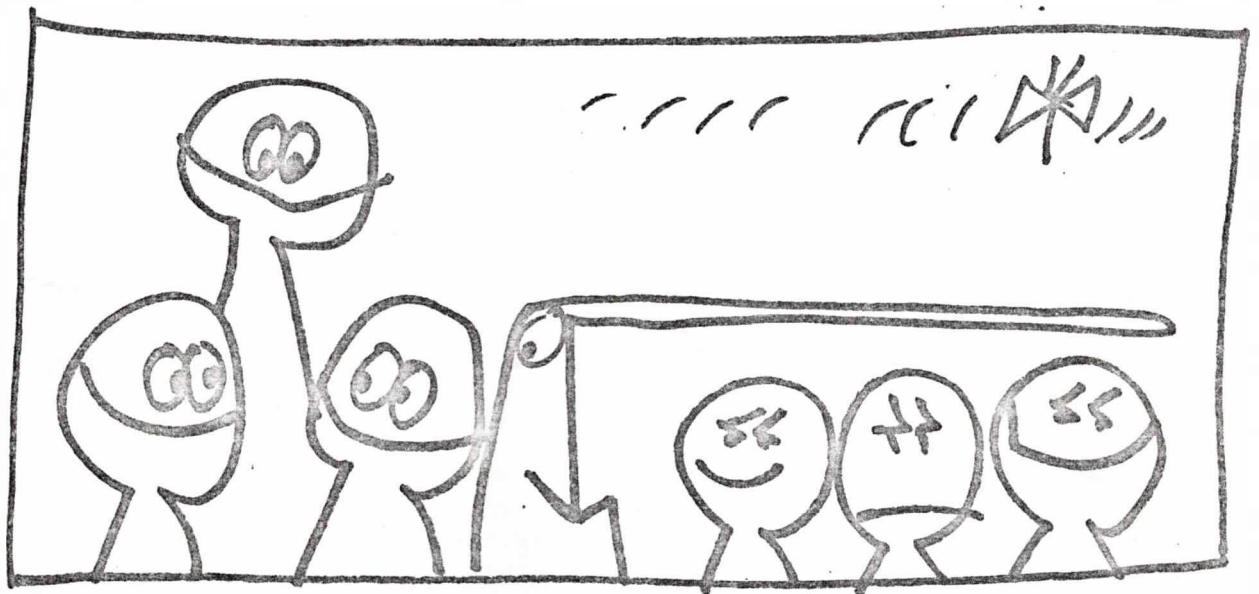


# Staring Eye



FIND THE FAN CONTEST # 11/12:

- a -- He's the one who stands out above the crowd.
- b -- He's the one with the long "knows"
- c -- He's the flutter-by
- d -- He's the unhappy urchin in the crowd.
- e -- He's none of these/all of these.

# GUYING GYRE #11 (OF #'s 11 and 12)

GUYING GYRE is a fanzine produced by Hawthorne High School, 4859 W. El Segundo Blvd., Hawthorne, CA 90250. This close-to-quarterly effort is available for letters of comment, assistance on THE PROJECT, or the usual. Please address all correspondence to the editor, GIL GAIER at 1016 BEECH AVE., TORRANCE, CA 90501. Trades are fine: all for all or one for one, whichever you feel proper/fair. This is CLASS PRESS PUBLICATIONS #19. (Jan. 1979) Contents Copyright © 1979 by GILBERT E. GAIER.

## SPECIALTIES THIS ISSSUE

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BOOK REVIEW: Thomas Burnett Swann's TOURNEMENT OF THORNS by Lynne Holdom	56
BOOK REVIEW: Kurt Vonnegut's WAMPETERS, FOMA, AND GRANFALLOONS by Jim Goldfrank	59-60
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## ART CREDITS

TIM MARION	COVER LOGO	DAVID VERESCHAGIN	55 (twice)
BILL ROTSLER	COVER, 25	CARL BENNETT	60 (right), 95
BRUCE TOWNLEY	60 (left)	SHERYL BIRKHEAD	32
OLE KVERN	56	RICK MARZULLO	29, 30 (twice)
JOHN DURNO	80	GIL GAIER	51 (crossword cover)
MAURICE HARTER	100	HANK HEATH	62, 63, 64 (graphs)
BARD	47	LAURIE RAWN	52

TALK/TALK (here and on page 52 -- the second page of GG # 12.)

Doing Double Issues of GG seems to be becoming the usual pattern; well, by the time the latest PPENumber averages are typed up and the locs and articles/reviews are put in, I'm past what my stapler can handle in one punch anyhow. It also saves a second mailing effort, which since I do it by myself, saves much time. This is a particularly good issue. The ratings are in a different format and the locs are full of interesting comments, disagreements, and enthusiasms.

This issue is dedicated to David Palter, a local fan, who twice came to my home and spent two days of his life discussing books with me, sharing his opinions of novels, correcting my file cards and ~~defending~~ explaining scientology.

A special appreciation goes to several of my students who typed parts of this issue, to David Kevin Klause who typed some of the issue, and to Bear Idman who (under great pressure and with bared teeth) typed much. I greatly appreciated those who typed their locs single spaced using sensible margins on white paper -- for I've cut them up and pasted some in. That saves time, too. (Of course it's now difficult for those loccers to get mistyped and misquoted, huh?)

What TALK/TALK I'm not able to squeeze in here will appear in the second section (GG #12) on page 52. My cover for that part is a semi-crossword. Most of the fun lay in finding humorous ways of saying something ordinary. The one which will appear in VERT 5 (in March) was fun to do, too.

Over the Christmas holiday I typed out a humongus list of authors/novels. NOW anyone who has read a great deal can get a handy list of all the books which have received five (5) or more PPENumbers in the past four years. A space is provided in front of each book listing for your PPENumber, too.

## (SECOND) PROJECT PPEN PRESENTATION

Welcome, again.

Many books have been added to this current list; thank you for helping to make that possible. Those who read the last issue of GUYING GYRE will notice that instead of listing ALL books highest to lowest ranking by their PERSONAL PREFERENCE EVALUATION NUMBER (PPEN) that I've separated them by authors this time so you can see which books by a certain author are most enjoyed.

(At the end of this list I'll mention some of the PPEN changes that have occurred. Also, I'll copy the flyer which explains the reasons for THE PROJECT and how to use the numbers -- in case you're new to all this.)

If anyone has read a large number of books and would find it a task to list all the authors and titles, just write me (Gil Gaier) at 1016 Beech Ave., Torrance, CA 90501. I'll mail you a long list of author-books...to which you need only add PPENs and return to me.

EXPLANATION: The number preceding the book title is the mean/average of all PPENs received for that book. Immediately following the title is the number of readings used to find the mean/average. The last number is the standard deviation; that means that 2/3 rds of all PPENs used to get the average fell within that number of points above and below the mean/average.

### adams

89.04 WATERSHIP DOWN 25 7.80

### aldiss

76.25 STARSHIP/ (NON-STOP) 40 15.38

75.46 LONG AFTERNOON OF EARTH/  
(HOTHOUSE) 28 16.30

69.29 BAREFOOT IN THE HEAD 24 21.36

65.17 FRANKENSTEIN UNBOUND 30 18.86

61.32 DARK-LIGHT YEARS, THE 28 13.75

59.90 CRYPTOZOIC 30 15.25

56.80 GREYBEARD 20 18.08

### anderson

79.66 HIGH CRUSADE, THE 47 10.92

78.00 THREE HEARTS AND THREE LIONS  
37 19.40

75.63 BROKEN SWORD, THE 35 16.74

75.10 HROLF KRAKI'S SAGA 20 15.94

75.02 TAU ZERO 56 15.02

74.56 BRAIN WAVE 50 13.77

72.96 STAR FOX, THE 25 13.20

72.51 PEOPLE OF THE WIND 41 10.01

72.05 FIRE TIME 43 13.12

70.86 DAY OF THEIR RETURN 36 12.23

70.53 SATAN'S WORLD 30 10.77

70.50 TRADER TO THE STARS 20 12.44

70.47 MIDSUMMER TEMPEST 34 19.40

69.69 THERE WILL BE TIME 29 12.36

69.63 ENSIGN FLANDRY 30 11.56

69.14 WAR OF THE WING MEN 21 12.51

68.69 OPERATION CHAOS 20 16.37

66.95 AFTER DOOMSDAY 20 11.95

66.40 CORRIDORS OF TIME, THE 20 11.60

66.15 ORBIT UNLIMITED 26 11.80

65.07 VIRGIN PLANET 25 13.40

65.03 BYWORLDER 29 12.95

### anderson (cont)

63.87 DANCER FROM ATLANTIS 40 13.33

60.65 THREE WORLDS TO CONQUER 20 14.43

59.91 SHIELD 22 11.08

### anthony

74.34 MACROSCOPE 52 14.72

71.56 SOS THE ROPE 30 14.26

71.00 OMNIVORE 44 12.16

67.09 CHTHON 31 20.02

66.38 ORN 33 16.60

63.25 VAR THE STICK 20 18.59

61.70 PROSTHO PLUS 20 14.85

59.38 RINGS OF ICE 21 20.50

### anvil

58.44 PANDORA'S PLANET 29 18.08

### asimov

82.76 CAVES OF STEEL 68 11.27

82.50 FOUNDATION TRILOGY 84 15.90

82.31 I, ROBOT 58 11.66

80.04 REST OF THE ROBOTS, THE 35 12.35

78.49 NAKED SUN, THE 69 12.65

75.21 PEBBLE IN THE SKY 52 11.70

69.50 END OF ETERNITY 50 17.06

69.40 GODS THEMSELVES, THE 70 15.56

68.31 CURRENTS OF SPACE, THE 45 14.26

68.06 STARS, LIKE DUST, THE 44 13.72

53.57 FANTASTIC VOYAGE 38 14.00

### ballard

69.82 CRYSTAL WORLD 22 21.39

61.20 DROWNED WORLD, THE 20 25.22

### balmer/wylie

73.64 WHEN WORLDS COLLIDE 31 14.89

71.71 AFTER WORLDS COLLIDE 28 15.23

bass

76.54 GODWHALE, THE 22 13.36  
 73.20 HALF PAST HUMAN 20 11.36

beagle

86.86 LAST UNICORN, THE 21 6.33

bester

88.37 STARS MY DESTINATION, THE/  
 TIGER, TIGER 64 7.90  
 85.85 DEMOLISHED MAN, THE 75 10.76  
 71.12 COMPUTER CONNECTION/ EXTRO/  
 INDIAN GIVER 50 18.63

