* with the work of the better ones. Claims for genius have been made here and there, but fail on examination.

[] The standard of story construction and form leaves much to be desired save among a few who would be writers whether SF existed or not.

[] The standard of characterization remains where it always was -- close to zero. Again, save for the beautiful few.

[] 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 is schollastic head, but to date has produced nothing significant.

[] One of the most engaging, indescribable, useful, lovable and thoroughly terrifying facets of the SF scene is fan activity, of which more hereafter.

Run your eye down these paragraphs, and the immediate impression is bleak. But not so, not so. Every remark in the list, save those concerning criticism and fandom could be paraphrased to apply to what the SF fan terms, a trifle haughtily, "mainstream fiction." Qualitatively, SF isn't doing too badly. It cannot be said that it has taken more than a minor place in literature, because it has so far failed to produce a really outstanding work with "classic" survival value. There are built-in reasons why such work is liable to be at best a rarity if not an impossibility.

The obvious reason is the inherent transience of any tale based, however slightly, on science as we know it. Science-as-we-know-it is subject to overnight revolution; tomorrows are constantly bringing with them discoveries which change the face of the observable cosmos, and every tale based on yesterday's knowledge is almost automatically dated. Very little SF survives readably more than twenty years. Such as does usually turns out to have precious little scientific foundation or to be concerned with human problems which do not date.

SF, despite its fixation on the future, belongs eternally to the present. This fixes the bulk of the product as entertainment -- not "mere" entertainment, for there is nothing mere about a job well done -- and as such performs its most craftmanlike service. Despite reviewers and blurb writers who scatter words like "satire" and "profound" and "significant," few stories appear which deserve them and few writers attempt the kind of fiction which might earn them.

A happy feature of the present day scene is the small but increasing number willing to make this attempt. Theirs is a rough and gravelly path; they are trying to turn a magazine-dominated entertainment form into durable literature. Some have ad partial success. Two have come close to total success; I refer to Miller's A CANTICLE FOR LIEBOWITZ and LeGuin's THE LEFT HAND OF DARKNESS, two of the best integrated works in the genre as well as two of the most thoughtful and artistically satisfying. (Sorry, but the coruscating Kurt Vonnegut is not really an SF writer, because SF is not his intention and he professes a healthy contempt for the genre. He simply uses the trappings, just as SF uses the trappings of the thriller.)

Cultists may and will disagree with such statements, but that is their privilege. Discussion such as this necessitates a stable point of view, and I have given mine.

The current scene is, like all cureent scenes, the result of minor historical processes occuring within its own body, in this case the seething body of practitioners, editors, publishers and readers of the genre. And there, blatant and shameless, is my excuse to dive headlong into the past.

SF reached its first peak in H.G.Wells but this need not detain us, because what followed for three or four decades was in the nature of a Dark Age. Plenty of SF was written but little of it survives save in the memory of ageing maunderers like myself. Do not mourn the loss: as a ten year old I swallowed great banquets of it with a voracity I blush to recall. Even a ten year old should have known better.

Modern SF began, for all practical purposes, when Hugo Gernsback produced Amazing Stories magazine back in 1926. He lacked a stable of experienced authors and consequently fell back on reprinting works of previous decades, even as far back as Wells and Verne. It won't hurt to note some of them, for there is a point to be made which enthusiasts may ponder.

He published, among others, THE MOON POOL by Abraham Merritt, THE SECOND DELUGE by Garrett P. Serviss, STATION X by George Allen England, THE BLIND SPOT by Homer Eon Flint and TREASURES OF TANTALUS by one whose name unpardonably eludes me.

All these were reprints. They were the finest SF novels available, lauded and worshipped by the devotees of the time. Their reprinting was *demanded* by readers who in Gernsback's "Discussions" col-

umn referred to them as "classics." Mark the word. We loved 'em. Today not one is thoroughly enjoyable and all seem inept and unbearably prosey. Times have changed and we with them. The "classics" have shown no survival traits.

Yet that silly word persists. One reads even now of Van Vogt's "classic" novel SLAN, and the word is applied indiscriminately to much that is irredeemably dated, simply because it once created a sensation. How many of today's classics will stand re-reading in 1980? The word has been applied to THE DEMOLISHED MAN, STRANGER IN A STRANGE LAND, NOVA and heaven knows how many more. The four named are famous within the genre and all are bad novels, whose attractions lie on a glittering but impermanent surface.

What I am pointing up is the distressing lack of discernment among reviewers (who must accept responsibility for irresponsible praise) and readers who persist in trying to load entertainment products with values they do not possess. In this respect the current scene shows little improvement over that of forty years ago; critical evaluation is noisier today, but qualitatively little better. If anything, the fans of Gernsback's day were quicker to spot nonsense and say so.

Since the reviewers are, in the main, the readers whose pennies keep the genre going, this has had a stultifying effect on writers who, poor devils, must produce what will sell. Only of late years have the efforts of a few begun to free SF from its self-imposed chains. We will come to them soon. (But it is a mortifying thought that the most uninhibited trend-setter and opener of doors in the history of SF was one of the worst novels ever published -- E.E.Smith's SKYLARK OF SPACE. History is no respecter of literary dignity.)

The famous John W. Campbell revolution of the late 1930's ushered in the era of violently technological SF which today's fans consider old hat, but which had its excellent moments. But he also issued a magazine called UNKNOWN, featuring stories allied to SF but not strictly of it (though most would be accepted as ~~SF in~~ today's inchoate field) and often which were plain wish-dream fantasy. It is quite possible that Campbell's bent for fantasy was the root cause of the indescribable variety of themes and treatments which today face anyone foolhardy enough to attempt a definition of SF. There are even those who point to Lucian's moon-trip satire as the original SF work. One might as well start with the Book of Genesis on the ground that it offers a stylish if doubtful cosmology. Whatever the ultimate confusion, Campbell's preferences bullied the trade for twenty years or so, with few prepared to go out on a limb and write as they wished and fewer prepared to publish them, until GALAXY magazine came along with a freer policy. The apron strings of technology loosened a little and human beings made a cautious appearance on the SF stage.

But the real reaction was brewing in England rather than America.

The quieter, more thoughtful style of English writing was not adapted to the tense, get-on-with-it Campbell format, nor did English preference lend itself easily to galactic high jinks or page after page of "hard" science. In the English tradition fiction deals with *people*.

Editor Carnell gave them their opportunity when he established NEW WORLDS magazine, and in quick succession appeared such breakaways as Wyndham, Aldiss, Ballard, McIntosh, Clarke and a dozen more. They brought a fresh flavour of literacy to SF and the Campbellian story of ideas found itself racing neck and neck with the English story of people, and was soon to be almost ousted by it as American writers also took up this more flexible mode. The public reacted quite favourably; Wyndham and Clarke achieved minor best seller status in the competitive hard-cover market. A wider public became interested.

But the real upheaval was yet to come. Perhaps the outre symbolism and near-impenetrable style of J.G.Ballard gave the final impetus, with the extremely literate and intelligent Brian Aldiss only a short shove behind him. With astonishing swiftness it arrived in the middle 1960's.

It called itself the New Wave (it always does) and its Poseidon was editor Michael Moorcock. It is unlikely that we will ever know what the New Wave writers really though about what they were doing and still are doing, because their voluminous public statements add up to nothing coherent. Its final meaning was probably the same old thing -- shackles of convention must be broken, taboos flouted, language freed of Pollyannaism, standard style abolished and fresh and urgent themes attacked. (It happens in the mainstream every twenty years or so -- just as the new generation begins to flex its muscles -- and that is what it always means.) All of which is wholly admirable. Each New Wave accomplishes a little and then goes the way of the Hemingway school, the James Joyce school, the kitchen-sink school and all the rest. Not with a bang. Not even with a whimper. Just with a soft, tired sound as the huge body of literature absorbs its little protest and moves on.

Meanwhile, this particular revolution has contributed some values and we should be grateful. Alas, in the fashion of New Waves it has made itself notable as much for its excesses as for its values. And they are the same, old wearisome excesses. Wilful obscurity masquerades as art, as though only the inside of a writer's head matters, and he has no responsibility to the reader. Four-letter words dot the text as though they have a mystic liberating power; eventually, since most of them

achieve no dramatic or expository purpose, they become a bore. And explicitly sexual description is a must, even if the story has to be wrenched into knots to make a place for it. Hints of sadism and the minor perversions are called on to jazz up the excitement. But, since it is usually so plainly pasted on to the body of the work, the eventual *frisson* is analogous to being massaged with cold porridge.

It was ever thus. Every twenty years we get it.

But this New Wave has produced some retainable goods as well as imitative shoddy. In particular Brian Aldiss, with such books as AN AGE and REPORT ON PROBABILITY A has shown that there *are* useful new approaches to be found. In America the rethinking of old ideas is also catching on. Once the tide of gimmickry recedes there will be some good things left behind on the shore.

I have considered only a few of the major formative influences on modern SF. To list them all would require a book, but one more must not be passed over. This is that wild, noisy, unco-ordinated, irresponsible and happy phenomenon called Fandom.

Fandom has contributed incalculably by the publication of its thousands -- literally -- of fan magazines. Some are inane, most are good-humoured, a few are very serious and one or two verge on the august. Their common denominator is the ceaseless stream of comment and opinion -- often ferocious and wrong-headed, often perceptive and deeply thought -- which fills their pages. They provide a kaleidescopic screen whereon the authors can almost *see* the impact of their work in a fashion denied to all but the most sensational of "mainstream" writers.

Since the authors themselves make frequent appearances in the pages of these fanzines (some of them, in fact, babble quite distressingly) and since they almost always, in the fashion of authors, talk exclusively about themselves, they let themselves in for the kind of comment and argument which any honest writer would donate his next novel to hear.

Whether they like it or not, they open their sensitive psyches to the influence of their readers. Good thing, bad thing? I don't know, but it would take a strong man to resist so much pressure and such a flood of query and idea. It is true that the second-raters are as likely to be encouraged in their badness as the first-raters in their experiments and probings, but surely in all literature there can be no other genre wherein writer and reader are so intimately involved. It's practically symbiotic.

So what is the overseas scene?

In a word, chaos.

SF has become too all-embracing a term. One comes across such despairing definitions as "SF is what I point to when I say it." In general the scene is one wherein a whole spectrum of work is displayed under a generic title which defies analysis. This profusion is matched, even within the sub-genres, by the individualities and idiosyncratic productions of the writers. At rock bottom there is the inevitable pile of hack rubbish and in the centre the hard core of old hands whose work commands a market by its very dependability.

But dancing on the surface are such sports and masquers as Brian Aldiss, experimenting with form and method; Philip K. Dick worrying his way through novel after novel in search of the roots of physical reality; Ursula LeGuin triumphantly displaying the alienness of *little* things; Samuel R. Delany battling, mistakenly, through a grandiose and technicoloured style to some kind of personal statement; Joanna Russ bringing a deceptive sublety to the use of language; and a host of minor flashes and scintillations going their own way of writing without regard to tradition. In these lies the hope for a better SF.

Not all they do is good. Some of it is very bad indeed, but at least they are doing their thing, and not flogging too many dead horses. Above all, the writers are in agreement that "the proper study of Mankind is Man;" their work relates more and more closely to human issues and ever less to the wish-dream. The wish-dream has, happily, found a tatty little niche of its own, referred to as "sword-and-sorcery," and there, hopefully, it will stay.

The type of work so aptly termed by author James Blish "the novel of apparatus" is still with us and probably always will be, but its dominance is in decline. Sex, after having been almost absent in the formative years, is having a blatant run, but that is cyclic in the novel and need not concern us much.

Something must come of all the effort. The new interest in purely literary values, though often ill-judged, is a hopeful sign. If this can be welded to consistent thinking and a closer tailoring of plot to theme, which is one of the greatest weaknesses of the genre, work of high quality may emerge.

Is that the scene? I'm not sure. The mass is too formless for appraisal.

And over it sprawls the great articulate body of fandom, hooting, praising, clawing, arguing, reviling, loving and hating in uproarious abandon.

Perhaps *that* is the real scene.

-- George Turner

POSTSCRIPT: This essay was originally written some two years ago as part of a group of essays by different writers, which were to be published in a fan-published book. The project fell through. Since the book was designed for a wider-than-fandom circulation, this may explain some of the simplicity of approach and many a too-familiar reference.

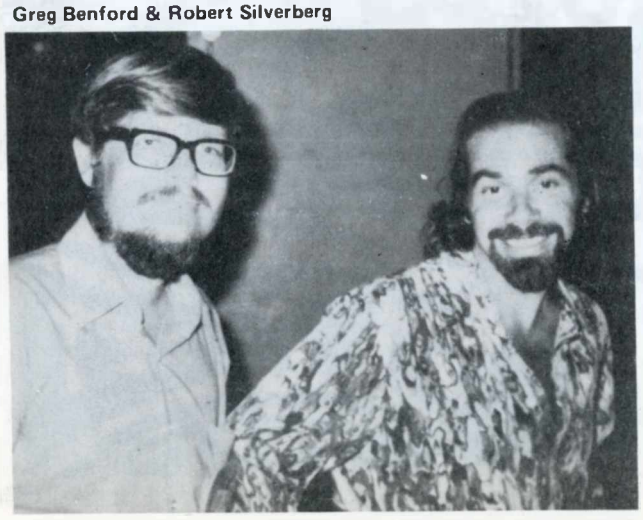
The scene itself has changed. My remarks about foreign language SF are altogether negated by the appearance, since then, of Amosoff, Abe and Lem; criticism has been enriched by such works as NEW ISSUES AT HAND and a general improvement in the standards of fan reviewing, and the New Wave has begun its retreat back into ebbtide (for which, my blessing). Otherwise I see little that needs change -- except that, like everything I have ever published, it should be rehandled from the beginning. But won't be.