biggle

75.30 MONUMENT 30 14.06  
 74.96 WORLD MENDERS 23 11.79  
 74.80 STILL, SMALL VOICE OF TRUMPETS,  
 THE 20 11.35  
 67.50 ALL THE COLORS OF DARKNESS  
 20 15.02

bishop

70.35 FUNERAL FOR THE EYES OF FIRE,  
 A 20 10.54

blish

79.80 CASE OF CONSCIENCE, A 55 12.99  
 77.59 EARTHMAN COME HOME 32 14.50  
 77.53 CITIES IN FLIGHT 40 15.95  
 74.20 BLACK EASTER 35 17.66  
 73.10 TRIUMPH OF TIME, THE 20 17.43  
 72.77 LIFE FOR THE STARS, A 22 9.25  
 68.38 SEEDLING STARS, THE 21 12.77  
 67.52 TORRENT OF FACES, A (w/knight)  
 21 11.65  
 62.65 MIDSUMMER CENTURY 35 15.08  
 60.64 ...AND ALL THE STARS A STAGE  
 33 10.73  
 54.55 SPOCK MUST DIE! 20 15.67

bova

70.30 STARCROSSED, THE 20 14.03

boyd

72.67 LAST STARSHIP FROM EARTH, THE  
 34 16.65

brackett

80.78 LONG TOMORROW, THE 23 11.51  
 77.85 SWORD OF RHIANNON 21 10.92  
 73.23 HOUNDS OF SKAITH, THE 30 14.27  
 68.31 GINGER STAR, THE 35 16.75

bradbury

81.55 MARTIAN CHRONICLES, THE 51 15.20  
 76.56 SOMETHING WICKED THIS WAY COMES  
 39 17.36  
 74.22 FAHRENHEIT 451 59 17.12

bradley

86.04 HERITAGE OF HASTUR 25 7  
 79.61 SHATTERED CHAIN, THE 23  
 75.40 BLOODY SUN, THE 20 10.02  
 74.40 SWORD OF ALDONES, THE 20 14.8  
 73.70 STAR OF DANGER 20 10.95  
 72.92 DARKOVER LANDFALL 25 10.36  
 69.56 PLANET SAVERS, THE 23 10.08  
 68.43 SPELL SWORD, THE 23 9.24  
 68.41 HUNTERS OF THE RED MOON 22 13.77

brown

85.59 WHAT MAD UNIVERSE 22 6.46  
 84.30 MARTIANS, GO HOME 30 6.53  
 71.16 ROUGUE IN SPACE 24 13.13  
 70.65 LIGHTS IN THE SKY ARE STARS  
 20 13.51

brunner

83.26 STAND ON ZANZIBAR 57 10.94  
 81.79 WHOLE MAN, THE 24 8.91  
 77.87 JAGGED ORBIT, THE 40 11.17  
 75.89 SHOCKWAVE RIDER 45 12.98  
 74.36 TRAVELER IN BLACK 28 14.90  
 74.32 SQUARES OF THE CITY 34 12.80  
 72.54 SHEEP LOOK UP, THE 49 19.84  
 69.76 TOTAL ECLIPSE 37 11.51  
 67.35 TIMES WITHOUT NUMBER 23 16.03  
 66.24 STONE THAT NEVER CAME DOWN, THE  
 37 11.04  
 65.45 CATCH A FALLING STAR/(HUNDREDTH  
 MILLENNIUM) 20 17.28  
 64.69 AGE OF MIRACLES/DAY OF THE STAR  
 CITIES 23 13.27  
 63.90 WORLD SWAPPERS 21 11.34  
 62.91 DRAMATURGES OF YAN, THE 23 10.34  
 61.71 WRONG END OF TIME, THE 28 11.71  
 60.95 INTO THE SLAVE NEBULA/SLAVERS OF  
 SPACE 22 10.81  
 60.85 BEDLAM PLANET 20 11.95  
 60.00 QUICKSAND 21 14.31  
 59.30 STARDROPPERS, THE/LISTEN! THE  
 STARS! 20 13.50  
 55.48 ATLANTIC ABOMINATION, THE 23 20.11

bryant

67.26 PHOENIX WITHOUT ASHES (w/ellison)  
 31 14.68

budrys

81.46 ROGUE MOON 25 14.23  
 69.63 WHO? 27 17.73

burgess

80.02 CLOCKWORK ORANGE, A 41 15.57

burroughs

70.25 GODS OF MARS, THE 20 10.90  
 66.15 THUVIA, MAID OF MARS 20 12.20



busby

61.26 CAGE A MAN 27 17.27

caidin

62.65 CYBORG 20 15.21

campbell

68.26 BLACK STAR PASSES 23 13.62  
67.20 MOON IS HELL, THE 24 24.52  
66.80 INVADERS FROM THE INFINITE  
20 15.77  
65.69 MIGHTIEST MACHINE, THE 23 18.18  
58.14 ULTIMATE WEAPON, THE 21 16.60

chant

79.07 RED MOON AND BLACK MOUNTAIN  
27 10.60

christopher

70.36 NO BLADE OF GRASS 30 16.85

clarke

85.36 CHILDHOOD'S END 103 12.70  
81.00 CITY AND THE STARS, THE  
56 11.95  
78.24 AGAINST THE FALL OF NIGHT  
59 14.73  
78.05 EARTHLIGHT 38 8.28  
76.44 DEEP RANGE, THE 36 14.43  
76.10 SANDS OF MARS, THE 40 10.65  
76.02 RENDEZVOUS WITH RAMA 89 16.05  
74.55 FALL OF MOONDUST, A 42 20.35  
72.00 2001: A SPACE ODYSSEY 65 16.36  
70.06 ISLANDS IN THE SKY 29 11.03  
68.84 PRELUDE TO SPACE 33 14.00  
67.30 IMPERIAL EARTH 55 17.65  
65.32 DOLPHIN ISLAND 20 13.55

clement

81.84 MISSION OF GRAVITY 65 9.80  
76.88 NEEDLE 44 13.60  
74.43 CYCLE OF FIRE 37 8.49  
72.75 ICEWORLD 33 11.19  
69.47 CLOSE TO CRITICAL 38 11.46  
63.83 STAR LIGHT 24 16.56

coney

69.72 JAWS THAT BITE, THE CLAWS THAT  
CATCH, THE 23 15.13

cooper

76.37 CLOUD WALKER, THE 24 14.72  
68.20 OVERMAN CULTURE, THE 20 11.29

crichton

68.70 ANDROMEDA STRAIN 37 18.31  
66.08 TERMINAL MAN, THE 23 16.85

davidson

73.36 PHEONIX AND THE MIRROR, THE  
22 16/27  
60.85 ISLAND UNDER THE EARTH, THE  
20 11.95

de camp

83.68 INCOMPLETE ENCHANTER, THE (w/  
pratt) 35 9.35  
82.00 LEST DARKNESS FALL 42 10.51  
76.90 TRITONIAN RING 20 11.88  
78.90 LAND OF UNREASON (w/pratt)  
20 7.65 (out of proper order)  
76.11 CASTLE OF IRON, THE (w/pratt)  
26 15.12  
74.08 FALLIBLE FIEND, THE 23 8.90  
71.63 TOWER OF ZANID 22 17.40  
71.55 ROGUE QUEEN 29 14.71  
70.43 CARNELIAN CUBE, THE (w/pratt)  
21 9.08  
70.30 GENUS HOMO (w/miller, ps)  
20 14.22  
69.55 DIVIDE AND RULE 20 10.03

delany

81.85 BABEL--17 48 12.00  
79.56 NOVA 57 16.82  
74.35 EINSTEIN INTERSECTION 65 20.75  
72.66 DHALGREN 44 22.04  
72.55 EMPIRE STAR 29 18.06  
71.35 JEWELS OF APTOR, THE 31 15.11  
68.13 TRITON 30 20.16  
67.94 BALLAD OF BETA-2, THE 34 15.07  
66.60 FALL OF THE TOWERS, THE (3 SN)  
46 24.90

del rey

71.90 NERVES 40 18.45  
67.65 ELEVENTH COMMANDMENT 20 14.74  
62.40 PSTALEMATE 20 13.18

dick

81.93 MAN IN THE HIGH CASTLE, THE 58  
13.26  
79.87 UBIK 31 14.29  
76.68 WORLD JONES MADE, THE 25 11.12  
76.30 MARTIAN TIMESLIP 20 15.53  
76.27 THREE STIGMATA OF PALMER ELDRITCH,  
THE 33 15.10  
74.22 EYE IN THE SKY 31 12.10  
73.45 FLOW MY TEARS, THE POLICEMAN SAID  
53 12.78  
72.81 GAME-PLAYERS OF TITAN, THE 27  
14.82  
70.97 DO ANDROIDS DREAM ELECTRIC SHEEP?  
36 15.20  
69.76 MAZE OF DEATH 20 18.18  
67.94 SOLAR LOTTERY 32 18.90  
67.40 CLANS OF THE ALPHANE MOON 25  
15.96

dick (cont)

67.30 NOW WAIT FOR LAST YEAR 20 19.93  
 65.52 COUNTER-CLOCK WORLD, THE 21 15.28  
 64.85 DR. FUTURITY 20 15.11  
 63.66 MAN WHO JAPED, THE 24 15.79  
 62.90 CRACK IN SPACE 20 15.31  
 62.75 GALACTIC POT-HEALER 32 18.29  
 59.14 WE CAN BUILD YOU 22 15.56

dickson

77.72 TACTICS OF MISTAKE 50 13.11  
 77.66 GENETIC GENERAL/DORSAI 32 13.26  
 76.44 SOLDIER ASK NOT 43 14.08  
 73.35 DRAGON AND THE GEORGE, THE  
 20 12.67  
 71.00 ALIEN WAY, THE 21 10.25  
 69.95 NAKED TO THE STARS 21 12.65  
 69.06 NO ROOM FOR MAN/NECROMANCER  
 35 15.38  
 68.71 WOLFLING 21 11.43  
 68.17 OUTPOSTER, THE 23 11.00  
 65.05 SPACEPAW 20 17.70  
 61.08 PRITCHER MASS, THE 34 12.80  
 60.05 SLEEPWALKER'S WORLD 34 14.17  
 58.00 R-MASTER 30 12.00

disch

79.08 CAMP CONCENTRATION 38 18.12

eddison

68.70 WORM OUROBOROS, THE 20 22.45

farmer

82.28 TO YOUR SCATTERED BODIES GO  
 56 9.20  
 78.50 FABULOUS RIVERBOAT, THE  
 53 15.00  
 76.46 LOVERS, THE 26 12.90  
 76.15 GREEN ODYSSEY, THE 20 9.91  
 76.12 MAKER OF UNIVERSES 24 8.83  
 75.30 PRIVATE COSMOS, A 20 6.71  
 75.10 GATES OF CREATION, THE 20 6.81  
 71.04 NIGHT OF LIGHT 22 15.52  
 70.00 TIMES LAST GIFT 20 14.56  
 67.84 INSIDE/OUTSIDE 25 12.55  
 67.09 LORD TYGER 22 16.23  
 66.80 BEHIND THE WALLS OF TERRA  
 26 11.31  
 66.15 HADON OF ANCIENT OPAR 20 14.30  
 64.81 FLESH 27 12.54  
 61.00 WIND WHALES OF ISHMAEL, THE  
 22 12.48  
 60.33 OTHER LOG OF PH. FOGG, THE  
 21 19.44  
 56.35 TIMESTOP/(A WOMAN A DAY)/(DAY OF  
 TIME STOP)/(MOTH AND RUST)  
 20 13.23  
 53.52 VENUS ON THE HALF SHELL (as  
 k. trout) 23 18.76

foster

65.54 TAR-AIYM KRANG, THE 24 12.33  
 63.41 ICERIGGER 22 14.75

gerrold

73.93 WHEN HARLIE WAS ONE 58 13.17  
 72.64 FLYING SORCERORS, THE 36  
 12.99 (w/niven)  
 68.82 MAN WHO FOLDED HIMSELF, THE  
 62 15.17  
 65.05 YESTERDAY'S CHILDREN 20 14.17

gunn

71.00 LISTENERS, THE 20 13.07

haldeman

84.14 FOREVER WAR, THE 48 10.41  
 70.81 MINDBRIDGE 21 15.48

harrison

75.75 DEATHWORLD I 57 11.18  
 74.06 DEATHWORLD III 34 13.18  
 72.07 TECHNICOLOR TIME MACHINE, THE  
 27 10.59  
 71.03 DEATHWORLD II 30 12.65  
 70.22 STAINLESS STEEL RAT, THE  
 37 13.51  
 69.40 STAR SMASHERS OF THE GALAXY  
 RANGERS 20 16.20  
 69.20 MAKE ROOM! MAKE ROOM!/(SOYLENT  
 GREEN) 30 13.09  
 67.23 BILL, THE GALACTIC HERO 37 19.15  
 63.42 TUNNEL THROUGH THE DEEPS/(A  
 TRANSATLANTIC TUNNEL, HARRAH!)  
 31 14.36  
 61.57 STAINLESS STEEL RAT'S RIVENGE, THE  
 30 13.23  
 59.94 STAINLESS STEEL RAT SAVES THE  
 WORLD, THE 33 14.81

heinlein

86.15 PAST THROUGH TOMORROW 26 11.56  
 84.20 DOUBLE STAR 63 9.39  
 80.96 DOOR INTO SUMMER 50 10.80  
 80.63 CITIZEN OF THE GALAXY 43 10.07  
 80.18 MOON IS A HARSH MISTRESS, THE  
 75 19.30  
 79.50 METHUSELAH'S CHILDREN 55 10.00  
 76.97 HAVE SPACE SUIT -- WILL TRAVEL  
 46 14.77  
 76.77 STRANGER IN A STRANGE LAND 89  
 18.31  
 76.71 GLORY ROAD 62 17.13  
 75.64 STARMAN JONES 31 13.23  
 75.35 PUPPET MASTERS, THE 59 14.70  
 75.30 STAR BEAST, THE 34 11.34  
 74.69 BETWEEN PLANETS 36 12.22  
 74.63 ROLLING STONES, THE 38 12.97  
 74.44 TUNNEL IN THE SKY 43 12.97

heinlein (cont)

74.43 STARSHIP TROOPERS 69 19.86  
 74.33 SPACE CADET 24 13.92  
 74.15 TIME FOR THE STARS 22 11.60  
 74.00 REVOLT IN 2100 AD 34 10.76  
 73.87 RED PLANET 41 14.08  
 73.54 ORPHANS IN THE SKY 46 11.46  
 73.08 FARMER IN THE SKY 45 13.00  
 72.88 TIME ENOUGH FOR LOVE 70 20.76  
 72.05 DAY AFTER TOMORROW/(SIXTH  
 COLUMN) 41 14.00  
 71.76 BEYOND THIS HORIZON 46 16.17  
 65.60 PODKAYNE OF MARS 51 16.57  
 62.25 FARNHAM'S FREEHOLD 58 20.42  
 57.64 ROCKET SHIP GALILEO 31 16.57  
 51.16 I WILL FEAR NO EVIL 68 22.81

herbert

84.61 DUNE 94 15.24  
 76.47 DRAGON IN THE SEA/UNDER PRESSURE  
 59 10.50  
 74.82 CHILDREN OF DUNE 36 17.23  
 68.30 DUNE MESSIAH 67 18.93  
 67.41 HELLSTROM'S HIVE 29 16.13  
 62.07 SANTAROGA BARRIER, THE 30 14.13  
 61.31 WHIPPING STAR 26 18.53  
 59.61 EYES OF HEISENBERG 23 11.77  
 54.65 GREEN BRAIN, THE 20 15.80

hoyle

64.46 BLACK CLOUD, THE 28 17.80  
 64.41 OCTOBER THE FIRST IS TOO LATE  
 28 11.78  
 61.48 OSSIAN'S RIDE 21 13.17

huxley

79.30 BRAVE NEW WORLD 43 21.62

johnson/nolan

63.52 LOGAN'S RUN 31 18.89

jones, d

59.70 COLOSSUS 20 17.44

keyes

86.00 FLOWERS FOR ALGERNON 37 10.77

kornbluth

82.87 SPACE MERCHANTS, THE (w/pohl)  
 53 8.34  
 78.17 GLADIATOR AT LAW (w/pohl)  
 29 9.74  
 72.86 SYNDIC, THE 29 11.64  
 70.75 SEARCH THE SKY (w/pohl)  
 20 13.96  
 70.38 WOLFBANE (w/pohl) 21 16.64

kuttner

75.15 FURY 20 13.93

lafferty

75.75 PAST MASTER 20 15.00  
 75.52 FOURTH MANSIONS 27 14.77

lanier

79.23 HIERO'S JOURNEY 30 9.05

laumer

72.03 DINOSAUR BEACH 32 13.18  
 70.63 WORLDS OF THE IMPERIUM 30 10.51  
 68.30 TRACE OF MEMORY, A 20 11.44  
 67.95 GREAT TIME MACHINE HOAX, THE  
 20 9.91  
 67.43 PLAGUE OF DEMONS, A 23 21.24  
 64.59 RETIEF'S WAR 27 15.53  
 60.71 HOUSE IN NOVEMBER, THE 21 12.90

lee

73.09 BIRTHGRAVE 21 16.87

le guin

85.59 FARTHEST SHORE, THE 34 6.16  
 85.25 WIZARDS OF EARTHSEA, THE 55 11.10  
 84.69 DISPOSSESSED, THE 90 15.14  
 84.50 LEFT HAND OF DARKNESS, THE  
 91 16.18  
 81.00 TOMBS OF ATUAN, THE 22 6.60  
 79.04 LATHE OF HEAVEN, THE 54 14.06  
 73.95 PLANET OF EXILE 43 10.17  
 73.46 ROCANNON'S WORLD 39 10.74  
 68.19 CITY OF ILLUSION 41 15.13

leiber

78.08 GATHER, DARKNESS 45 13.39  
 74.66 CONJURE WIFE 32 19.13  
 74.33 SWORDS OF LANKHMAR 39 11.60  
 72.63 WANDERER, THE 41 16.90  
 72.14 SWORDS AGAINST WIZARDRY 21 12.76  
 71.00 SWORDS AND DEVILTRY 31 11.52  
 70.72 SPECTER IS HAUNTING TEXAS, A  
 29 14.55  
 69.10 SWORDS AGAINST DEATH 20 11.34  
 66.05 SILVER EGGHEADS, THE 20 14.61  
 65.43 BIG TIME, THE 44 19.25  
 62.52 GREEN MILLENNIUM, THE 21 14.89

leinster

79.75 FORGOTTEN PLANET, THE 20 11.54

lem

65.05 SOLARIS 23 16.05

lewis, c s

78.10 The "Narnia" Novels 20 12.04  
 73.84 OUT OF THE SILENT PLANET 39 16.39  
 72.34 PERELANDRA 38 15.74  
 72.64 THAT HIDEOUS STRENGTH 31 16.60