-- George Turner, March 1972

ALGOL'S People

George Turner

Greg Benford & Robert Silverberg



Mother, poor dear, raised me to be a genius, and might have succeeded if the general IQ average could have been lowered to about 50. Instead, all she got was the modern version of a polymath—one who knows all about everybody else's ideas and has none of his own.

I was raised in Kalgoorlie (Western Australia) until the age of 6, by which time I was fully competent to deal with alien invasions, having survived measles, whooping cough, diphtheria, hepatitis ('yellow jaundice' we called it in those naive days) and the 'flu epidemic of 1918-19. Ancient old bastard, aren't I?

By age 16, and then living in Melbourne, I had suffered and disapproved of schools and was about to face life—i.e. get some dreary job—with practically no education or practical ability. The job was dreary, all right, and the war (WW2 for those historically inclined) arrived just in time to rescue me from dying of boredom. For six interminable years it did its best to kill me in spectacular but unsubtle ways, but I'm a survivor type with really slippery genes.

The war collapsed, my resistance to a bloody frightful way of life collapsed with it and I retreated into the Public Service. That turned out to be even more disgusting (at least in a war you can sometimes figure out what you are doing and why) and the list of my jobs since then is longer than memory will tolerate.

I work at whatever is available for reasonable money—even to writing SF reviews for greasy pelf—and have been employment officer, waiter, instructor of motor trade apprentices, laboratory technician, matriculation coach, general factory hand, owner of a taxi truck (a famous disaster) and God only can recall what else.

None of these things interest me greatly; I do them in order to live in a style slightly better than that to which I would like to think I am accustomed, but mainly to buy time in which to write novels. Nobody in his right mind expects to make money out of novels, particularly when he refuses to take advice from his agent or his publisher and tends to scream the place down at editorial conferences. (You devils! You are castrating my child!) Therefore I slave for a living and write as I please about what pleases me and don't have to worry about financial return; the only concern is whether the work is done as well as I can do it.

Not, mind you, that I wouldn't love to be involved in a runaway best seller, with great wads of automated dollars beating a path to my door, but it won't be achieved by writing the contemptible shit the trade would like me to turn out. Because I won't write it. Therefore I won't achieve it. Except, perhaps, by accident.

Art for art's sake? Not at all, Virginia—satisfaction for personal satisfaction's sake. Which is not quite the same thing, being less rarefied and much cosier. (And, of course, thoroughly self-centered.) So I have published five novels (not SF) which have paid their way and little more, although one of them did carry off the Miles Franklin award for best Australian novel one year. (You will never have heard of the Miles Franklin, but it is pretty prestigious and I'm proud of it.) A sixth is flitting from publisher to uninterested publisher as you read this (that nice man, my agent, loves it, but nobody else does) and a seventh is sitting in my typewriter, refusing momentarily to unravel itself from a knotty bit of plotting.

Number seven, by the way, is SF. Which means, after some years of critical sniping at other writers in the field, that I will eventually have to stand up and be counted. See if I care!

Which brings me to age 56 in a life quite unusual in its lack of achievement. I'm not even married. Well, I was once, for the space of a few sharp breaths and sharper words, but nobody has asked me since and I haven't quite reached the stage where I need some good woman to sweeten my declining years. When I have, I suppose I'll ask one.

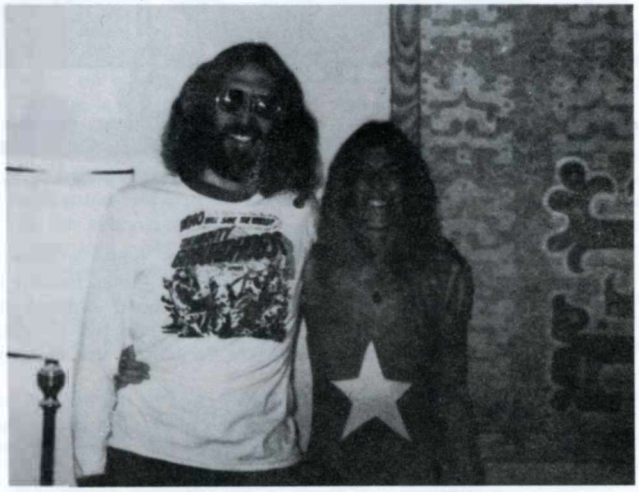
If she has any sense she'll refuse. I'm a terrific provider but—well, you know—erratic.

Effective with this issue, "ALGOLAGNIA" changes to "ALGOL'S PEOPLE." Ken Smookler of Toronto pointed out that according to standard Canadian usage, algolagnia stands for sadism or masochism, depending on whether the viewpoint is active or passive. We can't very well have sexual perversions in *Algol*; this is a family magazine. Drawings of naked Amazons wearing boa feathers on the back cover are a different matter, however...

Although most readers appreciated the pictures run last issue, they complained about their smallness and poor quality. At the time, this couldn't be helped. I hadn't seen most of these people in several years (not since the latest wave of New Yorkers emigrated to California) and had to make do with the photographs I'd taken over a period of 6 years. Early last spring I bought a new camera and, suitably equipped with film and electronic flash, journeyed across the continent to attend L.A.Con, where I confronted and photographed those contributors I could find.

The results appear on these pages. The size and, hopefully, quality of the photographs has improved and the design of the pages may prove easier on your eyes. This is going to be a continuing feature of *Algol*, so photos of those who've appeared in *Algol* in the past, and their biographies as well, would be appreciated.

Dick & Pat Lupoff



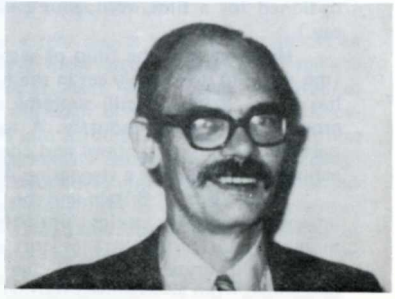
Steve Stiles

Harlan Ellison & Friend

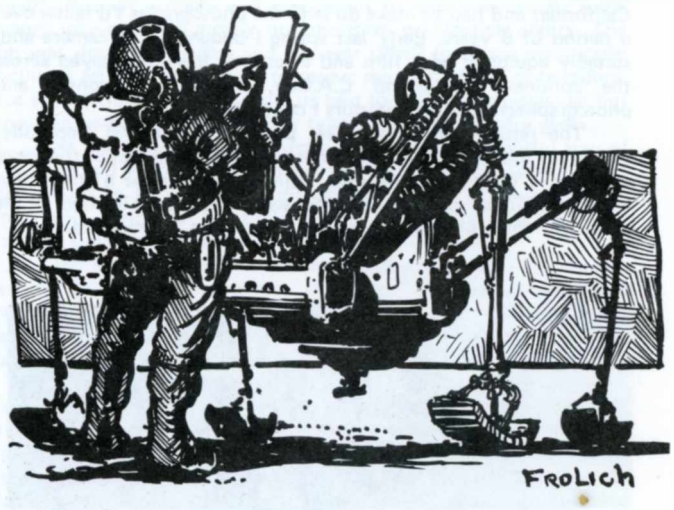
Barbara Silverberg

John Bangsund

Frederik Pohl



LUPOFF'S BOOK WEEK



THE SHEEP LOOK UP by John Brunner, Harper & Row, 1972, 461pp., $6.95

This book, according to the jacket biography, is Brunner's sixty-fourth novel. When you're that prolific, there's a risk of your works getting in each other's way and obscuring one another. This is sometimes known as Silverberg's Disease.

In Brunner's case, however, there have been a series of somewhat similar novels, these past few years, that stand aside from—and very likely above—his run-of-the-mill output. These are his gigantic near-future catastrophe novels: *Stand on Zanzibar, The Jagged Orbit,* and now *The Sheep Look Up.* These books share a hardboiled, realistic attitude, a grim view of the world that lies immediately ahead, and a 'mosaic' approach to narration that is not very unusual in the mainstream novel but that is somewhat unusual in science fiction. Brunner sets up several groups of characters and situations and cuts between them cinematically, whereas the majority of SF writers usually adopt a single viewpoint character and carry the entire narration from that point.

The Sheep Look Up is a pollution catastrophe novel. Brunner shows us his particular future world—as far as I can find, the date is never explicitly stated but internal evidence in the book suggests that it takes place somewhere between 1977 and 1985—through the eyes of characters travelling between the Denver area, Berkeley, and Los Angeles.

The crisis in world environment is not an acute and spectacular one—no world emergency that a superman can arise and set to rights. Rather, it is the cumulative effect of all our foolish and overambitious tampering with the environment, that catches up with mankind. Water pollution crises that cause 'don't drink' notices on public water supplies . . . overuse of insecticides that produces chemical-resistant strains of crop-destroyers . . . overuse of antibiotics that leads to the development of resistant strains of viruses . . . the death of the seas . . . the poisoning of the atmosphere.

Against this background Brunner projects an 'eco-commando' movement, an army of urban guerrillas whose enemies are not a political entity or economic class, but the whole industrial system.

The plot is rather slight. One friend of mine dismisses the plots of these books entirely, as convenient frameworks upon which Brunner hangs his world-portraits. The portrait of *Sheep* is horrifying, blood-freezing, and totally convincing. The book is a total downer, yet executed with compelling skill. While I was reading it I seized any available excuse to avoid picking it up each day—but once started reading, I could hardly bear to put it down.

It's a book that should be read by every Federal department chief, every congressman, every administrative or judicial agency head who hears environmental cases, and every top executive of a large corporation in the country—if not the world. It'll scare the daylights out of them, but it could literally save the world.

Unfortunately, the book is more likely to be read by people who (a) already have at least an inkling of what's going on and don't really need this much convincing, and (b) don't really have much power at their command, with which to do anything about the situations Brunner describes. It's an instance of what Sid Coleman calls "Preaching to the already-saved." So much harder to convert sinners.

TUNNEL THROUGH THE DEEPS by Harry Harrison, Putnam, 1972, 192pp., $5.95

When I was a wee tad somebody produced a strange sort of hybrid soap opera-superscience film called *Transatlantic Tunnel.* It starred the legendary Richard Dix, George Arliss and others, and when I managed to find it at a New Yorker revival a few years ago I found myself fascinated when I wasn't actually sleeping.

Harry Harrison's *Tunnel* is a lot like that old film. (And to bring the situation full circle, I've heard that the new book has been optioned for a film. Well, *plus ca change,* as Uncle Hugo used to say.)

Harrison adds the fillip of setting the story in a parallel world (the old film was simply set in the future). The American revolution has failed, Britain is still supreme in the world, aviation has never grown into a major industry. A transatlantic tunnel is conceived, partially as an aid to travel and commerce but mainly as a kind of economic placebo for a stagnating Atlantic economy.

The culture of Britain and the Colonies in the book is a kind of latter-day Victorian upright/uptightness. The book is sorely lacking in human interest—a strange sort of romance and power-struggle relationship unites the hero (an American named Washington, descended from an executed traitor) who is the chief engineer of the tunnel project, his sweetheart, and her father, whom the hero's modern engineering notions give grave offense.

The imaginary world against which the book is laid is potentially a fascinating one—there are powerful Indian nations in the Americas, a whole world system has developed without the influence of an independent United States these past two hundred years—but unfortunately Harrison makes very little use of these differences.

The bulk of the narration stays very close to the engineering feat of building the tunnel (as it did in the film), with endless, or seemingly endless, sections of description of the equipment and technique used in its building.

The style is deliberately based on the Victorian novelists', but somehow Harrison doesn't quite manage to bring that off. There is the restraint imposed by the conventions of 85 years ago, but there is neither the purple prose nor the sometimes florid emotionalism of authentic Victorian fiction.

The result is a failure as a novel. An interesting notion, and at the length of a long short story or novelette, it might have succeeded. But to make a novel the book needed to have more plot and more scope that it has.

MASTER OF VILLAINY by Cay Van Ash and Elizabeth Sax Rohmer, Bowling Green University Popular Press, 1972, 312pp., $10.00, $4.00 paper

Bowling Green University has established the Center for the Study of Popular Culture, doing so on the theory that the 'mass' arts are as deserving (if perhaps for different reasons) as the 'class' arts, of serious academic attention. The Center has devoted itself to such pop culture phenomena as detective and science fiction, the current volume being the first full-length work to deal with Sax Rohmer, the creator of the insidious Dr. Fu Manchu and a slew of lesser known heroes and villains.

Rohmer was one of those gifted authors whose works manage

to touch just the right combination of factors that make them hugely popular with a mass audience, all the while that serious critics and academics either blast them as pernicious trash or spurn them as utterly beneath notice. We can all think of other examples—Edgar Rice Bruroughs was a prominent member of this school of writing, Jerry Siegal was another, as was Doc Smith.

The biography of Rohmer now published had a somewhat circuitous route from typewriter to printing press. The title page gives the following credit lines: "by Cay Van Ash and Elizabeth Sax Rohmer / Edited, with Foreword, Notes, and Bibliography by Robert E. Briney."

The way things actually worked out, the book reads like an autobiography of Elizabeth Sax Rohmer, Rohmer's widow, somewhat clumsily (and coyly) made over into third person by Rohmer's female 'protege' Cay Van Ash, then edited by Briney. At any rate, the book places a huge amount of emphasis on Elizabeth and all too little on Sax, and does so in the most sloppily soap-operatic fashion.

We are forever being told of what a silly irresponsible fellow Sax was, not caring for business, falling in love with adventuresses and teenage tramps, while the angelic and forbearing Elizabeth showed such patience and fortitude as no ordinary woman could possess . . .

The book is rich in anecdote, and reveals a good deal of Rohmer's non-literary career, as playwright, producer and traveller. But every time, just when things are getting interesting, the spotlight miraculously switches to the enchanting Elizabeth and the prose goes into a rhapsody to her courage, her loyalty, her intelligence, her beauty, her vivacity, and (to this reader) her insufferable pettish egotism.