malzberg

70.60 HEROVIT'S WORLD 33 23.14  
66.89 BEYOND APOLLO 37 20.28

matheson

74.27 I AM LEGEND/ (OMEGA MAN, THE)  
29 13.83

mccaffrey

79.14 DRAGONQUEST 43 11.07  
77.60 DRAGONFLIGHT 51 17.53  
70.53 SHIP WHO SANG, THE 45 13.52  
63.75 RESTOREE 20 13.60  
63.32 DECISION AT DOONA 34 11.70  
59.50 TO RIDE PEGASUS 20 8.90

merriitt

76.40 DWELLERS IN THE MIRAGE 20 15.60  
74.15 SEVEN FOOTPRINTS TO SATAN  
20 16.34  
73.95 MOON POOL, THE 20 18.70  
72.25 SHIP OF ISHTAR, THE 20 17.68

miller

86.22 CANTICLE FOR LEIBOWITZ 72 12.45

moorcock

80.42 BEHOLD THE MAN 36 15.51  
75.35 ALIEN HEAT, AN 28 16.56  
74.20 STORMBRINGER 20 13.90  
73.25 JEWEL IN THE SKULL 20 13.47  
64.70 ICE SCHOONER, THE 20 15.85  
62.00 BLACK CORRIDOR, THE 20 17.71

niven

83.67 RINGWORLD 72 14.00  
83.21 NEUTRON STAR (sss) 24 10.05  
79.52 MOTE IN GOD'S EYE, THE (w/  
pournelle) 69 11.28  
77.82 INFERNO (w/ pournelle) 39 12.75  
74.65 PROTECTOR, THE 52 15.04  
73.95 FLIGHT OF THE HORSE (sss) 20 11.46  
73.28 LONG ARM OF GIL HAMILTON, THE (sss)  
21 14.39  
71.70 GIFT FROM EARTH, A 46 13.95  
71.63 WORLD OF PTAVVS 43 13.82  
67.52 WORLD OUT OF TIME, A 21 15.01

norton

76.40 WITCH WORLD 28 10.34  
74.41 DAYBREAK 2250/(STARMAN'S SON)  
34 11.52  
70.95 BEAST MASTER, THE 22 10.22  
70.64 TIME TRADERS 22 10.63  
70.13 STAR GATE 22 10.92  
69.90 ZERO STONE, THE 20 10.09  
69.43 WEB OF THE WITCH WORLD 21 10.81  
68.30 STAR BORN 20 10.61  
67.15 GALACTIC DERELICT 20 12.36  
63.76 SIOUX SPACEMEN 21 13.74

norton (cont)

63.70 QUEST CROSSTIME 20 12.22  
61.15 JUDGEMENT ON JANUS 20 13.46  
52.33 IRON CAGE 21 14.92

nourse

69.35 STAR SURGEON 20 10.48

offutt

75.05 MESSENGER OF ZHUVASTOU 20 10.74  
65.54 ARDOR ON AROS 22 13.77

oliver

69.00 WINDS OF TIME, THE 20 11.85

orwell

81.65 1984 49 20.36

pangborn

80.53 MIRROR FOR OBSERVERS, A 28 10.84  
79.48 DAVY 37 15.05  
66.70 COMPANY OF GLORY, THE 20 17.86

panshin

79.93 RITE OF PASSAGE 48 9.05  
71.10 STAR WELL 20 12.03  
70.65 MASQUE WORLD 20 12.43  
69.09 THURB REVOLUTION, THE 21 13.46

piper

78.37 LORD KALVAN OF OTHERWHEN 24 9.23  
76.86 LITTLE FUZZY 44 17.00  
76.13 OTHER HUMAN RACE, THE/(FUZZY  
SAPIENS) 23 11.17  
73.28 SPACE VIKING 32 9.60

piserchia

STAR RIDER 22 15.33

pohl

80.32 MAN PLUS 25 9.45  
69.90 DRUNKARD'S WALK 20 9.69  
67.40 REEFS OF SPACE (w/williamson)  
20 13.26  
65.52 STARCHILD (w/williamson) 21 12.22  
63.30 ROUGE STAR (w/williamson) 20 14.58  
62.66 SLAVE SHIP 24 22.88  
59.86 AGE OF THE PUSSYFOOT 21 15.52

pournelle

71.56 SPACESHIP FOR THE KING 25 13.13

priest

75.43 INVERTED WORLD, THE 23 13.56

roberts

84.78 PAVANNE 23 19.19

rotsler

62.66 PATRON OF THE ARTS 32 16.51



pratt

69.25 BLUE STAR, THE 20 18.24

russ

69.45 PICNIC IN PARADISE 20 14.79

66.10 CHAOS DIED, AND 20 22.20

65.08 FEMALE MAN, THE 24 19.04

russell

80.23 SPACE WILLIES, THE 21 12.87

78.29 MEN, MARTIANS AND MACHINES  
21 10.55

77.90 GREAT EXPLOSION, THE 31 10.65

75.11 WASP 28 18.06

74.20 SINISTER BARRIER 20 13.36

70.55 DREADFUL SANCTUARY 20 13.43

schimtz

83.19 WITCHES OF KARRES, THE 41 11.18

73.12 AGENT OF VEGA 24 12.83

69.79 DEMON BREED, THE 24 10.08

68.76 UNIVERSE AGAINST HER, THE  
21 13.46

63.26 LION GAME, THE 23 15.91

58.56 TELSEY TOY, THE 23 15.95

shaw

74.13 OTHER DAYS, OTHER EYES 23 11.76

56.90 PALACE OF ETERNITY, THE 20 14.15

sheckley

75.95 IMMORTALITY, INC/ (IMMORTALITY  
DELIVERED) 22 14.00

70.66 DIMENSIONS OF MIRACLES 21 18.40

61.72 OPTIONS 22 17.65

shute

68.45 ON THE BEACH 20 13.80

silverberg

80.28 DYING INSIDE 64 15.76

77.40 STOCHASTIC MAN, THE 37 13.26

76.03 NIGHTWINGS (sss) 31 12.55

75.13 UP THE LINE 38 10.31

74.96 BOOK OF SKULLS, THE 36 18.39

74.50 TO LIVE AGAIN 20 13.14

73.55 DOWNWARD TO THE EARTH 31 13.43

73.28 TIME OF CHANGES 36 16.31

72.97 TOWER OF GLASS 33 18.21

72.78 THORNS 27 14.85

71.08 HAWKSBILL STATION 38 14.99

70.15 MASKS OF TIME, THE/(VORNAN-19)  
27 13.61

69.97 MAN IN THE MAZE, THE 33 13.74

69.65 TO OPEN THE SKY (sss) 20 13.34

66.90 WORLD INSIDE, THE 20 21.66

63.50 SON OF MAN 20 20.35

63.50 SECOND TRIP, THE 20 21.55

53.15 REVOLT ON ALPHA C 20 15.93

simak

83.47 WAY STATOPM/(HERE GATHER THE  
STARS) 45 11.62

83.47 CITY (sss) 64 13.24

75.47 RING AROUND THE SUN 30 12.50

72.83 TIME AND AGAIN/(FIRST HE DIED)  
29 12.43

72.47 CHOICE OF GODS, A 38 16.30

70.95 TIME IS THE SIMPLEST THING/(THE  
FISKERMAN) 22 18.09

70.47 GOBLIN RESERVATION, THE 34  
14.93

68.88 WEREWOLF PRINCIPLE, THE 34 12.46

68.15 ALL FLESH IS GRASS 20 13.16

66.57 THEY WALKED LIKE MEN 21 15.75

66.42 ENCHANTED PILGRIMAGE 33 15.79

66.26 CEMETERY WORLD 49 14.56

65.13 COSMIC ENGINEERS 23 15.43

63.59 WHY CALL THEM BACK FROM HEAVEN?  
27 17.15

61.70 DESTINY DOLL 20 19.35

sladek

72.24 MECHASM/(THE REPRODUCTIVE SYSTEM)  
21 15.85

smith, c

82.67 NORSTRILIA 43 11.84

smith, e e

78.56 GALACTIC PATROL 25 11.73

77.95 CHILDREN OF THE LENS 20 16.31

76.00 GRAY LENS MAN 25 17.47

76.00 SECOND STAGE LENS MEN 22 13.44

73.00 FIRST LENS MAN 25 13.00

71.95 SKYLARK OF VALERON 20 13.83

71.10 SKYLARK THREE 20 12.45

68.86 SKYLARK OF SPACE, THE 21 15.05

68.10 SKYLARK DUQUESNE 20 19.46

67.57 TRIPLANETARY 21 14.90

smith, g o

67.75 VENUS EQUALATERAL 24 11.50

sohl

63.55 COSTIGAN'S NEEDLE 20 16.86

spinrad

72.70 BUG JACK BARRON 39 21.90

71.04 MAN IN THE JUNGLE, THE 23 19.87

69.37 IRON DREAM, THE 43 21.36

57.35 AGENT OF CHAOS 20 17.35

51.95 SOLARIANS, THE 21 16.02

stafheff

78.26 WARLOCK IN SPITE OF HIMSELF, THE  
20 9.72

stapledon

80.47 LAST AND FIRST MEN 21 18.52

77.05 ODD JOHN 21 14.64

stewart

85.33 EARTH ABIDES 27 13.00

sturgeon

87.06 MORE THAN HUMAN 66 13.00  
 75.06 SYNTHETIC MAN/(THE DREAMING  
 JEWELLS) 32 12.76  
 71.16 VENUS PLUS X 25 19.68

tolkien

97.77 LORD OF THE RINGS, THE  
 35 4.91  
 84.44 HOBBIT, THE 43 10.06

tucker

78.87 YEAR OF THE QUIET SUN 32 9.18  
 76.56 LONG LOUD SILENCE, THE 25 15.75  
 71.05 LINCOLN HUNTERS, THE 20 13.48  
 70.57 WILD TALENT/(MAN FROM  
 TOMORROW) 21 15.61  
 67.20 TIME MASTERS, THE 24 16.00  
 64.27 ICE AND IRON 37 15.42

vance

81.94 DYING EARTH, THE 39 11.23  
 77.41 DRAGON MASTERS, THE 34 13.00  
 74.84 LAST CASTLE, THE 26 13.37  
 74.24 TRULLION: ALASTOR 2262  
 29 12.14  
 73.83 BIG PLANET 24 14.20  
 73.40 EMPHYRIO 20 12.30  
 71.95 BLUE WORLD 20 14.32  
 70.77 LANGUAGES OF PAO 27 13.83  
 69.00 MARUNE: ALASTOR 933  
 20 9.21  
 65.88 GREY PRINCE, THE/(DOMAINS OF  
 KORYPHON, THE) 26 14.78

van vogt

77.30 WEAPON SHOPS OF ISHAR 31 13.34  
 74.62 WEAPON MAKERS 21 15.78  
 74.62 SLAN 48 16.88  
 72.00 WORLD OF NULL-A 32 16.47  
 70.00 WAR AGAINST THE RULL 20 16.47  
 68.13 VOYAGE OF THE SPACE BEAGLE, THE  
 /(MISSION INTERPLANETARY)  
 23 17.88

verne

70.25 JOURNEY TO THE CENTER OF THE EARTH  
 21 13.25

vonnegut

78.58 SLAUGHTERHOUSE FIVE 47 15.12  
 78.42 CAT'S CRADLE 50 18.67  
 74.00 SIRENS OF TITAN, THE 37 19.32  
 66.51 PLAYER PIANO 29 24.38

wells

83.58 TIME MACHINE, THE 58 16.22  
 82.52 WAR OF THE WORLDS, THE 52 12.47  
 79.36 INVISIBLE MAN, THE 41 13.93  
 74.92 FIRST MEN IN THE MOON, THE 28 16.00  
 73.00 ISLAND OF DR. MOREAU, THE 25 17.53  
 64.95 WHEN THE SLEEPER WAKES 20 13.45  
 60.68 FOOD OF THE GODS 22 23.00

white, j

68.42 DREAM MILLENIUM, THE 21 18.55

white, t

63.50 PHEONIX PRIME 20 15.45  
 57.85 SORCERESS OF QAR, THE 20 16.06

wilhelm

78.00 WHERE LATE THE SWEET BIRDS SANG  
 24 17.72

williamson

82.25 DARKER THAN YOU THINK 20 8.41  
 74.92 HUMANIDS, THE 36 14.10  
 67.28 SEETEE SHOCK 21 11.03  
 66.20 SEETEE SHIP 20 10.58

wyndham

81.39 RE-BIRTH/(CHRYSALIDS, THE) 26 9.56  
 75.86 DAY OF THE TRIFFIDS/(REVOLT OF  
 THE TRIFFIDS) 37 13.41  
 74.05 OUT OF THE DEEPS/(KRAKEN WAKES,  
 THE) 21 12.20  
 71.10 MIDWICH CUCKOOS, THE/(VILLAGE OF  
 THE DAMNED) 29 14.25

zelazny

85.58 LORD OF LIGHT 68 11.94  
 78.46 THIS IMMORTAL 47 14.65  
 76.52 NINE PRINCES IN AMBER 57 15.22  
 76.46 SIGN OF THE UNICORN 30 13.27  
 76.11 GUNS OF AVALON 47 14.26  
 75.04 DOORWAYS IN THE SAND 44 12.13  
 73.51 DREAM MASTER, THE 49 15.18  
 73.49 ISLE OF THE DEAD 43 15.85  
 73.35 JACK OF SHADOWS 52 13.32  
 70.81 DAMNATION ALLEY 43 13.16  
 70.81 CREATURES OF LIGHT AND DARKNESS  
 47 19.39  
 66.61 TODAY WE CHOOSE FACES 34 17.10  
 65.45 TO DIE IN ITALBAR 40 16.94  
 58.05 BRIDGE OF ASHES 20 15.91

## SOME SPECIFIC OBSERVATIONS

I've spent days trying to get this list both readable and correct. If either aim falls short, please let me know. Lots of little errors have crept in, I'm sure. If a book ever appears twice, it's because evaluators sent it in under two names and I'm not aware they're the same book. That ought to correct itself in the next year or so. You'll also notice some authors have short story collections included -- which THE PROJECT really doesn't attempt to cover yet; but I've received more than twenty evaluations for them. Evidently contributors considered them as Short Stories in a Series (sss) which really satisfies the novel concept; examples of this might be Asimov's I, ROBOT and Simak's CITY. Where I knew (and remembered to do so) I put an (sss) after such books. If you feel any really don't fit that label, let me know.

After all the HUGO recipients have numbers, it will be fun to sort out the "real" winners from the "real" duds. (Did you notice that Asimov's THE GODS THEMSELVES with 70 evaluations is only 69.40?!) I'd imagine that a HUGO or NEBULA winner would fall somewhere in the 80's or 90's, wouldn't you? Of course, some years there's not much to choose from.

An author's most enjoyed novels seem to be emerging. Asimov is a good example. (I see that I forgot to write (sss) behind I, ROBOT and THE REST OF THE ROBOTS.) Any drop of six points or more between one or two books creates a significant separation of opinion...in my opinion. Note for example that between THE NAKED SUN (78.49) and END OF ETERNITY (69.50) that there are nine points difference. (Moves from Very Good/Almost Excellent to Above Average/Almost good.) Yet only two points separate his top four books; only four points separate his top five books. In contrast to the rest of his novels, FANTASTIC VOYAGE (53.57) almost drops off the scale.

Using my own rule of thumb

90's READ!

80's READ!

79.99 to 76.00 HIGHLY RECOMMENDED

75.99 to 70.00 THERE'S A GOOD CHANCE YOU'LL ENJOY THESE

69.00 and below These books are not RECOMMENDED reading for some reason or other. I assume that the higher the Standard Deviation (above, say, 15.00), the greater the possibility there is that you'll find it an entertaining read. For instance, Asimov's END OF ETERNITY (69.50) and THE GODS THEMSELVES (69.40) with standard deviations of 17.06 and 15.56, respectively, have an upper range potential in the mid 80's.

Letters keep coming in asking in incredulous tones where such and such a book is. ALL books are listed which have received twenty plus PPENs. So...draw your own conclusions. (Probably many of the novels not presented for lack of evaluations are 1) old and out of print, 2) not particularly good, or 3) too new to have been evaluated twenty times. Those which don't fall into one of those categories and are great SF and not listed mystify me, too. But if things go as planned, THE PROJECT will get most of them -- since my plan is to continue these efforts for at least two more years...and as many as seven.)

SINCE THE FIRST SET OF EVALUATIONS APPEARED, NEW NUMBERS HAVE CHANGED A FEW BOOKS' PPEN AVERAGES RATHER ABRUPTLY. I thought you might find it interesting to know which ones had risen/had dropped appreciably. To be quite frank, the rest of the PPENumbers did not change significantly -- even though the number of readings sometimes doubled (or almost doubled).

ORN 71.76 to 66.38

TIME OF CHANGES 64.45 to 73.28 (!)

BOOK OF SKULLS, THE 68.38 to 74.96

DUNE MESSIAH 74.25 to 68.30

FALL OF THE TOWERS, THE 72.26 to 66.60

CITIES IN FLIGHT 83.64 to 77.53

SIRENS OF TITAN, THE 69.90 to 74.00

FRANKENSTEIN UNBOUND 71.12 to 65.17

RING AROUND THE SUN 70.41 to 75.47

STARSHIP TROOPERS 79.08 to 74.43

NERVES 76.82 to 71.90

COMPUTER CONNECTION 76.45 to 71.12



STUDENT PPENs (Personal Preference Evaluation Numbers)

MEAN/ AVER	NAME OF BOOK	AUTHOR	NUMBER OF READINGS	STANDARD DEVIATION
93.40	DUNE (SF)	Herbert	27	7.12
89.61	TO YOUR SCATTERED BODIES GO (SF)	Farmer	28	6.88
89.05	HIERO'S JOURNEY (SF)	Lanier	39	9.92
88.61	PRIEST-KINGS OF GOR (SF)	Norman	26	9.54
88.04	ATON (SF)	Greenfield	21	8.30
87.85	STRANGER IN A STRANGE LAND (SF)	Heinlein	20	14.98
87.00	THE HOBBIT (FAN) (j)	Tolkien	20	12.31
85.81	HUNTERS OF THE RED MOON (SF)	Bradley	69	10.95
85.76	THE FABULOUS RIVERBOAT (SF)	Farmer	21	11.64
85.29	OUTLAW OF GOR (SF)	Norman	24	10.65
85.12	TARNSMAN OF GOR (SF)	Norman	25	9.91
84.70	THE EXORCIST (OCC)	Blatty	27	13.77
84.09	WIZARD OF EARTHSEA, A (FAN) (j)	Le Guin	40	13.76
84.04	THE LATHE OF HEAVEN (SF)	Le Guin	21	10.33
84.00	HELLSTROM'S HIVE	Herbert	20	10.58
83.80	RAGA SIX (OCC)	Lauria	20	9.17
83.68	WHAT MAD UNIVERSE (SF)	Brown F	22	9.70
83.51	HELL'S GATE (SF)	Koontz	85	10.86
83.33	THE FOREVER WAR (SF)	Haldeman	24	13.86
83.13	THE STARS MY DESTINATION (SF)	Bester	30	9.02
83.05	THE FORGOTTEN BEASTS OF ELD (FAN)	McKillip (j)	39	14.05
83.00	THIS PERFECT DAY (SF)	Levin	21	9.85
82.67	EARTHBLOOD (SF)	Laumer	37	14.56
82.60	HAVE SPACE SUIT--WILL TRAVEL (SF)	Heinlein	20	13.41
82.43	THE STONE CARNATION (GOTH)	HINTZE	23	10.56
82.04	SLAN (SF)	van Vogt	48	9.58
81.60	THE DOOR INTO SUMMER (SF)	Heinlein	20	13.41
81.54	THE DEMOLISHED MAN (SF)	Bester	26	10.05
81.48	TRIAD (OCC)	Leader	39	12.80
81.31	ANTI-MAN (SF)	Koontz	51	8.94
80.93	THE TECHNICOLOR TIME MACHINE (SF)	Harrison	29	9.31
80.92	TIME OF THE GREAT FREEZE (SF) (j)	Silverberg	50	11.87
80.78	TUNNEL IN THE SKY (SF)	Heinlein	59	10.70
80.48	DEATHWORLD I (SF)	Harrison	23	12.67
80.23	THE STAINLESS STEEL RAT (SF)	Harrison	22	12.58
80.04	DAMNATION ALLEY (SF)	Zelazny	22	11.58
79.74	MIRROR IMAGE (SF)	Coney	23	13.56
79.71	RINGS OF ICE (SF)	Anthony	24	13.14
79.58	THE HAUNTED EARTH (SF)	Koontz	29	16.18
79.48	DIMENSION A (SF)	Davies	29	12.06
79.18	THE GINGER STAR (SF)	Brackett	22	9.92
78.68	STARSHIP/NON-STOP (SF)	Aldiss	32	11.82
78.64	DARKOVER LANDFALL (SF)	Bradley	20	18.70
78.39	DEATHWORLD 3 (SF)	Harrison	41	12.54
77.95	DOUBLE STAR (SF)	Heinlein	22	10.60
77.86	RED PLANET (SF) (j)	Heinlein	21	12.57
76.80	RINGWORLD (SF)	Niven	20	15.57
76.51	ORPHANS OF THE SKY (SF)	Heinlein	47	9.09
73.50	CONJURE WIFE (FAN)	Leiber	20	13.26