Maybe one of these days someone will do a good book about Rohmer and/or his works. In my opinion the ideal candidate would be the same Briney whose contribution to *Master of Villainy* is excellent but all too little. Still, until that time this book seems to be the only game in town, and if you want to read—uh, play—there's no place else to go.

BEYOND APOLLO by Barry Malzberg, Random House, 1972, 138pp., $5.95

This seems to be the month for near misses and for failed, noble efforts. Barry Malzberg's novel is just such a one—a thin book based on a good, but thin idea, the problem being apparently that the idea is just a bit thinner than the book is.

Basically, the 'story' of *Beyond Apollo* has all taken place before the opening fthe novel. An attempted Mars shot has failed, the government has for political reasons followed this with an attempted two-man Venus landing shot. Something happens to one of the astronauts; the other returns alone, apparently rational and reasonably calm, but so freaked out by what happened that he can't tell anybody where the other crewman is or what took place.

The surviving astronaut tries to tell what happened. They have him locked up in a mental hospital and he produces one story after another of what happened. But nobody really knows—including him!

A neat notion, and Malzberg works a number of interesting changes on it, letting his narrator review his own past, his relationship with his wife, his relationship with the other astronaut. Were there Venusians? Did he hallucinate them during the space shot? Or is he hallucinating them now in retrospect?

So it goes, and it goes with considerable imagination and a degree of black humor.

But the idea doesn't carry for 138 pages—somewhere around the middle of the book I found myself wishing that Malzberg or his hero would work out some point and get on to the next thing, whatever it might be. Well, it never happened, and before too much longer I found myself dragging along from page to page, and by the time the book ended it was a relief.

Like *Tunnel Through the Deeps,* not a bad effort, but one without sufficient substance to justify a novel.

DRIFTGLASS by Samuel R. Delany, Signet Q4834, 1971, 278pp., 95¢

As far as I know this is the first collection of Chip Delany's short stories and novelettes, and as you might expect, it's a fine book. Several of the stories are pretty long—in the fifty to sixty page bracket—and with a little padding and large type a couple of them might have been published separately as shortish novels. In their present form I'm sure that they're artistically superior; also, I'm sure, they're not nearly as rewarding to Delany's pocketbook, but then that's the way it goes in this business.

I think the lead story, "The Star Pit," is my favorite from the book. It's a novelette, originally published in *Worlds of Tomorrow* in 1967, and it's one of the finest stories Delany has ever written. It concerns madness, and intergalactic travel, and love and death, and the meaning of sex and reproduction. No trivial themes, and Delany has never been one to back away from serious challenges.

He writes, as we all know, with the pen of a poet, a poet who in turn is largely a musician. And those who know Delany also know that he is a gourmet chef of incredible accomplishments. So his stories come up full of poetry, and music, and full of the odors and flavors of gourmet cooking.

At times I think he hones his instruments just a bit too finely: the well-crafted phrase becomes an end in itself rather than a tool for the advancement of the narration. But Delany's sights are set high, and his attainments are considerable, and *Driftglass* is an important collection of stories.

* * * * *

BRIEFLY NOTED

THE BOOK OF VAN VOGT by A. E. Van Vogt, DAW Books UQ1004, 1972, 191pp., 95¢

If you dig Van Vogt now, or if you admired his work during his peak period two or three decades ago, you'll probably enjoy at least some of the stories in this book. Four stories never-before-reprinted from their original magazine appearances, three brand new. All of them with the old pulp emphasis on plot with relatively little emphasis on character or style...

CLARION II edited by Robin Scott Wilson, Signet Q5056, 1972, 256pp., 95¢

I didn't read the first volume of stories from the Clarion workshop for would-be science fiction writers, but this second collection is about what you might expect. That is, a bunch of student exercises of varying quality; to satisfy my own curiosity I graded each story as I would have had I been teaching the course. The results were one A, two A-, four B+, four B, three B-, one C, two C-, two D and one E. The question, now, is whether a collection of student exercises ought to be published, specifically whether it ought to be fobbed off as professional stuff, and the answer, in my opinion, is (or should be) No.

TIGER RIVER by Arthur O. Friel, Centaur Press, 1971, 186pp., 75¢

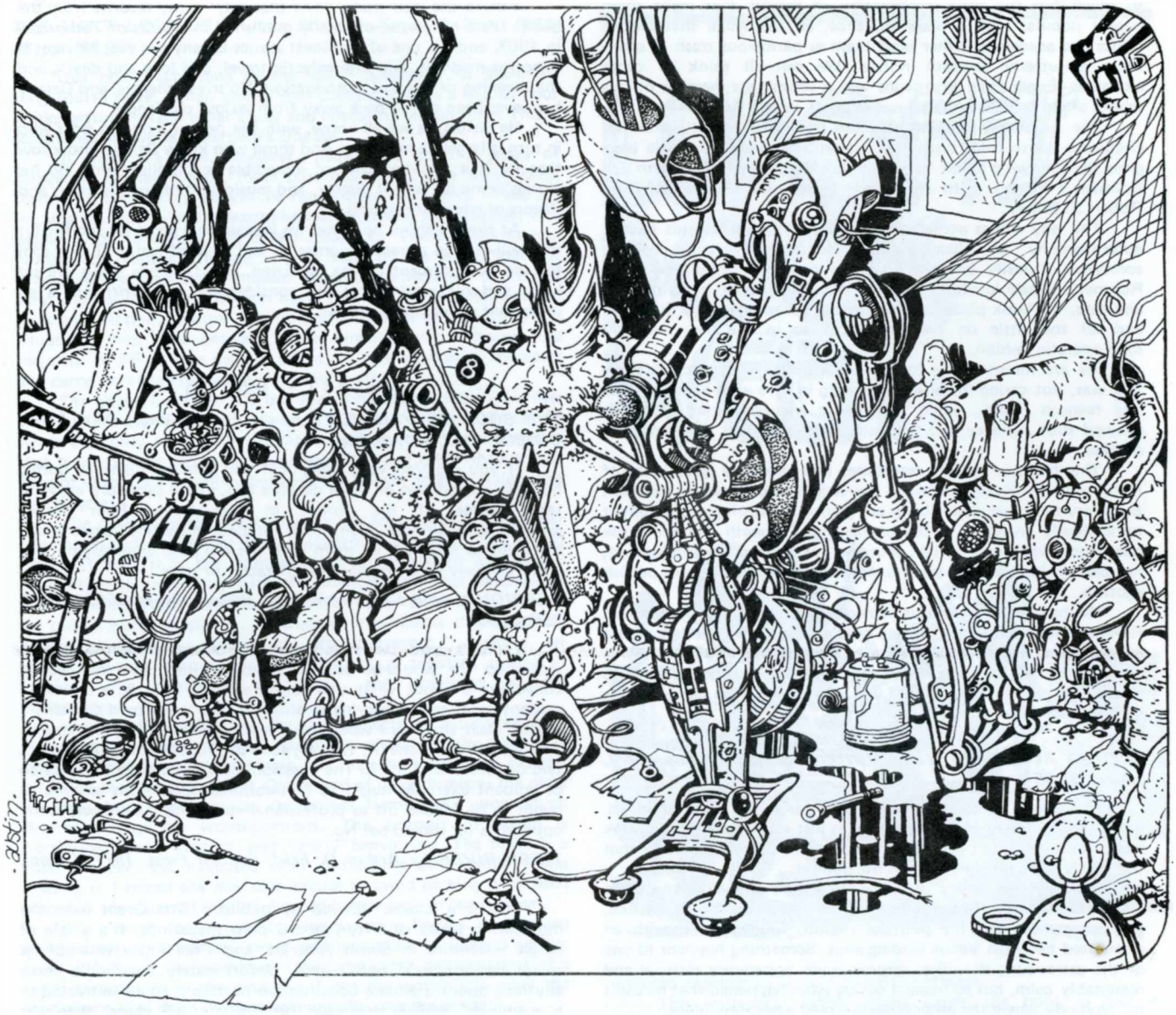
This is a 'classic' revived by publisher Don Grant from the mouldering pages of fifty-year-old pulp magazines. It's a tale of jungle adventure in South America, and Friel knew whereof he wrote because he'd been there. Unfortunately, he didn't know anything about dramatic construction or pacing, so we're treated to a seemingly endless trek-saga for 150 or '60 pages, then the discovery of a lost city and a climax packed into the last few chapters. Haggard did it decades earlier and miles better.

DREADFUL SANCTUARY by Eric Frank Russell, Lancer Books, 1963, 174pp., 50¢

Russell produced two Fortean novels, *Sinister Barrier* and *Dreadful Sanctuary,* for John Campbell back in the Forties. I read the former when it was reprinted as the first "Galaxy Novel" in 1950 and it scared the daylights out of me. I thought it was the greatest novel I'd ever read. For some reason I never got around to *Dreadful Sanctuary* until this year, and I found it dull, contrived, unconvincing; the characters unbelievable, the basic premise silly and the plot ridiculous. Now, pals: Is the book really that much inferior to *Sinister Barrier* or is it my standards that have changed drastically? Dast I go back and reread *Sinister Barrier* to find out? Or should I preserve the happy memory of my innocent boyhood? Who has an opinion to offer?

VIRGIL FINLAY, Grant, 1972, 153pp., $11.50

In my opinion (and you surely realize by now that this is an opinionated column) there were three great illustrators of science fantasy in the pulp era: Frank R. Paul, Virgil Finlay, and Hannes Bok. I knew Paul and Bok, although both only slightly; I know Finlay only through his works and through the testimony of those who knew him. He had a style heavily dependent upon fine detail work, his colored illustrations depending upon a gorgeous, sensuous slathering of tones, his black-and-whites drenched in incredibly painstaking line and shadow. This book comprises a portfolio of Finlay's works—37 black-and-whites, four color—plus an appreciation by Sam Moskowitz and a Finlay checklist by Gerry de la Ree. Indispensible for the Finlay admirer!



MY COLUMN
Ted White

Magazines which don't make money, can't spend money.

Last issue, after exploring the economics of writing SF, I ended on a cliff-hanger of sorts by suggesting that it was possible the SFWA could do something about it all, and that I would go into this in my next Column...which this is.

The reactions to My Column in the last *Algol* were surprising. People who hardly knew me came up to me at conventions to express their sympathy for my poverty and their shock that The Editor of One Third of All the SF Magazines was paid so little. Mixed with their sympathy, of course, was contempt. They'd known all along that I was really just a 'fanzine editor' devoting himself to a glorified hobby, and I had with my own words confirmed this impression.

Well, gee, fellas—when Harry Harrison was briefly the editor of *Amazing* and *Fantastic,* he suggested—and received—the munificent sum of $75.00 a month (half what I make). And we all know that Harry is not a fanzine editor. And, just to get Sol Cohen off the hook (the financial plight of the SF magazines is not of his making), I will reveal that the former editor of a more prestigious SF magazine was paid $50.00 a week—or about $50.00 a month more than I—less than ten years ago.

This leads me to a direct corollary: magazines which don't make much money can't spend much money either—on either their editors or their writers. Nor, to continue this train of thought a bit, do they have the sort of money that is required to adequately promote a magazine so that it can make money properly.

(At this year's Secondary Universe Conference, I listened with awe as Ben Bova described his discussions with Conde-Nast's promotion department, circulation department, and ghod knows what other departments, the end effect of which was the sort of author- and magazine-plugging which keeps *Analog*'s circulation head and shoulders over that of the other magazines. Money. That's what it takes to make money. If you've got it, you can get more. If you don't—forget it. Right now only *Analog* has any real money behind it.)

So: what has this to do with the SFWA and what can the SFWA do about it?

Let me tell you what the SFWA cannot do, first.

The SFWA cannot, by either bullying or more honeyed enticement, force the magazines to raise their word-rates to a more comfortable level. A few years ago the then-president of the SFWA told me he intended to see to it that by the end of his term the SF magazines would either pay a minimum of 5¢ a word or face a SFWA boycott. It never happened. Let's consider why:

Right now my magazines pay an average of 1½¢ a word—our rates range from 1¢ a word (for novels and stories by newcomers) to 3¢ a word (for better-established authors). *F&SF* pays 2-3¢ a word and *Galaxy* and *If* pay about the same. (*Analog* pays 5¢ for short fiction; 3 or 4¢ for the longer stuff. But we'll leave *Analog* out of this discussion.) Assume, for the sake of argument, that the average SF magazine publishes 60,000 words of fiction each issue (I don't know the actual figures for each magazine; this is just for the purpose of illustration). At 1¢ a word, the fiction in that magazine costs the publisher $600.00. That isn't a lot, you might say. But at 5¢ a word, the same contents would cost the publisher $3,000.00. And that still doesn't seem like a lot of money.

However, it is. Especially when the magazine's profit margin is narrower than that.

"Bunk!" cried the then-president of the SFWA when I pointed this out to him. "If a magazine was making no more money than that, it wouldn't be in business. Why, you can make a better return on your investment just by putting it in a savings account. Publishers are hard-headed businessmen and that isn't the way they operate. Of course they can afford it."

Can they?

I'm not going to rip open any closet doors here, nor will I expose any publishers' skeletons, but the simple fact is that in the case of at least half the magazines being published in our field, the publishers could make a better return on their investment elsewhere. At least half the magazines in the field are poised on the brink of breaking even, relying upon subsidiary sales (anthologies, foreign editions, etc.) for the narrow margin of profit. These magazines survive because they are operated with an absolute minimum of staff—no secretaries, no art departments, just the editor and maybe a poorly paid (if he's paid at all) assistant—or even an editor who is also the publisher. And they survive because at this point it is the course of least resistance. The youngest magazine in the field is twenty years old; every magazine has a built-in inertia which continues it. In many cases it would be financially disastrous to fold—think of all the subscriptions to be refunded.