When my students give a book an evaluation in the 80's or 90's, you can be sure it was a resoundingly successful read for them. Usually the 70's are satisfying without being quite fulfilling and engaging without being riveting. Anything below that they generally didn't care for all that much.



## THE PROJECT

THE PROJECT is endeavoring to utilize the evaluative judgement of some of the most knowledgeable science fiction and fantasy readers in the world -- those found in fandom. If you're reading this, you're most likely already a fan. Would you be willing to help THE PROJECT by evaluating the SF/F novels you've read and remember well; whether few or many -- all are welcome. The process of examining your reading preferences is often enlightening and usually quite enjoyable.

The basic purpose of THE PROJECT is to help the new high school teacher of SF/F and the one who "got stuck" with the class and knows little about the reading in the field to do the best job s/he can. An evaluative list of the most "enjoyable/readable/worthwhile" books in the field would be a good start. It will be an enormous reference list but not required reading for the student in any sense -- merely a tool. At times only some of the books will be available in print; that's another reason for having such a large choice. Basically I'm hoping the recommendations will provide teachers with an alternate approach to teaching an SF/F class: a reading class with some discussion/lecture/individual conferences. No tests and no book reports. It is being done and is having excellent results. Maybe in this way teachers can avoid the long lectures and the minute analysis of the lock-step "classics only" oriented program.

But first we have to know the "good ones and the bad ones." There are no absolutes. So I'll take personal opinions from READERS OF THE GENRE -- which adds up to a ~~popularity contest~~ consensus. I now have three sources of novel evaluations: fandom, my students, and reviews from pro/fanzines.

All SF/F books are fair game since high-schoolers tend to run the gamut from needing simple "starter" stories to rich mature ones and from quite easy reading on up to college graduate level. Generally, your reading counterpart can be found in a high school class.

I suggest we work only with novels this time around; doing the shorter works concurrently would be unwieldy. Your book recommendations should not concern college courses; teachers there have their own special problems -- beyond my ken.

ENOUGH RATIONALE. NOW TO THE TASK.

It would be impossible for me to evaluate and catalog the tremendous variety of responses from hundreds of fans without some kind of numerical aid. So I've developed a simple set of the most frequently made responses used to describe books read; to these I've assigned numbers with which I can work. In this way THE PROJECT is made viable.

My fanzine GUYING GYRE (pronounced jir) is publishing all material relating to THE PROJECT; at present that consists of contributors' comments on various authors and their works, lists of Personal Preference Evaluation Numbers (PPENs) of books read, and general discussion of these and other aspects of reading SF books and teaching SF/F.

If all goes well, GUYING GYRE will continue publishing updated PPENumbers and adding new ones when twenty evaluations accumulate for a novel. In two to seven years a master list should be printed. So. What are needed most now are SF/F readers willing to rate books they've read -- using the scale which follows:

((CONTINUED ON THE BACK))

((THIS IS THE BACKSIDE))

# PERSONAL PREFERENCE EVALUATION CHART

- 95 -- one of the best books I've ever read
- 85 -- excellent/superior
- 75 -- good/enjoyable/recommendable
- 65 -- above average
- 55 -- average/satisfactory/readable
- 45 -- below average
- 35 -- poor/weak
- 25 -- bad/terrible

78  
77  
76  
75  
74  
73  
72

FINE TUNING: Let's use 75 (good/enjoyable/recommendable) as an example. You may substitute for the second number (5), a 6, 7, 8, if you wish to suggest the story was extremely good, particularly enjoyable, or highly recommended. Go downward from 5 (4 or 3 or 2) if the story was pretty good, rather enjoyable, or mildly recommendable. (Avoid using 0, 1, or 9 as a second number.)

\*\*\*\*\*

You probably noticed immediately that the comments beside the numbers on the chart above are quite subjective. They were meant to be. Remember that the aim of THE PROJECT is to discover the degree of enjoyment you've derived from your reading. The key word here is ENJOYMENT: whether gained from plot, action, character, ideas, or whatever, the value of the reading I am seeking is not "what is good for us" or "what we should like" or "what others seem to enjoy" but WHAT LURES US ON.

What books should be used? Any and all science fiction and fantasy books you've read and remember well enough to feel confident about evaluating. Those that you can't decide on because of mixed feelings, put aside.

If you'd like further information on THE PROJECT, write me. If you'd like a copy of GUYING GYRE (3/\$2.00 or PPEN contributions), write me. If you're interested in discovering what books by what authors are being highly recommended -- to increase your own reading pleasure, write me. If you have such a large number of books to evaluate that it would be a hardship listing them all, write me. (I'll mail you a long list of author-books...to which you need only add PPENs and return. If you've read a book so new that it doesn't appear on the list, just add it on.) Except the student/teacher issue #4, all other issues of GG are out-of-print. The next one will be out winging Real Soon Now.

GIL GAIER  
1016 BEECH AVE  
TORRANCE, CA 90501

P.S. Thought you might be interested in which books are the current top PPEN choices.

97.77	Tolkien	LORD OF THE RINGS
89.04	Adams	WATERSHIP DOWN
88.37	Bester	STARS MY DESTINATION
87.06	Sturgeon	MORE THAN HUMAN
86.86	Beagle	THE LAST UNICORN
86.22	Miller	CANTICLE FOR LEIBOWITZ
86.15	Heinlein	PAST THROUGH TOMORROW (sss)
86.04	Bradley	HERITAGE OF HASTUR
86.00	Keyes	FLOWERS FOR ALGERNON
85.85	Bester	THE DEMOLISHED MAN
85.59	Le Guin	THE FARTHEST SHORE
85.59	Brown	WHAT MAD UNIVERSE
85.58	Zelazny	LORD OF LIGHT

Thanks for sending Guying Gyre 9/10. You have nudged me into sending you the first installment of my book evaluations as I promised back in July 1977 -- typed then but never mailed. Such a listing as you have been working on is a useful start for a sercon discussion of SF books. It's usefulness as a reading guide is more limited: so much depends on the judgement of the readers who send their lists to you. A professional reviewer or critic - I can read a few of his or her works and decide on prejudices and standards. If they agree with mine, I will trust the reviewer on books recommended. If they differ from mine, I can only accept recommendations with great distrust.

But with the people who send you PPENs, all I have to go on is a list. Unless I have read a good chunk of the list already, how can I decide if the reviewer is competent or a klutz? Some sort of statement of critical philosophy by each reviewer would help. (Anyone who says they have no philosophy and just tell the truth is too naive to be trusted.)

Example of the problem of lists: The greatest number of reviews comes from Marty Massoglia. That makes sense, since Marty has been compiling lists of "hundred best SF books" since his student days at MSU, if not before. He's a list-maker.

Also, he lists many books not mentioned by the other list-makers in GG 7/8 and 9/10. Can I accept his judgement? --- Marty gives van Vogt's ROGUE SHIP (a hack work re-write of a 1940s novelette) higher marks than H. G. Wells' TIME MACHINE. Wells' book has been in print without a break since 1900, millions of copies sold, hundreds of stories written based on Wells' ideas. It has a memorable idea, effective development, emotional involvement, and a world that becomes vividly real and immediate. Talk about sense of wonder: the final scenes on the cold, dying earth -- great bloated red sun hanging on the horizon, giving no heat to the lonely seashore, chill winds, slow arthropods crawling ashore -- haunt the reader.

I still remember clearly scenes from TIME MACHINE. I forgot the plot and the background of ROGUE SHIP a week after I read it. Marty says both books are 55, "acceptable but not great". No, he says TIME MACHINE is 54, a bit lower.

Happily, most of your evaluators disagree with him, giving Wells an 85. Still, it makes me wonder.

Marty says Charles Eric Maine's TIMELINER, a confused episodic novel of cyclic time and body-exchange, is superior to Barry Malzberg's HEROVIT'S WORLD, which is a frightening close-up on the mind of a science-fiction writer who is trapped into a dismal "Perry Rhodan" series contract and is losing the ability to write at all, sickened by an overdose of action-adventure formula stories. Anyone who has been a professional writer will feel a twinge reading about Herovit: "God, I could end up the same way. Please, Lord, not yet."

Maybe Marty likes Perry Rhodan stories? Or thinks SF writers are all cheerful, happy-go-lucky types who love what they're doing every minute of every minute of every day?