Corners are cut wherever possible. Pick up a copy of any issue of *F&SF* which came out this year. It is, at the present, being printed by the worst printer in the business, a printer well-known for the shoddiness of his products. This shoddiness has undoubtedly hurt *F&SF* badly—the package simply doesn't coincide with the image which has been *F&SF*'s stock in trade for all its life. You can be sure that the monetary inducement was overwhelming—a big enough difference in costs to lead Ed Ferman into a gamble which unfortunately didn't pay off. (Shortly *F&SF* will change to the same printer who is now doing *Amazing, Fantastic, If* and *Galaxy*; it will cost more, but it was obviously necessary.)

So let us say simply that the magazines are trapped in a vicious circle: they aren't making enough money to be able to afford to spend enough to sell more copies and thus make more money.

Can the SFWA do anything about this?

I don't know. Obviously the SFWA has the power and ability to help promote the magazines in a general way. At the Secondary Universe conference I mentioned earlier, the point was raised in reference to the SFRA, a comparable group of SF's academics. It was pointed out that many teachers and most students in the SF classes are unaware of or unfamiliar with the SF magazines. It was pointed out that magazines face certain distribution problems with respect to the college bookstores (national distributors aren't geared to handle such outlets for the most part) but that individual publishers (mine among them) are investigating direct sales to such stores. Certainly the SFWA and SFRA can help here—and the student market is obviously the largest potential market for the magazines.

But this wasn't what I had in mind when I mentioned the SFWA at the close of my last Column.

I was talking, you'll recall, about the economic situation for the SF writer—not the magazines. And it is becoming increasingly obvious that the magazines are forming less and less of the writer's marketplace. In the last year, for example, one man has doubled (or more) the outlet for SF stories. Roger Elwood has, at last count, forty-two contracted anthologies which will publish new stories, for which he is paying an average of 3¢ a word and sometimes more (but this appears to be hard to pin him down on—in more than one case he's paid 3¢ for stories he promised 4¢ or 5¢ a word on). Elwood is obviously the largest market the field has ever seen and he makes possible a vastly enlarged production schedule for those authors who can expand their output and meet his sometimes capricious requirements (he has rejected stories he commissioned by authors such as Alexei Panshin, Terry Carr, Robert Silverberg, Jack Vance and myself; to my knowledge only Silverberg was paid for the rejected story—the rest of us have been less lucky despite the fact that we've eventually sold our stories elsewhere).

But for the last seven or ten years, the most profitable area in which to write SF has been the novel—for both hardcover and paperback original publication. It does not pay much better than magazine publication on an initial per-word basis (the average is still 2½¢ to 3½¢ a word on the initial advance), but the possibility of subsidiary sales—especially foreign sales—can raise the amount earned on a novel to at least double the original advance, and there is always the possibility of additional printings and royalties here at home.

Not too long ago the SFWA drew up a Model Contract. (Well, the SFWA has published more than one Model Contract; it gets revised from time to time.) It was designed primarily to do two things.

First, to rid the author of the usual hidden clauses which virtually allow a publisher to rape its authors at will. And second, to spell out a more favorable (and equitable) royalty percentage. I'm not going to go into such details here as the 4-and-6% royalty as opposed to the 6-and-8% royalty—just take my word for it that publishers will agree to the latter, but vastly prefer the former, which amounts, when all is said and done, to only half as much money for the author.

In any case, the SFWA Model Contract is an admirable contract which takes advantage of neither author nor publisher and which spells out a fair and equitable balance for each.

Naturally, publishers are resisting it. Why not? At present book publishers have a surplus of available books, and can afford, in most cases, to work on a take it or leave it basis. Some clauses in most publishers' contracts are negotiable—such as the clause which applies foreign sales monies to the balance of your unearned domestic advance (and thus deprives you of those foreign earnings), or the clause in which the publisher takes 50% (or more) of your magazine sale in advance of book publication. But others are not. Not unless you are in the enviable position of being sought after by the publisher. Few enjoy that position, and those who do don't have

The SFWA should publish books.

money problems any more.

So the Model Contract is unlikely to become an industry standard.

Unless, of course, one (or more) publisher(s) offer it as an inducement to attract authors. That would create a competitive situation. It seems unlikely to happen, however, unless someone makes it happen.

And this is where the SFWA comes in.

I have this idea, you see. I am not broaching it here for the first time. I have already outlined it to Poul Anderson, the present president of the SFWA, and to SFWA stalwarts and past presidents like James Gunn and Gordon Dickson, all of whom have given it serious consideration.

My proposal, boiled down, is that the SFWA should publish books. And, in so doing, use its own Model Contract. It is my feeling that under such circumstances the Model Contract would become an industry reality and other publishers would be forced by the pressure of competition to adopt it in whole or part themselves. It was also my idea to put the SFWA in a more financially secure position, in which it would be able to afford salaried officers and workers.

Put bluntly like that, the idea seems both sensible and difficult to put into effect. How, for instance, would the SFWA become a publisher?

The mistake many people make in considering the role of publisher is to conclude that a publisher need do everything involved in the publication of a book. That the publisher need be, in effect, the typesetter and printer and merchandiser of his books. This is not actually the way the industry functions.

My plan would have the SFWA acting as an independent producer of books. The SFWA would, in effect, supply the property—the actual copyedited manuscript, the design for the book, the design or mechanical for the dust jacket, the dust jacket copy, etc.—to an existing publisher of books, through which the book would be published. The SFWA's existing assets—major SF authors whose works are in ready demand, considerable editorial talent and connections with the top art talent in the field—are, I think, enough to start the ball rolling. The stumbling block is the negotiation of a workable relationship with an existing publisher. My thought originally was to investigate the commercial publishers for possibilities. James Gunn suggested that the university presses might make a better starting place. I think he may be right.

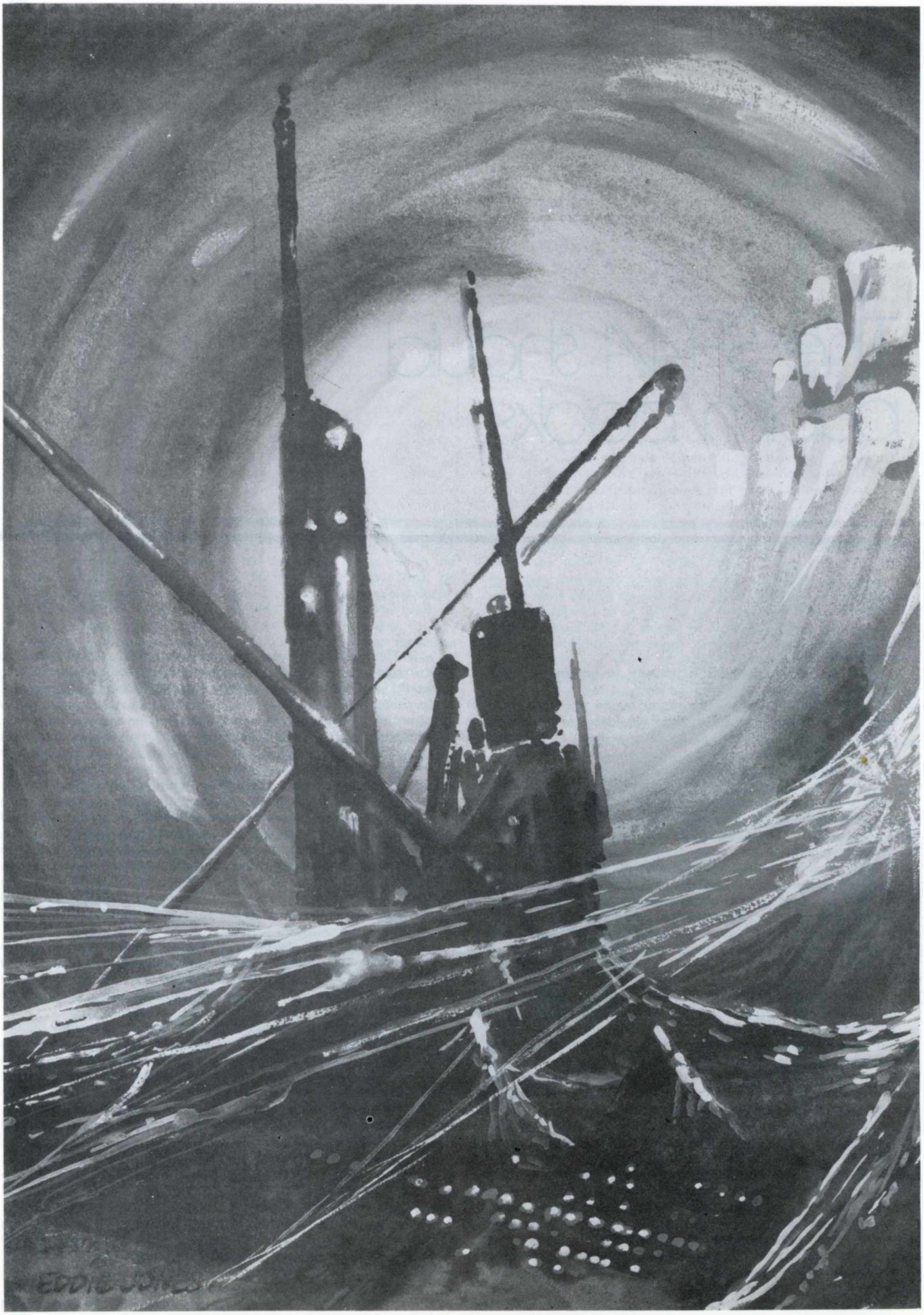
There are, of course, other problems which would arise once this basic publishing setup was established. The question of who would be published by the SFWA Press, for example. The potential for abuse is very real. When I mentioned the idea at one get together of authors I watched the dollar signs light up the eyes of several, who began planning immediately the ways in which they could take advantage of such a scheme. My own feeling is that the SFWA Press should start with such books as the Nebula Awards annuals, the Hall of Fame anthologies, etc. And continue with other proven money-makers, such as an Asimov book, etc. (assuming Isaac wanted to publish a book through the SFWA Press—but why not? The contract would probably be better than anything he is now getting). But sooner or later a general publishing program would be required, with a salaried editorial staff and a regular list of new books. There will be juicy plums here, and much potential for abuse. But I think this could be worked out—and that it does not comprise an objection to the overall plan, but simply an obstacle to be mounted.

I have, as I say, discussed this plan with the SFWA officers. No one objects to its basic outline, although all have expressed reservations about the workability of various features. But unfortunately, no one has done much with the idea except to discuss it.

Therefore, I am bringing it out into the open, here. My reasons are altruistic: I want to see it established because I feel it will in the long run benefit us all. Perhaps you, reading this Column, are the person with the necessary connections to make the SFWA Press a working reality—or perhaps you know someone else who has those connections. If that's the case, fine: here it is in broad outline. Contact me for details if you think you need them. In any case, take the ball and run with it.

COMING NEXT ISSUE:

There's a strong possibility of an all-British issue for May, with "Science Fiction As Empire" by Brian Aldiss, "SF In The Real World" by John Brunner, and "A New Metaphor For The Future" by J. G. Ballard. There's also a good possibility of obtaining a British contribution which will stand the literary world on its ear. Or, as we say in the publishing game, Maybe Not. Deadline for all letters of comment, artwork and contributions is April 15th, 1973.


EDDIE

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Harry Warner asks a specific question about the Ace Specials with their Dillon covers which he thinks requires research and elucidation. I can give a definite answer—the poor sales of the Ace Specials with the Dillon covers had nothing to do with the reaction of readers on the stands or the comparative costs over other Ace SF books. They sold poorly because fewer reached the newsstands, due to the extraordinarily high percentage of copies returned, rejected by dealers, or destroyed (by means of having covers returned for credit by wholesalers and the rest of the book pulped). It became apparent—too late—that the similarity of these covers in style, design, and unmemorable monochromatic cover art registered on the overworked memories of wholesalers as if they were simply repeats of last months' titles...and so they were being returned in greater quantities. I had occasion enough to check through statements of returns and destroyed copies and can state that by the second year of the Specials they were getting fifteen to twenty-five per cent less copies on the stands than non-Special SF—or for that matter any other category printed in similar quantities (generally about 90,000 copies total).

That's the whole story. It had nothing to do with the authors, the quality of the novels or anything else.

Re Dick Wilson's claim that Charles Brockden Brown was the first American science-fantasy writer, an older claim can be made for Joseph Morgan whose Utopian—or perhaps dystopian—novel *The History of the Kingdom of Basaruah* was published in Boston in 1715 and has been called by the Harvard University Press which reprinted it in 1945 "the first American novel." It's an allegorical 'Imaginary Voyage/Social Satire' novel to an undiscovered land 'North of America.'

Ted White is most interesting—and there's a lot of truth in what he says—but also a very slanted personal case as well. To make a decent salary an editor should learn to edit everything, not just SF, and if such an editor has the right talent to adjust to the point of view of all audiences for other kinds of literature, he will eventually make a good middle-class living. Obviously Ted is too determined to remain fixed in the one category—credible for his integrity perhaps but hard on the pocketbook. But I have heard malicious fans make the claim that Ted had it good—he's being paid to put out two printed fanzines in just the way he wants. As one who published seven issues of newsstand SF magazines (*Stirring* and *Cosmic*) for exactly no salary, I would say that things are looking up.

As for the claim that 'publishers get rich,' I aim, after thirty years of working in the editorial treadmills, to find out whether this is indeed so. But it isn't as simple as all that—the outlook is different, the risks are different and greater, and the debts (at the start) are cumulative. Would Ted say that his publisher, Sol Cohen, is a rich man or merely a man who is just managing to make ends meet? Would you even call him a happy man? My impression of Sol is that he has been a quite frantic man for many years.

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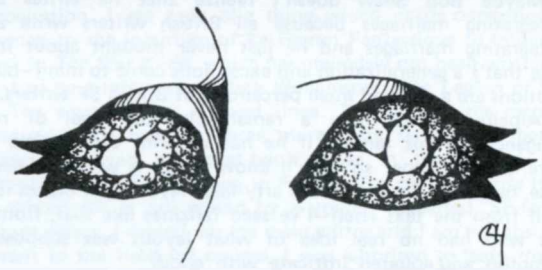
Dick Lupoff must have been misled by a dealer about Mark Twain's *Christian Science*. It's contained in the uniform editions of his works, including the set that I acquired by clipping coupons from the long-departed *Philadelphia Record*. I suppose that Christian Science is the only important denomination that hasn't undergone some liberalizing within the past few decades. I wondered a couple of times in Boston last fall, as I looked out of my hotel window onto that enormous new building, what would happen if young and progressive people should somehow get control of the Christian Science hierarchy and rid it of the Eddy-worship, then make its techniques more palatable to the unconvinced. Whether its cures are created by religion or by psychology, there's not the slightest doubt that Christian Science does benefit some people with physical problems. Of course, it's also possible to speculate about the consequences of a marriage between Christian Science and Dianetics.

The history of science fiction in France might have been quite different if World War Two hadn't come along. An experienced editor named Georges Gallet was ready to publish a sort of prozine which would have mixed stories with some science fact articles, and had a few copies of a first issue published, then the war broke out. I sometimes wonder if the slow development of native authors of

RANDOM FACTORS: *the readers*



science fiction in so many nations has something to do with the lack of equivalents over there of the publications like *Science & Invention* that paved the way over here for the real prozines.

Ted White's financial revelations will make me feel a trifle more comfortable the next time I go to a con. I have this mixture of inferiority and equality every time I happen to get close to two or three pros. Then I remember that my income from writing for the newspapers and from non-science fiction free-lancing is probably larger in an average year than 90% of the people who sell science fiction regularly or edit it or otherwise depend on it for the bulk of their income.

I can't agree with Bob Shaw when he wants the annoying critics to write the perfect novel: the obvious objection is that we wouldn't have any good critics at all if all good critics could write fine novels, because the public would insist on their creating fiction instead of reviewing it. Otherwise, I like Bob's long letter and I agree with him in the implications that a lot of critics are careless. Even if a critic needn't have the ability to write fiction, he should be accurate in his statements of facts and he shouldn't bombard his readers with cliches while complaining about stereotyped novels or use ad hominem arguments. Incidentally, I once got into trouble with Dr. David Keller over another immortality novel. It was his *Life Everlasting*. I asked why the whole basis of the story should be valid when the women who had immortality but couldn't bear babies were in a position to make themselves happy by having children first, then taking the immortality treatment. Dr. Keller told me I didn't understand female psychology.

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I can see Ted's point about writing, but I do think he overdoes it. For that matter, maybe a few overdone looks at the hardships are what is needed to counteract what Kusske called fannish dreams of glory. Ted did overlook a couple points. He says to make money you shouldn't write, you should edit. (For $150 a month? Okay, he said you should edit for a big company, but then that's probably what a lot of Doubleday office boys thought they were going to be doing when they were hired.) Anyway, there is another side to the writing. If I could sell 4 novels a year at $1500—or 3 at $2000—I would be making a bit more than I am right now at my mundane job, and more than a good many people in Blackford County, Indiana, make. Poverty level? Not here—though I admit it's uncomfortably close. And that is the point he misses—that a writer can live where he damned well pleases. I have been offered—seriously—a house and 20 acres of land in West Virginia for $500. If I went to free-lance writing, I would probably take it. (Tho I'd want to see it first.) Currently I'm paying $75 a month rent for an 8-room house... figure the equivalent cost in New York City and my 'effective' income—meaning whatever I have left after paying for essentials—jumps quite a bit, doesn't it? That's what a writer has going for him. An editor—particularly one working for a big publishing house—lives in New York City or close by, and pays the price in rent, pollution, traffic, vandalism and what have you. Ted may be able to edit from Virginia as long as he's working for $150 a month, but move up into that big-time editing and from all I know, you move back into the rat race. And who says you have to write nothing but science fiction? Andy Offutt claims he makes more

than the vast majority of SFWA members, and I don't doubt him a bit. (Of course, if you're a writer who wants to live in the big city, you may have problems, but they're of your own making; nobody is forcing you to stay put. You can live in Kentucky just as well as Andy does.) Ted's other point—that people who know nothing about the field are the ones making good money from it—is well taken but true in any field from writing to ditch-digging.

Maybe Bob Shaw doesn't realize that he writes about disintegrating marriages because all British writers write about disintegrating marriages and he just never thought about it. (Of course that's a generalization and exceptions come to mind—but the exceptions are a damned small percentage of British SF writers.)

Alpajpuri must have a remarkably low level of reader intelligence for his fanzine if he has to print each article on a different color paper so they'll know which is which. Unless, of course, he goes in for the sort of arty-farty layout that makes it hard to tell from the text itself—I've seen fanzines like that, from arty types who had no real idea of what layout was supposed to accomplish, and equated 'intricate' with 'good.'

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It's the whole range of *Algol* that I should be responding to, but what really prompts me to write, unfortunately, is the exchange between Dick Lupoff and Bob Shaw.

While both are people I like a great deal, I'm afraid that with only minor exceptions I have to side with what Bob says here. The exceptions, and a few quibbles for Bob: A critic is only a person who can verbalize his likes and dislikes; the fact that different critics may not agree only demonstrates, to me, that different people like (and dislike) different things. Also, while I would not hold up Dick's *One Million Centuries* or *Sacred Locomotive Flies* as Great SF—Bob implied that Dick spoke from an a priori insight into writing without having had to sweat to get into print himself—I would still recommend either of them to a friend as a pleasant way to spend a few hours, the former as a better-than-average adventure yarn, the latter as a humorous piece (of which SF has very few good examples). SLF is a little heavy-handed in spots, but Dick gets it off more times than not.

Once these exceptions are noted, however, I find I agree with what BoSh has said. I also went cross-eyed when I first read Dick's line, "Most often, for reasons upon which one may speculate, he deals with disintegrating marriages," in *Algol* 17; it seemed to me than that if things were not as they should be in the Shaw household that it was in piss poor tastes to 'speculate' about it in a fanzine, and that if things were as they should be that Dick's choice of words was, at best, ill-considered.

Since Bob has done an excellent job of demolishing Dick on this point, as well as others, I don't think I could, should or would want to add any more, were it not for the fact that, presumably after making his cutesy reply to Bob's letter, Lupoff comes back to the theme in another review of one of Bob's books in this *Algol*.

"The point I am concerned with," Dick says in review of *Ground Zero Man,* "is this: when a theme recurs in an author's work, this is of interest to a reader or critic. And Shaw has written of disintegrating marriages in book after book after book, including most recently *Ground Zero Man* and *Other Days, Other Eyes.* Why Bob Shaw keeps writing of disintegrating marriages, I do not know. Why he denies that he writes of disintegrating marriages I do not know either."

The point of Lupoff's concern may have seemed more valid if the review had appeared in, say, *Algol* 19, where BoSh's letter would not be near at hand for comparison and where what he'd had to say would therefore be blurred by the passage of time. As it is, the effectiveness of Dick's point of concern lasts until one reads Bob's letter, where it becomes apparent that Bob did not deny writing about disintegrating marriages at all but rather quibbled that the trouble with the marriage in *One Million Tomorrows* was not that it was disintegrating but that "the partners were almost too much in love." Bob adds further on, "For the record, I have written a cycle of four books in which I deliberately gave the heroes different kinds of marriages and different sets of marital problems because I thought it would be a salutory change from the all-too-common SF hero who has no human ties whatsoever and thus can be flicked off to the other side of the galaxy with a minimum of disturbance for both himself and the author."

In ticking off and destroying the "logical flaws" Dick thought he found in *One Million Tomorrows,* Bob seems to demonstrate that, while Dick may have read what he reviews, he sometimes does not comprehend what he reads. Lupoff's review of GZM adds weight to that belief, and since Dick has now found three of the four works Bob cited I suppose one can look forward to the day when Dick stumbles across the fourth, *The Two Timers,* shakes his head over it and wonders aloud why Bob "keeps" writing about disintegrating marriages and why he "denies" writing about them, although it seems to me that most anyone capable of comprehending the English language should find an answer to the first question and a negation of the second in the statements I've quoted from Bob's letter. Since Dick refers to the letter in opening the review, one can only assume that, once again, there has been some failure on his part to understand what has been written.

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Let me work my way down—and sometimes I do choose my words carefully—to the argument between Dick Lupoff and Bob Shaw regarding criticism. Having been both critical and criticized many times over the last couple of years I suppose I'm at least as poorly qualified as the next person to comment.

Although somehow I didn't see *Algol* 17 and therefore missed the review in question I don't think that need stop me, although I do confess to a moment's hesitation over it. Neither Lupoff nor Shaw seem particularly concerned over the review generally but rather over Lupoff's rather unnecessary line "for reasons upon which one may speculate" referring to Shaw's alleged concern with disintegrating marriages. While Shaw feels, rather justifiably in my opinion, that Lupoff is casting stones, and therefore he reacts with great vigor, I'm more inclined to feel that he is tossing straws, and a post card from Mrs. Shaw would have been far more than sufficient to answer such a silly line. Certainly one may speculate on Shaw's use of such a theme, (allowing for the moment that he uses it regularly). If one has the time and the inclination for such, Asimov's fondness for metal people and Bradbury's over-usage of children, not to mention Anne McCaffrey's love of dragons can provide endless hours of speculation, useless indeed, but still speculation.

Lupoff claims Shaw talks of disintegrating marriages, Shaw returns that he talks of people almost too much in love. Marriages of all kinds, whether Shaw's or Lupoff's versions, amount to much of the same thing. All marriages are disintegrating, and anyone in love is too much in love. If Bob Shaw didn't write of human relationships in his novels someone, Lupoff or someone else would be complaining drastically if not nastily, that Shaw cannot seem to write about real people or that his book is utterly inept in regard to characterization. Again, and finally, so what. What ever happened to the excitement in the field produced by *The Lovers*?

My responses might have been less prejudiced, and/or kinder to Lupoff if at the same time I hadn't read his review of *The Lathe of Heaven* in which I disagreed with almost everything he said, and certainly with his heaps of superlatives. I found the novel to be just barely enjoyable, far too inconsistent to be related to Philip Dick's dreams and the characters just barely out of the cardboard stage. I do agree that she has written a far better version of it than a multi-field hack would have done, my only quarrel is that it's a far worse version than Ursula LeGuin should have done.

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When Franz Rottensteiner declares "that writers like Anderson want the fans or the reviewers to write only about the things they have liked" he is indulging in the common, mildly irritating practice of the critic manque: attributing thoughts or motives to a person whom one has never even met.

For the record, not even professionally published reviews seem to make the slightest difference to science fiction sales, let alone pieces in fanzines. So the only question is, "Do the remarks of this person, whether favorable or unfavorable, have any relevance, any value to the ongoing effort to improve the product?"

I can't speak for others, but will say that I myself have found it well worthwhile to pay close attention to certain pros, among them Theodore Sturgeon, A. J. Budrys, P. Schuyler Miller, and James Blish. Whether kindly or caustic, whether something I can agree with or not, the comments of people like these are always instructive. Among fans—by which is meant everybody making such statements who has not sold a reasonable number of stories professionally, including members of academe—I know of only one person whose writings are worth similarly careful attention. That is Sandra Miesel. Many others have been very gracious to me, of course, but she is the only one from whom I have learned more than what the opinion is of an isolated individual.

If fandom as a whole takes Rottensteiner and his habitual terminological inexactitudes seriously, why should prodom take fandom seriously?

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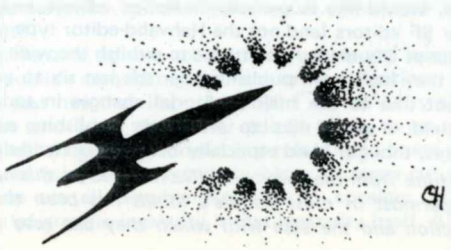
Mr. Turner is perfectly at liberty to think of me what he likes, but I find his opinion of Stanislaw Lem as a critic a bit curious, especially as he sees fit to qualify his good opinion of Messrs. Knight and Blish by the addition "but they are professionals." So presumably Lem doesn't qualify for the good guys because he isn't quite a professional? But the facts known to me point a quite different picture:

Lem's book on SF, a 700 page opus, large format, called *Fantastyka i Futurologia,* appeared in January 1971, and sold out an edition of 5000 copies in a week, in a country without SF. It won the literary award of the magazine *Miesiecznik Literacki* (and that's something other than a Hugo or a Nebula). A second edition, revised and enlarged (mostly to cover the work of Philip K. Dick whom Lem considers to be the most important living SF writer) will appear early in 1973.

Despite its length (if printed in the Advent format and set-up it would run to at least 1500 pages) the book is already, less than two years from its appearance, scheduled to appear in 3 translations (sometimes in abridged form): in Germany, Hungary and the U.S.A. I don't think that the US and German publishers do the book just because they love me; I also don't think that there exists an American SF author who would be able to sell a 1500 page book on SF; and if he exists I should like to hear of him. I also believe it indicates something that it is Lem's fanzine pieces (despite my fumbling translation attempts) who get reprinted professionally, and not George Turner's (who, aside from his blind spot, makes an excellent reviewer for a newspaper, I am sure: but Lem is a critic, and a major critic, and neither Mr. Turner nor Knight or Blish are in Lem's class, and to compare them to Lem would be as ridiculous as claiming that Blish were as good a critic as William Empson or R. P. Blackmur).