Moving right along, Marty gives a 26 ("worthless trash") to Sarban's SOUND OF HIS HORN, rating it below such acknowledged stinkers as Keith Laumer's MONITORS or John Jakes's ON WHEELS.

Sarban has in SOUND OF HIS HORN an alternate-world story about the long aftermath of a Nazi victory, a century after the fall of England. Great stretches of Europe have been deliberately depopulated and returned to forest so the rulers of the Reich may hunt in "primeaval teutonic" woods. The hero is a modern man dropped into that



Nazi future, picked up by foresters and taken to a great hunting lodge. He soon discovers that the Overlords like to chase human prey through the night forests - deer and wolf are too easy to catch - and sure enough, one night he himself is tossed out into the woods with a one-hour lead before the dogs are loosed.

An impressive story, a very impressive evocation of mood - the forest by night, the distant hunting horn coming closer, the dense brush difficult to fight through, escape all but impossible. For those who have to know - yes, he does escape. Read the book, if you can find it. /// Why didn't Marty like it?

I could go on, but the point is made. (Arrgh, I just noticed. Marty gave Stewart's EARTH ABIDES a 47! That's one of the ten best SF novels ever.) How could I trust the man's evaluations?

I want to avoid putting together a biased list. Here is the standard I use to get number grades for the books. It isn't quite the same as yours, but it enables me to correlate numbers with specific features of the book.

What I look for: first, the quality of the background or setting.

This is very important in SF. The setting is not given by the real world; it is invented by the writer as much as the characters are invented. Is it believable? Is it consistent? Do I remember it? Can I imagine other things happening there after the story is over?

Second, the characters and what they do.

This is necessary for any fiction, not just SF. Are the characters presented well enough so I feel I have met living beings? Do I know them well enough to say what they do when they're not on stage? Has the author made me care what they do?

So, the two essentials: setting and character development. After all, what is SF but the story of human awareness shaped by an environment different from the Earth today? People who come out of a different setting - how will they respond to the challenges of the universe they live in?

Does someone have another definition of SF that fits better? I doubt it.

If the setting is wholly Earth today - where's the SF? If the characters are wholly people of Earth today - where's the SF? If the characters are not people whose problems concern us - why bother to read the story at all?

As to the ratings:

95 -- setting memorable, characters memorable, emotional impact!

85 -- setting well done, characters well done - superior

75 -- setting good, characters good - above average

These three are the "above average" ratings (A,B,C). There are no major flaws in setting or people. You follow the story with genuine interest; you care about what happens next. Buy the book if you don't have it. Read and re-read.

Distinctions: 75 means a good story, one you'd like to own, one you remember. Maybe a few vivid scenes. Not totally convincing, though, but no real weak point you can pin down. (Ex. Anderson, STAR FOX.)

85 means a really memorable story. The background is exceptional, or the characters really stand out. (Ex. Delany, BABEL-17)

95 has everything above plus one more: emotional impact. You



finish the book and just sort of sit there, still resonating to that other world. It is more vivid to you than the mundane world, and may remain so for weeks or longer. Very few books have this. If you can finish the book and then just put it down and start something else, it's not a 95. (Ex. Tolkien, LORD OF THE RINGS; Pangborn, DAVY; Stewart, EARTH ABIDES; Wells, TIME MACHINE)

Down the line to the "passing" grades (D): read but don't buy

65 -- setting good but weak characters, OR weak setting but good plot

55 -- formula work with setting and characters weak

Distinctions: 55 is standard background and standard characters doing the usual stuff in standard ways. That is, "space opera" - spaceships and rayguns, robots, mutants, etc, etc. It is at least well written and reads quickly, but nothing really memorable. (Ex. Laser Books)

65 is also standard formula stuff, but with maybe a little extra. Maybe the background is different: an unusual world, a strange bunch of aliens. Or maybe the characters are better done than expected: real suffering people. Or maybe the plot is ingenious with a new twist nobody ever tried before. (Ex. Niven KNOWN SPACE)

And now to the "failing" grades (F): don't buy, don't read

45 -- formula: poor setting, cardboard characters, badly written

35 -- poor setting, badly done characters, glaring mistakes

25 -- incoherent, inconsistent, illogical

Distinctions: 45 lacks one thing the "passing" books have, readable writing. The setting doesn't mean anything. Characters move back and forth with no motivation or purpose. And the writer can't seem to explain what he means. (Ex. Heinlein's FEAR NO EVIL)

35 is also badly written, but it has in addition absolutely glaring flaws in characterization and logic that even good writing couldn't save. You just can't believe in it. (Ex. Rand, ANTHEM) if they are disorganized enough.

\*

This introduction has been perhaps overly long, but anyway you know what I mean by 95 and what I mean by 35. This rating system gives lower grades to action-adventure pulp stories than some might like. But that's my choice: I like to read adventure stories, but rarely buy them.

Included are discussion and explanations of some of the unusually high ratings (95) and some of the really low ones (25,35). The bulk of the material that falls between can pretty much take care of itself.

This is the first installment, authors in alphabetical order. I use the list from GG 7/8 although it is a bit out of order.

((Mark, that's a fine, clear explanation and I can quite comfortably use your numbers. Sorry that I'm not able to publish all 34 pages of PPEN's you've sent in, but they're all being used. Following are your "discussions and explanations" which I found most enjoyable. MORE. MORE.))

Adams' SHARDIK gets the 95 because of the solid background of the medieval land and the personality of Kelderek. The author's view of religion as a force in history

plays a part. Characters change and grow, oh yes indeed. And the climactic scene of Shardik taking out the slave dealer has an impact. //// Poul Anderson sure has a lot of books, doesn't he? Most of them are solidly written adventure stories, some with a little added flair. Nothing really bad. But he rarely rises to a level that can involve and pull in a reader. MIDSUMMER TEMPEST has scene and character and plot going for it, but misses the 95 because Anderson tried an experiment with the language (writing the dialogue in Elizabethan blank verse) and it just doesn't work, it gets in the way of the story.

The plot of Piers Anthon's TRIPLE DETENTE kills it -- fleets of space warriors agree to each conquer and invade the others' home planet, thus establishing a built-in set of hostages. If you think politicians and admirals could rig that one up, you must be a true Conspiracy Fan. Even good writing, and Anthony's isn't bad, can't save this one. //// How do "Oceans of Venus" and "Space Ranger" rate 65 while the rest of the "Lucky Starr" books by Asimov rate 55? Ingenuity of background, that added touch; the open-air duel on Mars in RANGER, the sea-life in OCEANS. ////

/// How come Blish's CITIES IN FLIGHT tetralogy gets 95 while the individual novels that comprise it get 85, 85, 65, 65? It's the cumulative effect; when you read all four stories in sequence, the strength of Okie civilization and the personality of immortal Mayor Amalfi build from book to book. Background details of starfaring cultures begin to sound familiar to you.

Bradley's work shows a steady improvement with each novel she does. I suspect that my overall rating for the Darkover series will be quite high when I get to finish them. /// Brunner is also a writer whose work has improved notably over the years. His earlier stuff tends to be formula action-adventure of the brainless type (45,55) while his newer stuff tends to have real people and authentic-seeming settings (85). Since his earlier books are still in print from Ace, some revised and some not, this makes quite a mixture for the unwary buyer.

Budrys's ROGUE MOON (95) has several very strong characters and a setting that leaves memory tracks: an alien rock garden on the Moon, with a very capricious defense mechanism. The protagonist enters it, gets killed, is resurrected and sent in again - and again. What kind of man would volunteer to be killed fifteen times? Who would send him on such a mission? The confrontation scenes vibrate with tension. /// SOME WILL NOT DIE, also by Budrys, is the most believable picture I have seen of rebuilding human civilization after the Great Holocaust. You know it would be like this. Other books show what happens when civilization does not get rebuilt to its former level but remains weak and scattered: DAVY or EARTH ABIDES. Budrys has a firm grasp of how politics happens and how technicians think.

Brown's MARTIANS GO HOME and WHAT MAD UNIVERSE are gems of fun story-telling. No particular emotional or intellectual substance - just a lot of fun to read. /// Bulmer has a series of action-adventure tales with characters popping in and out of dimension doors to strange worlds. Read once and forget. They're like mental popcorn. but they're competently written, so you don't wince. /// Bester's first two novels are right up there: polished writing, strong conflict, solidly constructed backgrounds. His third novel is a sad comedown. This time the ingredients just don't mesh, and the language gets in the way. (It's a wholly unconvincing 21st century Spanish-flavored American English.)

T. J. Bass's two novels about the Hive-world of 2300 are very strong in background, especially biology. Unfortunately the characters don't quite match up, so I have to rate them just below the top. Still, very much worth reading. People impressed by the fake ecology in DUNE should see what real SF biology is like.

There are a number of writers in here who don't usually appear on the SF shelves of your local bookstore: Charles B. Brown, John Barth, Thomas Berger, William Burroughs,

Samuel Butler. The store managers probably stock them in "general fiction" or even "classics". Libraries will do the same. Don't be fooled; the particular works listed are clearly SF in approach and content. /// Many fans may be turned off because of the packaging -- "oh no, man, I never read that literature stuff. Just science fiction." Their loss.

Berger's REGIMENT OF WOMEN doesn't work very well. It's a heavily anti-feminist novel, in which the women have won and simply reversed the sexist structure of 20th century U.S. urban society. Woman bosses growl at pretty-boy male secretaries, try to seduce them. The men spend hours discussing make-up and accessories. Ugh.

On the other hand, NOVA EXPRESS is pure space opera, with galactic good guys (Nova Police) chasing galactic bad guys (Nova Mob) and both sides operating in secret on the primitive planet Earth. Burroughs has the pacing and attitudes down cold. Naturally the Nova Mob is into selling drugs - the worst kind of drugs - mental images of death and destruction. Burroughs's own previous novels depend greatly on the background of the emotionally dead world of the long-time junkie. /// The Nova Police discover their courts are corrupt. They begin to take direct vigilante action to stamp out the Mob. The unfortunate inhabitants of Earth don't know what's going on as mass battles to the death unroll in the cities and mindscapes of America. /// Occasional lapses into incoherent language give this book a 73 rather than the 78 it would otherwise have.