I fear it is amicable Jerry Lapidus who has some of his facts wrong, not I. If I claim that SF criticism is better the further apart it is from the centres of professional SF activity, I do not mean to say, and do not require, that there be no pros at all there: it would perhaps be difficult to find countries that meet this requirement. The handful of pros he cites don't make much difference. And: Lee Harding's activities, both professional and fannish, seem to be negligible, just now; Jack Wodhams isn't very active in fandom; Phil Harbottle is British and at present no pro at all. Chris Priest and Redd are fans turned pros, Pamela Bulmer is a fan, etc. The fact is that in Great Britain and Australia the pros don't take so active a part in fandom as do American SF authors; that they are totally abstinent I do not ask of them.



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You've done well in translating my speech, which was, frankly, improvisation. I see only one thing which needs correction: the reference to the intention of Le Rayon Fantastique to publish the sequel to *The Star Kings,* which has obviously not been written, was meant to be a reference to Jack Williamson's *The Legion of Space.*

The situation has evolved since. The fate of the magazines continues to be bad but three more book series have met with success. I started a pocket-book series in the second largest pocket-book publishing house in France. For once, (I write this for Ted White) SF is not edited by a young, conceited, SF-ignorant assistant editor. I myself am the main editor and I am not absolutely ignorant in the field (of course, I was surprised to learn that Ted White was editor of *Amazing*; I thought it was T. O'Connor Sloane, Ph.D.).

I publish my SF books among general literature, i.e., in the same series as works by Francois Mauriac, Colette, Pierre Boulle or Alberto Moravia. The covers of these books do not indicate that they are SF, so the public buys them and discovers that they like SF. Until this time the highest sales of SF novels have been around 25,000 copies (books by Bradbury, Lovecraft, A.E. Van Vogt, Asimov).

However, the sales of *World of Null-A* were 112,000 copies, and I have published four books which have sold 75,000 copies: Simak's *City,* Clarke's *2001,* Van Vogt's *Space Beagle* and Sturgeon's *More Than Human.* Right now I'm publishing classic SF but plan to publish some new authors (I've just bought a book by Zelazny) plus older ones like Nat Schachner.

On the other hand, as an author I am compiling a hardcover book about the SF illustrations in the US pulps (1926-1953). There will be about 350 reproductions (Paul, Wesso, Dold, Morey, Leydenfrost, Bok, Finlay, Lawrence, etc.) and a text of commentary and criticism by myself. It will be published at the beginning of 1973.

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When you told me that an article about science fiction in France by Jacques Sadoul appeared in *Algol* 18 I was impatient to know what he could have written. When I received *Algol* 18 I immediately jumped to his article and ...I was astonished. That you found this text interesting shows your lack of information on the French SF field, and the eagerness with which you welcome any piece of information, and there is very little in these two pages. In fact it gives only one French name: Boris Vian, who was a very brilliant writer, but not really an SF one. The lack of precision could be explained by the fact that this was originally a speech, but... but other things cannot. I shall try to give you some examples.

"Le Rayon Fantastique and Presence du Futur were edited by men who hated SF"—These men are respectively Georges H. Gallet and Robert Kanters. If the dislike of Kanters for SF is well known, he expressed it in public many times, I never heard before that the same went for Gallet. I cannot state that it is untrue but I find it hard to believe. He edited Le Rayon Fantastique (124 books), *V-Magazine* in which he published Barbarella (beginning in 1962), and now a new series of books, Science Fiction (with the help of Jacques Bergier). A lot of people discovered SF in Le Rayon Fantastique and are still thanking Gallet for it.

"...He ceased to publish real SF after 50 books... After 60 more books he tried to return to the origins..." Perhaps this is a question of taste, I don't see things the same way. In fact there was some change in Le Rayon Fantastique at the end of 1958 but it was only in the origin of the novels edited by Gallet. Before this time nearly all the books were translated from the English language, among the exceptions were novels by Francis Carsac, but beginning with no. 62 (*Le Gambit des Etoiles* by Gerard Klein), not 50, Gallet tried to give a market to French and other European novels and edited then some of the best novels in his series. I fondly remember books by Lieutenant Kije, Daniel Drode, Francis Carsac, Arcadius, Philippe Curval and others. And also the novels written by Nathalie and Charles Henneberg: *Le Sang des Astres* is still number one on

my list, I read it when it was published in 63, I was fourteen years old and it probably started my love for SF.

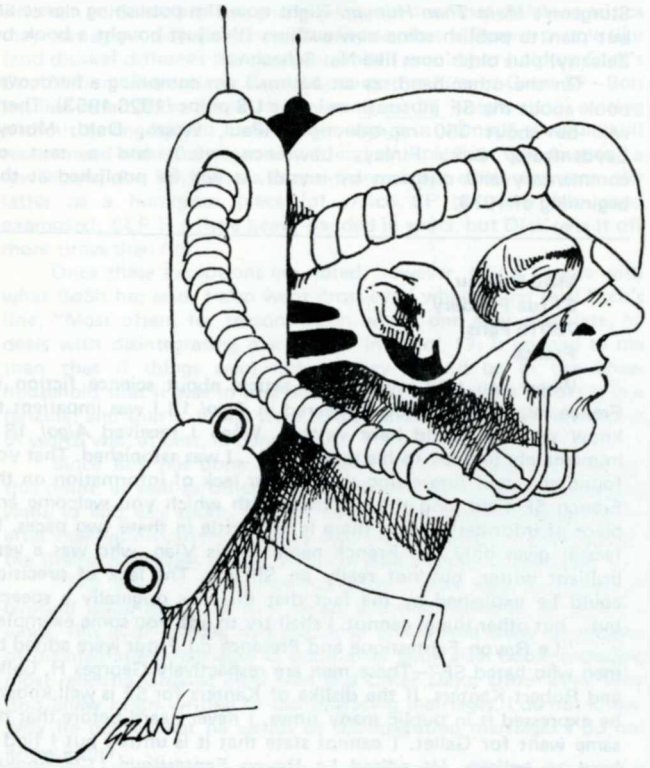
Gallet still edited some American authors but very infrequently. Jacques Sadoul tells: "After 50 books... After 60 more books... (he) published two more books by Van Vogt." So you conclude that two Van Vogt books appeared after no. 110. You are wrong, there were three and *The Weapon Shops of Isher* is no. 86 (1961), *The Book of Ptath* no. 87 (1961), *Siege of the Unseen* no. 112 (1963).

Le Rayon Fantastique was published by two of the most powerful French publishers: Gallimard and Hachette, and in 1964 the series ceased because problems existed between them (they still exist) and not because sales were worse than before.

Trying to give a date to this text I looked up the first projection of *2001: A Space Odyssey* in France: 26 September 1968. So it seems that this speech was prepared at the end of 1968. Only one detail is annoying with this date: Jacques Sadoul ceased to be editor of the French SF book club, the CLA, with the fourteenth book of the series which appeared in June 1968. So, when he says "now I am publishing... We plan to publish"... To explain the 'we,' Sadoul never edited the CLA alone but with Alain Doremieux.

Some more details: Yes, 'collection' means 'series'; in most cases publisher means editor; "Le Rayon Fantastique" has a double meaning "The Fantastic Ray" but also "The Fantasy Shelf."

I wanted to rectify some gross inexactitudes and it is now done. But don't think all is said in Sadoul's text about SF in France, even with errors, for those two pages are far too short. There have been, there are other magazines and series and also fanzines; there are also writers and some are very talented.



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I can speak with some authority on the problems of working for money vs. working for love. Neither was satisfactory. It all began when I was ten and decided to become a scientist because it paid well. (Remember, this was a whole generation ago when technical personnel were actually in short supply.) So I pursued this objective methodically for the next ten years, sometimes sacrificing other interests. The first question on college oral comprehensives was "Why did you want to become a chemist?" "Money and men," I responded. The staff was rattled but they passed me anyway. After acquiring an eminently suitable husband in graduate school I was forced to recognize my dislike for the field (not to mention my wretched research director) and laboratory ineptitude (I was always doing dumb things like getting my hair caught in a stirring motor). So I switched into the vastly more congenial field of medieval history. Unfortunately, a medievalist is slightly less employable than an aerospace engineer. There is no possibility of ever, at any time finding employment in the subject I love best. So here I sit, corroded by feelings of futility, as useless as an ornamental potted plant. (Planted pot would have use for some people.) My peculiar education leaves me fitted for nothing but writing sercon fanzine articles. Fandom is a wonderful, engrossing hobby but surely a grown woman ought to be capable of other public accomplishments?

The Screen Writers' Guild is larger and better organized than SFWA and has called strikes. Could Robert Bloch or some other informed person tell us if it has had any success improving conditions for screen writers?

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Alpajpuri has a point when he says (and I paraphrase), that a fanzine should account for the presentation of material as well as the material itself. The problem is one of balance: how much typographical work is useful, and how much is economically possible? Then again, how much do you, as editor, want? I have certainly been just as artsy-fartsy as any faned when it comes to experimental layout and graphics, I guess. Especially with *Hoop*. My view is that artwork and graphics should be, above all else, utile. I would not consider any of the graphics in *Algol* 18, for example, as wildly experimental—certainly nothing like Greg Shaw's *Mojo Entmooter* of some time back—but of very high quality, and high utility; in other words, your fanzine works. At least for me. I think the whole discussion futile. Nothing aggravates me quite so much as genuinely conflicting Weltenschauungen, especially when, as Paj does, such fanzines as *Energumen, Focal Point* and *Algol* are put down as inhuman pages of print. I think these fanzines, and others Paj cites, are strongly indicative of their publishers' personalities. Paj is correct, when he says these zines don't have as full an understanding of graphic possibilities as he does—and I think he's wrong in assuming these fanzines are not successful on their own terms.

Speaking about the economic state of science fiction... and obliquely about John Campbell... I have recently completed a study (a rather sercon study, I am ashamed to add) called "Cultural Change and Science Fiction in the Early Campbell Years, 1937-43." (It was done for the Junior-year Honors Colloquium in History, here at the University of Minnesota.) I was able to obtain, thanks to Ben Bova and the people at Conde Nast, the circulation figures for *Astounding* from 1934-44. In 1934, the magazine sold (on the average) 42,000 copies per month; the next year, it dropped 10,000 copies from the average monthly circulation. Growing gradually after 1935, the sales jumped from 37,000 in 1937 to 43,000 copies sold per month in 1938. Thirty-eight was, as you recall, the first year of Campbell's editorship. (There is little correspondence between magazine sales and national economic indicators, but that's where the whole paper comes in.) Circulation settled at about 40,000 copies per month in 1940-41, a drop I attribute to increased competition (some 11 new magazines started up after 1937.) It was Ray Palmer, quoted by Harry Warner in *All Our Yesterdays* (and I paraphrase), who said at Chicon I that "Campbell is unbelievable—he sells magazines by giving the fans what they want!"

I suppose this is where Harry Warner gets the idea that publishing what the fans want will be publishing what science fiction readers in general want. I don't know how accurate a cross-sample of science fiction readers fandom really is—fandom is definitely an elite, and elites usually evince all sorts of distortions when represented as 'typical' of their society. Fandom, as an elite, would probably be more concerned with literate and dramatic thinking than the mass of science fiction readers. Most SF readers (you know, the kind who buy *Analog* at the grocery store) are interested more in imaginative entertainment than anything else. I personally would like to see science fiction editors, as long as they are really SF editors (and not the Hahvahd-editor type described by Ted White at Doubleday), continue to publish the wide spectrum of material they have been publishing for the last six to seven years. I would not like to see major editorial changes in today's science fiction field; I would like to see better publishing and payment procedures, though. (And especially better newsstand distribution!)

[I think from the comments I've received on this issue of Algol *that uppermost in most people's minds has been the clarity of reproduction and the ease with which they can read the material*

I've published. As the last, and this, issue show, I've attempted layout and graphic design that leave the integrity of the article intact, not interfering but rather supplementing the material published. This is pretty hard to do at times—and this issue shows it in perhaps too high a ratio of solid pages of type—but the layout of Marion Z. Bradley's piece, while simple, is effective in presenting the article as a unity in which the graphic theme of the opening pages is continued throughout the 8 pages of type.

Publishing and payment problems are particularly extensive now; as Fred Pohl put it in Locus, *these problems, which had caused Wollheim's departure from Ace, had not been cleared up to the extent where he could remain with Ace in a position with integrity. Distribution problems may clear up in the future, although this is very unlikely. More probably they will get worse until some drastic solution is forced on publishers and distributors alike.]*

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John Piggot is full of shit. If a fanzine editor wants to spend hundreds of dollars on an issue, that's his business. Certainly much more has been spent on much less (I'm reminded of the $750,000 blown on that valley-curtain fiasco in Colorado, and the Sydney opera house, and the Vietnam war). A large monetary investment can produce a better fanzine, and good fanzines attract lots of subscribers, and before long a fanzine starts paying for itself, and then bringing in a little extra which goes to the editor and contributors... I mean, hell, just look at *Amazing* and *Fantastic.*

I might mention that *Trumpet,* what with its color covers and expensive paper stock and elaborate graphics, was running 1500 copies and paying for itself when Tom Reamy stopped publishing three years ago. I met Tom at the Worldcon in L.A. and he said he wanted to revive *Trumpet* but was going to Malaysia to shoot a film and would I handle it for a couple of issues...? So after I swept the bits and pieces of my jaw off the floor I replied in the affirmative, so, just you wait, Andy Porter, you may have some competition soon.

Visually, *Algol* 18 is splendid. You do good things with Letraset, and I think your sense of layout has better evidenced itself than in lastish, particularly in your treatment of the Alfred Bester article. I'm glad someone besides myself feels the urge to use photographics in fanzines these days. I like your presentation of portraits of the contributors, but really! you should get more up-to-date photographs! And if you hadn't used the mediocre Rotsler sketch on that page you could have printed the pictures twice as large.

The reduced typeface was, yes, very readable, though for me scanning across the page was a little difficult and after reading the whole issue straight through I found myself with a headache. It would be nice if you could type in double columns, but that might use up the space you saved by reducing in the first place...

I can't say much about the written material except that I enjoyed it immensely and intend to go back and re-read it months from now—for me the mark of personally gratifying writing. Alfred Bester and Thomas B. Swann and Ted White and Robert Silverberg all wrote delightful pieces—and I even read Lupoff's reviews! Good God, what are you doing to my mind?!?

I think Jerry Lapidus made a good point in the Starving SF Writer discussion when he said that most science fiction writers are in it for love, not money. At least I speak for myself—I write speculative fiction because... because the speculative side of my existence is the one that's alive. The creative process is a continual grasping into the grab-bag of What If...? and the sprinkling of manuscript pages with those handsful of Inner Vision. I don't care if I ever make money off SF—I'll never stop writing it. Naturally we should do our best to hammer the SFWA into a good strong writers' union. But should all the prozines and SF markets disappear tomorrow, I'd still be here, pounding away at visions of future doom and salvation for the human soul. What else is there but Otherwhat?

Most fanzine editors today do not share the imagination and drive to publish stimulating, well-constructed fanzines. To a lot of them it's just not that important. All I can do is try to point out parameters and tools that other editors seem to be unaware of. When I speak of graphics I'm not just referring to boxes around illos or colors of ink or text typed in shapes or pages cut to different sizes—those are all possible elements to consider, but the real substance of graphic ingenuity is that ingenuity itself. A magazine is a wholly graphic entity, meaning that it's perceived by the eyes, not so much the nose and fingers and taste buds and telepathic nodes. Everything in a fanzine is 'graphics,' not just the pretty pitchers and layout but the titles and articles as well. The way in which they manifest themselves in the graphic medium (the fanzine) will determine the way in which they're perceived by the reader. That's all. What anyone does with that startling revelation is up to them; if they have any imagination they'll at least think about it a bit.

[Last issue I ended up spending about $400. This was for printing, and mailing, and postage, and some promotional costs. As I type these words in the waning days of September I'm fairly confident that I'll have broken even, or nearly so, on Algol *18. Of course, this issue I'm embarking on a new venture: type set contents. This issue the letter column has been done to give the greatest possible amount of letters in the least possible space; future issues may see the lead article, possibly the entire book set in type. That, of course, depends on finances and other matters.*

Regrettably, the only photos I had available for use were rather dated. The photos in this issue reflect the contributors, past and present, as they appeared at LACon; in George Turner's case I asked for and received a completely new photo, posed especially for use in Algol. *Double columns of type are, yes, very difficult, unless you can afford the space and added time they occupy. Or unless you have them set in type, which is a completely different matter...]*

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What is meant by "a real person" in the review of *The Lathe of Heaven*? A dictator is as real as anyone else. Hitler, after all, wanted to solve the world's problems; his view of them just happened to differ from that of most of us.

The most pertinent remark in Ted White's column was never answered—"Why don't you give up this silly space-writing stuff and get a real job?" I'm not implying any criticism of his fiction (so far as I recall, I've never read any of it). I just wonder why he continues as a writer-editor when it doesn't seem to furnish a decent living. I worked at various routine jobs, from drawing-office clerk to railway porter, for 25 years before deciding to go free-lance as a commercial artist/writer some 18 months ago, and if I ever find that I can't live reasonably comfortably on what I make, I'll go back to a 9-to-5 job again. If I can still get one.

Assuming that Jack Wodhams is serious—and in view of some of the adjectives he uses, that's a large assumption—why hasn't his instinctive feel of the psychology of humanity taught him that the reason why publishers persist in producing familiar uninspired pap is that the public persists in buying and reading it? What else should they produce in a society which abounds, at all levels, with people who lack imagination? (It says here.) There's nothing to prevent an author from writing whatever he wants to write. But society is under no obligation to pay him for it.

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The article by Ted White is fascinating and a little frightening. I

knew that few SF writers made a living at it, most having another profession. However I assumed that the editors were at least making a decent living. I am an assistant professor of mathematics and have always considered myself rather underpaid, but I make several times what Ted does as an editor. Makes me wonder if THE SF editor (John Campbell) was so badly underpaid. I don't know what the solution is—except the traditional; to make a living at something else—preferably something pleasant—and write as an intermittently profitable hobby. As a school teacher I have never felt really justified in complaining about my salary since it was my decision to be one. Perhaps SF writers should adopt the same philosophy.

[I believe Campbell was actually rather well paid. I'm quite sure it was at the very least a 'living wage'—which, taking into account Campbell's home in New Jersey and a wife to support—approximately $15,000+ per year. And, too, Campbell had been editor for such a long time that though his pay may have been exceedingly low to begin with, it climbed quite respectfully through the years.]

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We're familiar with constant complaints by authors that they've spent months and years on a piece of work, only to find that their readers and/or critics completely misread them. (For instance Norman Spinrad in *Algol* 15: "Larry Ashmead loathed the book... He hadn't understood what I was trying to do.") Whether they've been misread or not, at least they've been read. That is, someone has spent a measurable amount of time reacting to their labor of love—whether an hour, 2 hours, 3 hours. The trouble with visual art is that people can assume it's instantly assimilable. Unless you've spent months, or even, off and on, years working on a painting, brooding over it much as a writer will anguish over his work—unless you've invested all this time, and then watched people glance at it for ½ second, mutter something like "yuh," and walk away—until then you've never experienced complete frustration. I've seen this happen a million times in museums from New York to Honolulu—I'm sitting or standing in front of a Rembrandt, a Picasso, a Titian, an El Greco, a Beckman, whatever, for half-an-hour maybe and am always subliminally aware of art-lovers moving past at expressway speed, obviously assured that between bats of an eyelid they've taken in all of what this artist was trying to get across to them. Somehow, I cannot imagine anyone riffling through 100,000 pages of *Bug Jack Barron* in, say, 2 seconds, and pronouncing judgment on it.

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The book boom is not over; rather, it has not even started yet, and you are well and truly in the vanguard. Listen as Jack predicts, and advises—invest your money in any beginning enterprise which undertakes to supply the most inexpensive/quality home printing/reproduction outfits. There is a demand, so it must be coming. SF is not by any means the only field where fanzines are cherished to abound.

It's been a long time since Caxton. The technological age has been slow here, and at present there is a great deal of forced make-do with duplicator and mimeograph. Surely a promotable home-printer must be just around the corner? From Christmas cards and pamphlets and underground press, any innovative format introduced to make printing easier, must result in higher grade private production, inevitably to interest an increasing band of experimenters, to become a general hobby much as photography, or woodwork, or fishing might be today.

The time may come when we may be able to by-pass the commercial publisher without getting into debt more deeply than we might do, say, for skin-diving equipment. The family-man may be able to turn out a beautifully-tooled volume containing the school histories of his children, illustrated. A plumber in his spare time might enjoy to create a limited edition, in imitation leather, extolling cisterns he has known, or bathplugs through the ages.

And writers, of course, might delight to have the opportunity to trial-test their own favored work, upon what number of critical audience they might sucker to subscribe. To revel to put forth unadulterated, unexpurgated, unbutchered versions of their labor, to retain their own titles, to choose their own frontispieces, and to totally eliminate the gratuitous cover crudblurb that otherwise all too familiarly insults the intelligence of both the scribe and his reader.

The day is coming. There are worse ways to spend winter nights.

Sure I have a beef against commercial publishers. They complain about losing money, but what a gutlessly visionless sheeplike fraternity they are. They have the venturesomeness of a maiden lady at a vicar's tea-party. Chicken-livered timids, if one dares to print a nude cover, they all have to print a nude cover. Stodgy unyielding locksteppers, they shy from anything that contains a smidgen of novelty, then have the gall to grumble about the marginal returns they get from backing short-odds-on so-called 'favorites.'

Publications are only as good as the writers they encourage. There is plea, begging, beseeching, for freshness, but if they get it they certainly don't print it, as the constancy of magazines' contents, for instance, amply testify with their customary unremarkability. Magazines do not increase their circulation by hewing to set formula and refusing to risk controversy and upset. SF magazines generally are a pretty staid bunch. They persist to present accounts of innovation and imagination with a continuing entire absence of originality, to make scant departure from the holy norms brought down from the mountain long ago by Hugo Gernsback. The lament for a decline in a magazine's popularity reflects its editorship, and no amount of vitality at the bottom will aid a magazine that lacks inspiration at the top. In the SF field—that exploratory land of novelty and bold adventure, where whole worlds, even galaxies, may be tremendously won or lost in vividly audacious challenge and gamble—in this field, I say, the motto would now appear to be to tamely play it safe and stay within bounds.

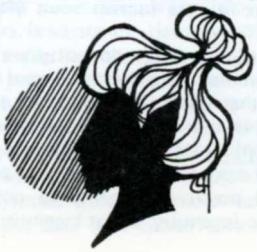
There is experiment not with intelligent attack, no girding integrity to pit wits with the buying public. There indeed seems to be fear that SF might sometime, somehow, become respectable, an event to occasion apparent dread in confirmed conformists, who, as orthodox purists, would ardently preserve the established status quo, to keep the genre separate unto themselves, deliberately to support and maintain a select literary ghetto for a chosen few.

In these tumultuous times, SF has displayed little radicality, and there is an insistence towards mediocritizing work down to a preconceived stereotype of hackery. SF once was new, but has bled vigor in imitating itself. The seeming unending argument to determine what is, and what is not, SF, fundamentally does disservice to SF, for a limiting categorization precisely denies a freedom to cross borders. Crossing boundaries, forwards, backwards, updown or sideways, is the prerogative of SF. These very constrictions of definition that would be, and in some cases are, imposed, stifle rather than nourish the baby.

As said before, there is not a great demand for originality, and neither is there a great demand for comedy. These are notable and outstanding fallacies. Comedy is even more speculative and free-ranging than is SF, is too individualistic to be in great demand. To define what is, and what is not, funny, is a problem that has known much more protracted debate than the sorting of SF from mainstream. Therefore it would seem obvious that any attempt to write amusing SF is a task to beg question of an author's mental stability.

But I should worry. Here is Ted White, a man in his position, revealed to be scratching for a living at a subsistence level. It's bloody disgraceful. A pittance in return for his pledged toil. And on top of that, he has to suffer the griping abuse of the vocally dissatisfied, the discontented, the sour spleen from frustrated geniuses like me. By God, but we do an awful lot for love in this field. A love-hate relationship. We can hate every bastard who curtails our expansion, who keeps our wings trimmed and prevents us from really flying. One of these days...

Thanks for the pic of T. Carr. It snipped out to be somewhat small on my board, but I find I can still hit it with two darts out of three.



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Your printing of the Bester article is a coup by any standards. I would have preferred hearing more about *The Demolished Man* and less generalization about the writing process, but Bester is entertaining and informative in any case. I must wonder, though, what Bester reads outside the SF field. I don't know where he gets the idea that SF is "iconoclastic... stimulating" while "the contemporary novel, nowadays, has a tendency to more or less report on the social scene to people who would like to sit comfortably at home and read a report without any sense of responsibility."

Hasn't he got his genres turned about? I like SF and am prepared to, and have, defended its quality, but it is generally much easier on the mind and conscience than the so-called mainstream. How many SF readers—or writers—can deal with Nabokov, Barthelme, Pynchon, Garcia Marquez, Robbe-Grillet, Barth, or Burgess, not to mention Joyce, Proust or Beckett? I don't think a sense of proportion denigrates SF. Franz Rottensteiner may state the case too harshly, but let us put aside our magnifying glasses momentarily and take a look at the great library of the world that surrounds, and dwarfs, us. I am interested in the close study of SF, but we must keep our relative position somewhere in the back of our minds. We must hold it there if only by way of reminding ourselves how much more work there is yet to be done.

Two years ago I said in the pages of *SF Commentary* that *Nova* was "the most nearly perfect SF novel ever written." This statement becomes invalid when the chessboard is overturned and an outside, living force is let loose in the fields of the imagination. The critic must realize that *Ada* is a much better, far richer work and will return a greater reward. *Ada* has been all but overlooked by fandom and one need not look far for the reason. Contrary to Mr. Bester's claim, fans with a steady diet of SF are incapable of appreciating Nabokov. It is their loss and that of no one else.

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The Bester article/speech was very interesting, perhaps one of the most interesting things I've seen in *Algol*. It definitely is a speech transcript, but the conversational hesitations and redundancies do not mar its effect much.

As a science fiction writer Alfred Bester was first and foremost a showman, an aerial artist with an overwhelming flair for the spectacular. This must be taken into account when he speaks of the writing of fiction, particularly SF. His attitudes and techniques worked well for him—we all know his work is incredibly pyrotechnic—but his view of writing as being purely climactic entertainment (which is swift, exhilarating, but ultimately empty) is a bit myopic. It obviously traces back to his deep involvement in the cotton-candy glamour world of 'entertainment,' where he has spent his entire professional life. That involvement, which is quite serious and worthy of respect, contributed most of the action and color abounding in his fiction, but perhaps it also restrained him from going further, beyond the realm of mere flash and excitement and into areas of artistic greatness. I believe readers want more than to be simply entertained, and this may be a reason Bester left the SF field.

His praise of the unique qualities of science fiction sounds ironic in view of other statements he has made concerning the genre. Apparently his attitudes have changed somewhat. Witness a few remarks taken from an interview conducted by Paul Walker, appearing in the April-May '72 issue of *LUNA Monthly*:

> "...Science fiction was a safety valve, an escape hatch, a release from the constraints of script-writing...but when [I] switched from script-writing to magazine piece-writing, [my] entire life changed... [I] became completely independent and autonomous and no longer needed a safety valve. That's why [my] science fiction stopped. Reality has become so colorful and rewarding that [I] no longer needed the refuge of fantasy. That's where [I've] been, in the real world, the adult world..."
>
> "Science fiction is no profession for a grown man. It can be a delightful hobby, but never to be taken seriously."
>
> "I'm in the entertainment business. I leave messages to Western Union."

Strange statements coming from the man who said science fiction was mind-stretching and stimulating, and who said also that the SF author must have something to say. Indeed, he says SF is "the supreme test of the career of the author."

To put it in the language of entertainment, will the real Alfred Bester please stand up?

The financial state of most SF writers, as portrayed by Ted White and Avram Davidson (among others) seems horrifyingly grubby, and yet it seems most SF writers, specifically those in power in the SFWA, don't feel destitute enough to do anything about it. I would like to know what can be done, and I wish Ted would tell us. I don't think the task of demanding and getting equitable pay for one's art is so difficult as to be doomed from the start, and I'm a bit surprised that there is not more effective activity going on to get results. Maybe I'm just not aware of it, but it looks like no one gives a damn.

I certainly don't think that art should be worshipped, but it's not unreasonable for artists to ask for the fair treatment due any human being who must work to live. The leeches can be made to listen.

If anyone can explain, I would like to know why a writers' boycott, which would necessarily involve some sacrifices but would not mean instant starvation, would not help to have some demands listened to and acted upon. The publishers are dependent on the writers: it is not the other way around. What's wrong with digging ditches (or just living off nature) for a few months, if it means a possibility of better treatment in the future? I'd like to see more discussion of this.

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The net result of the Benford article in no. 17 and the White column in no. 18 is to reinforce my original opinion that writing science fiction, like editing a fanzine, should be done primarily for the fun of it as a sideline and not as a means of feeding the kiddies. Isn't that how the whole thing got started in the first place? Gentlemen scientists, relaxing from their hard days in the white lab smocks, amused themselves by bashing out glamorous adventure stories only slightly removed from their day's work. Good stuff, by and large, barely flawed by the fact that the authors were scientists rather than writers. Enter the writer upon the scene, for better or for worse, enticed by the scent of easy money. Science he knows

not, writing he does. The stories improve, without question, but alas and alack the money just isn't there in sufficient quantity to make a living on that alone.

Bob Shaw twists off a little in his passion over disintegrating marriages. I don't know myself what the ethics of this sort of thing might or even should be, but I must admit that Dick wins a few points here on the 'methinks-he-doth-protest-too-much' vote basis. The facts seem to be in Lupoff's favor... either the books do or don't deal with disintegrating marriages, like it or not... but all Shaw needed to have said was "yes, and isn't it a fascinating subject for an author?" and that would have been that. Maybe it is the legendary British reserve coming to the fore that causes Bob to react so strongly ("this is the sort of thing that you just don't do") but even so it is a hell of a reaction. For Bob to characterize Dick's statement: "Most often, for reasons on which one may speculate, he deals with disintegrating marriages" with his impassioned outburst that Dick is "far removed from an understanding of everyday propriety, decency and courtesy" strikes me as discarding a flyswatter for a tactical atomic weapon.

Please don't get me wrong. I don't have the slightest knowledge or care about Bob's marriage except for the human compassion we all would have for each other's well-being, and I hope I haven't alienated Bob from what I have always thought of as a good, if distant, friendship. I'm just scoring things from the point of a reader and in this bout I'd have to say that Lupoff should read his books more carefully and Shaw should stop regarding his authoritarian position as unassailable, and indeed should get down off of his high horse and become more human.

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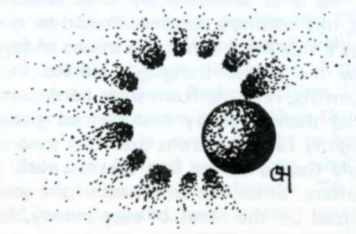
I imagine that everyone has had their say about the Bob Shaw-Dick Lupoff controversy, but I cannot resist adding my own observations. First, Shaw is very hacked off over what seems a minor matter. Lupoff said that one could speculate on the reasons why Shaw tends to deal with disintegrating marriages; he did not try to use the idea to analyze Shaw's own marriage or state of happiness. Pace Bob, the marriages are dissolving or disintegrating. In *Other Days, Other Eyes,* the woman is a first-class bitch. If this is love, excess or not, I will take vanilla. Shaw has, as he notes, a perfectly good rationale for the use of the marriage complications: relief from the usual problem of characters who seem to have no emotional life. Why not let it go at that?

Shaw's argument from standards of behavior is rather silly. When an author uses a device, it is legitimate to ask why he does so. If people do not want their motives and predelictions analyzed, they should not publish novels. If Shaw thinks that Lupoff has been throwing in "snide insinuations" perhaps he has too thin a skin.

In the same fashion, Lupoff's own literary output, if any, is completely beside the point. To be sure, the author of several books generally has some good insights that a non-writer generally will not have, but to reduce criticism to the professionals and require credentials is to reduce the whole business to a coterie. The only valid question is whether Lupoff has managed to criticize the book effectively. He has. It is an example of idiot plotting.

As for the question of why the bad stuff should get mentioned or reviewed at length, the only answer is that when the stuff appears with the Ace Special label and with a recognizable name, the reviewer has some obligation to deal with it. If the SF reviewer confined himself to the good stuff, he would be out of a job. As for the Gernsback volume Lupoff reviews in 18, the name alone is enough to warrant a careful treatment. This is the sort of crud that deserves to be hung up like a crow in a corn-field, as a warning to the others.



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Canada

Lupoff's book reviews were excellent as usual, and much as I respect, like and admire Bob Shaw, I think Dick's point is valid. Bob has indeed written often of marital problems and such a recurring theme is something any intelligent reader or perceptive critic is bound to ponder. I've just finished *Other Days, Other Eyes* and I found the weakest part of the book to be the marital relationship of Garrod and his wife. It just didn't seem right that a man like Garrod would accept the emotional blackmail so meekly and I kept asking myself "When the hell's he going to tell her to shove it?" It may be that Bob is simply interested in the emotional attachment of one human being to another and this is perhaps most strongly evident in marriage, (or perhaps I should say maybe Bob is interested in the emotional exploitation of one human by another which is evident in many failing marriages.) Whatever, I too had wondered about this point and consequently didn't take Dick's original query as a snide inference, merely, as I said last time, the logical question of a good critic taking his work seriously. Looking back, I can understand how Bob, being obviously involved on an entirely different level, could interpret Dick's question differently and be much upset by it. It seems to have been a matter of misinterpretation on Bob's part, or at least I hope so; I'm delighted that Bob is happily married but would be equally relieved to know that Dick is not intentionally malicious.

Ted's column contains the most interesting material in the issue. There have been several "It sure is tough being a writer" columns in recent times, but this one is not redundant, adding the editorial viewpoint as it does. I know SF writers don't get rich easily, but I hadn't realized just how ridiculous the situation for a prozine editor could be. I didn't think Ted was in the six-figure bracket, but I'd always assumed he made an adequate living. $2256 a year (approx)? Shit! This is a gloomy column, but one that's essential reading.

I'm looking forward to *Carandaith* because it'll finally give Paj another chance to show the rest of us clods just how a fanzine should be put out. I looked forward to his own fanzine with considerable anticipation. Alas, *Carandaith* 6 was filled with all the things Paj had blasted the rest of us for doing. Oh, he had some fine multi colored mimeo work (and also a lot of colored fillos to which the color added nothing) but the same old page after page of illo-top-left-illo-bottom-right that was so inordinately stupid in other fanzines was still the mainstay of the layout. I thought at the time that this was a case of Put-up-or-shut-up but for a while Paj was silent on the fanzine scene. Paj is still telling us all where we fall down, in vague and personal terms, so let's hope that this time he can put some concrete demonstration into his condemnations.

To give Paj his due, *Carandaith* will undoubtedly be a highly attractive and probably unusual fanzine. But what all this has to do with real communication is still unclear to me. If my fannish articles with their simple layouts and Rotsler illustrations don't stick in the mind of the reader, then I doubt that putting them on a different colour paper, or separating the art and text, or adopting some bizarre layout would make much difference. The layout itself might stick in the mind if it were unusual enough, but that's not what I'm aiming at, and I don't know of many others who are aiming at it either.

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Bob Shaw's big Irish ire over Lupoff's review seems to boil down (boil over?) to a very large umbrage at one very offhand remark. Perhaps Dick Lupoff should have omitted that underscored phrase, but was it so odious as to impel Shaw to make an utter ass of himself while defending the sanctity and virtue of his conjugal state? The prospect of a man of Belfast lecturing a U.S. barbarian on the niceties of Old World etiquette does require some suspension of disbelief... but aside from that, is Shaw really so ignorant of what has been going on in fanzines like *SFR* for the past several years? Certainly, what he suffered—if that is the proper term—at Lupoff's hands is mild when compared to the broadband calumny that has crackled through the microcosm of late?

His defense of his book is the real charmer, though. He begins his letter with a comment to the effect that he rarely answers public

criticism of his work, and then he confronts the reader with eight paragraphs, a full *Algol* page, of rather bellicose rejoinder to Lupoff's review. For the most part, Shaw misses not only the point of the criticism, but most of the actual criticism as well.

The response to Bangsund's commentary on Campbell faintly surprises me, though I think Harry Warner has inadvertently supplied a very accurate label for the piece: "major reaction." Indeed. The comparison to Stalin is revolting, and Bangsund's fears of "technocracy" are idiotic. What technocracy? Does he seriously believe that the industrial establishment is a technocracy!? If so, he is rather drastically redefining the word, and he should date the era of technocracy from Andrew Carnegie and John D. Rockefeller, not Campbell. Logically speaking, J.B. should relate JWC to Lenin, who was the real architect of the Soviet state. Stalin was a stolid Johnny-come-lately; Lenin was the real visionary.

Ted White can really be disgusting at times: sleep with science fiction? Doesn't that make the pages sticky?

I think someone ought to light a candle for Richard Wilson. Charles Brockden Brown? Oooo, SF is where you find it, these days!

Unaccountably, the best item for me is Silverberg's travel report. Unaccountable because I loathe travelogues. Anyway, I can tell from his description of mammarian deflation in the bushnegro that he let his sub to *National Geographic* lapse many years ago... if he hadn't, said phenomenon would be no novelty. I'd really like to see that carved paddle; high-quality 'primitive' art is a great scarcity these days. Has Bob considered how lucrative an import trade might be? Collectors pay fantastic prices, some museums even more. (Of course, one always keeps the choicest pieces for oneself, if only as a retirement fund...) Surinam sounds like a nice place to visit, but I wouldn't want to be eaten there—by piranha, at least.

On a somewhat more serious note, I am shocked at Mr. S's casual handout of candy to the native children. Unless these kiddies have access to modern dentistry (which appears doubtful), refined sugar is as insidious as opium, perhaps more so. Slow death by tooth decay is no laughing matter, regardless of how silly it may seem to us. And the fact that every visiting tourist may do the same thing is a less than moral excuse. Who knows but that some little jungle-bunny with a yen for sweets might be a potential master wood carver? If he gets hooked on that stuff, the world may never know a great artistic genius. Tsk, the depravity of civilized folk.

I think Silverberg underestimates the steadfast quality of a bona fide, true-blue, macromastic breast fixation. (I of course speak from experience.) However, I would agree that every corporeal part remains sufficient unto its own peculiar delight, and, therefore, a holistic approach should be regarded as the most commendable.

Other orifices notwithstanding.

WE ALSO HEARD FROM: C. Lee Healy; Robin Wood; Greg Burton; Eric Lindsay; Philip Harbottle; Nick Shears; Florence Downey; John Piggott; Gerald Giannattasio; Joseph Sullivan Jr.; Sam Long; Dave Piper; James D. O'Dell; Roger Waddington; Paul Anderson; Richard Powers; Yale Edeiken; John Brunner; G. P. Cossato; Barry Malzberg; David Kraft; Warren Johnson; Dick Geis; Bob Stahl; Angus Taylor; James Gunn; Dave Hulvey; Jerry Kaufman; Jacqueline Lichtenberg; Bill Bowers; Dainis Bisenieks; Kim Gibbs; Jim Allan; and Richard Wilson.

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FC	- Your art/contribution is on file for future use.
CP	- Please contribute to *Algol*; a note will follow.
L?	- Something in this issue may interest you.

CONTINUED FROM INSIDE FRONT COVER

There our editorial philosophies differ. Mike held to proving the excellence of *Energumen,* but felt that once he'd proven his point to himself and to fandom that *Energumen* should cease as a living, published entity. My editorial philosophy is that change is constant. Reaching heights of excellence is only a step in discovering and attaining ever newer heights. And, in reaching greater heights, to grow and change, taking your readers with you, until both you and they have changed and grown into something else. *Algol* has changed so incredibly much since those first stumbling issues, nine years ago, that it's hard to realize that first two page issue, with a circulation of fifty copies, is the ancestor of this issue, with a circulation of a thousand.

Energumen was honored by fandom with two Hugo nominations. *Algol* has been published for nine years and has never been nominated for a Hugo. I'd like to think that *Algol* has reached a point where its contents and appearance represent some of the best writing, artwork and graphics available in fandom. I am not asking for a Hugo, but I do feel that *Algol* deserves a chance to compete for the honor of winning one. If *Algol* were to be nominated, I'd be exceedingly flattered. And if *Algol* is again not nominated, I'll continue to devote all my energies to creating the best magazine, to giving readers and subscribers the best *Algol* possible.

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