Brook's SWORD OF SHANNARA is a tedious pastiche of Tolkien's LORD OF THE RINGS. It falls into two parts, of which the second (written five years later) is much superior to the first. Rumor says the second part was very heavily "edited" by Lester del Rey, but that's really not important. It reads better, anyway. The quest goes ever on - and on and on and on. Unsympathetic characters at best.

Brooks in SWORD OF SHANNARA can't control his language well enough to describe what's going on in many cases. Characters eat "food" (no specifics), they walk through "forests" (no specifics), they are attacked by "a monster" (no description of what it was). The setting never becomes clear in my mind's eye.

Tolkien characters moved in a very sharply defined landscape, a real countryside. Brooks figures move in a vague murky terrain which becomes vivid only in spots. Those spots are enough to give the book a 55 instead of a 35. Even so ... you can find better Tolkien-copy heroic fantasies than this.

Books is not the worst. There is a thing called "Circle of Light" which is below Shannara. But I don't really want to talk about it. "Circle of light" has these cute talking animals, and if there's one thing that kills fantasy, it's cuteness. Even Gardner Fox KOTHAR novels are better than that.

Edgar Rice Burroughs books - well, what is there to say? Even at his worst, ERB could keep a story moving along: plenty of action and suspense. That's why the Mars books and the Venus books are mostly 55 and 65, rarely higher, rarely lower. No great insights into the human soul ... but no really unreadable patches either. I re-read the stories of Barsroom and Amtor every five years or so. It's a pleasant skim: 30 minutes per book. (I read fast.) Mild senza wonder.

The later books in the series drop off in quality. Burroughs was getting tired, formulas were getting stale. But Burroughs at his worst is better than most of Lin Carter or Gardner Fox or John Jakes or John Norman - the army of Burroughs imitators.

\*\*\*\*



Rick Knobloch must have a poor memory if he doesn't recall the third SF book he ever read of the third woman he ever loved. Don't most people remember such things quite clearly? /// Also, he gives his first SF book a 95, just because it was the first, a practice I consider excessive. Sure, I remember the first SF book I read: MISTS OF DAWN, by Chad Oliver. It was a Winston Juvenile hardcover, about a time-travel expedition to the Pleistocene, and the stranded teen-age hero who is temporarily sheltered by a tribe of Cro-Magnons. Fun to read, well-written, but I wouldn't give it more than 65.

Some authors here decidedly worthy of comment: Cabell is a specialized taste. His light irony and wide sweep of references seem marvelous to those who can follow him, baffling and boring to those who can't. The key question behind his 21-volume series of novels (if I dare sum up such a monumental work) is this - who created the universe? Naturally he doesn't give a serious answer. The reader follows deeper and deeper into the quest, meeting on the way Jurgen, Dom Manuel the sculptor king, Lord God Jehovah (nope, he wasn't the creator), Horvendile, Kalki the silver stallion, and a nasty-tempered Russian demon named Koshchai the Deathless.

For those who have trouble keeping track of all the gods, demons, and others who populate Cabell's books, there is even a summary volume: index and concordance, something like the appendices in LORD OF THE RINGS. Good luck.

/// Lin Carter's heroic fantasies oscillate just at the readability level: some are good enough to finish and re-read, others are so bad you have to put them down and walk away. Most just hover on the borderline. Carter is a good editor; he can recognize good fantasy. He just can't write it.

/// Chandler's stories of Commodore Grimes all sort of bland (and blend) together in my memory: a generalized 62-65. The stories are not bad, but details of plot and setting tend to vanish from the mind as soon as you finish the book.

Caidin's first SF novel, MAROONED, was halfway decent, so I gave him the benefit of the doubt. The next novels got steadily worse, and now he's turning out TV script adaptations for some awful cyborg series (\$6 MAN) which aren't even worth opening, and so are not listed here. Does anybody watch the TV show?

Tell Rick Knobloch that Correy's CONTRABAND ROCKET was the third SF book I read in my life, and I recall it quite well. It was an old Ace double, back to back with Murray Leinster's FORGOTTEN PLANET (the second SF book I read). I was twelve years old at the time and interested in natural history. FORGOTTEN PLANET is all about a stranded human colony on a world of giant insects. How could I resist giant bugs? The book was well worth the 35¢ - my first SF purchase and the nucleus of the burgeoning collection that now is fighting me for living space in my apartment, twenty years later.

Hal CLEMENT's stories usually have very thoroughly done backgrounds. The plot may be pedestrian and the characters not very interesting technicians, but the worlds they visit - wow! The super-high gravity planets of Mesklin and Dhrawn, the hot steam atmosphere of Tenebra, the desert world of Abyormen ... these are what make the stories work, alien climate and landscape. Clement plays fair with you on this. If you know enough geology and chemistry, you can usually figure out what is going to happen next -- about a paragraph before disaster engulfs the characters. They didn't see it coming, and now have to figure a way out of the mess they're in. The menaces in Clement's novels tend to be mudslides and floods and quicksand rather than giant carnivorous monsters (although he does include monsters where they would be ecologically appropriate).

In Clement's books, every planetary surface is loaded with potential deathtraps. The explorers have a grand old time just staying alive.

Mark CLIFTON and Frank RILEY turned out a preachy novel called "They'd Rather Be Right" in 1953. The inventors of a machine that boosts human brain power to super-genius levels



not only can't sell their machine, they are actively being hunted by the FBI, CIA, American Psychiatric Association, etc. The characters of the novel sit around and talk. The authors lecture us about mind control and public relations brainwashing. On and on and on. /// This thing won a Hugo as the best SF novel of 1954. It had one paperback edition as THE FOREVER MACHINE and then died. I rate it as 45, being generous. Rest in peace.

Just to be complete, DANTE's COMMEDIA should be included among the epic fantasies. (Trilogy: INFERNO - PURGATORIO - PARADISO) I know the author didn't think of it as a fantasy, but most modern-day fans would. If you can't read Italian, get a good translation; Ciardi (NAL) or Sayers (Penguin).

Avram DAVIDSON is a very uneven writer. Some of his books are convincing and lively, others are just flat. When he's good, nobody can beat him at catching the tone of conversations. His characters have their own very distinct voices, and if you have any ear for dialogue, you can hear them. /// He tends to toss in all kinds of ingredients - the kitchen sink approach - and more often than not it works. He is intimately familiar with medieval and ancient legends.

When Davidson includes material from alchemy or ceremonial magic, when he presents creatures from Greek or Roman myth - he has them cold. By comparison, Swann's supernaturals were mostly too sweet and cute.

Sometimes, though, Davidson will start a story and not finish it, just sort of run out of steam. It's like a serial with the last chapter missing: very annoying. ISLAND UNDER THE EARTH suffers from this. It just stops. /// His best fantasies do resolve nicely. The alchemist completes the production of the Ultimate Compound in PHOENIX, and the monsters trying to invade Earth through teleport doors are diverted in MASTERS OF THE MAZE.

The only rating I see for MASTERS OF THE MAZE in GG 7/8 and 9/10 is a "27" by Marty Massoglia. That's really too bad. Readers might believe him and be steered away from a good book. I'm told that a catchword at MSU for SF fans in the 60s was "Communist Chulplex Ate My wife!" - which is based on the speculations of a character in MASTERS. Did Marty miss contact with it during his MSU stay?

May I point out that Peter DICKINSON has been missed by a great many SF readers, which is a shame, because the man has a sense of setting that is unrivalled and the ability to make very unlikely environments the most reasonable of all places to be. His trilogy of juvenile fantasies, starting with WEATHERMONGER, got some notice in the field ... but how about his science fiction for adults?

POISON CRACLE has an Arabian sheikh (rich, of course) build an animal behavior lab as an annex to his air-conditioned palace. In the lab an English researcher is teaching a chimp to talk using Ameslan sign language. There is a murder with the chimp the only witness and ... right, you guessed it. Dickinson makes the situation seem quite believable. As I said, he's very skillful.

Both GREEN GENE and KING & JOKER are alternate-world stories: in one, there was a mutation for human skin color about 1650 as a result of which the Irish are literally green. This adds certain tensions to the battles in Northern Ireland, as you can imagine. /// In the other, Edward the Seventh never made it to the throne of England - different royal family, and a very peculiar family they are. Try Dickinson's stuff and see if you like it.

EDDISON's last fantasies in his Zimiamvian cycle are flawed: the storytelling is too confused, with too many flashbacks and interpolations. But OUROBOROS is still one of the best sword-and-sorcery adventures around, told in language that is half Elizabethan and wholly memorable. Read this one to see what the heroic epic can really be like.

Robert E. Howard and E. R. Burroughs are OK in their way, but very rarely can either one reach the level of power in their narratives that Eddison maintains all along, almost routinely.

Every time a New England fan goes out to a yard sale or Salvation Army book sale, there is bound to be at least one copy of Max Ehrlich's THE BIG EYE sitting all by itself in the "science fiction" section. It is such a bad book that even for 25¢ nobody will buy it. I think it made a Book Club connection; hundreds of thousands of copies seem to be around. How about on the west coast?

Phil FARMER seems to specialize in series that leave readers walking around asking, "When's the next volume? When is the next book coming out?" First, the World of Tiers stretched five volumes from 1965 to 1977. Then, the Riverworld books with two volumes in 1971 and then a looong wait until 1978 for volume three. And it turns out there's a volume four coming ... some day.

There is also Farmer's project for re-writing the Great Works of Western Lit: MOBY DICK becomes THE WIND-WHALES OF ISHMAEL. Well, why not swipe from the best? (Don't tell Fred Jakobcic about this. He doesn't like Moby Dick.)

Ron Goulart's lightweight adventure stories all blend into one confused mass of snooty machinery, talking dogs, condescending youth, stubborn elders, etc., etc. I must have read about twenty - they're like cotton candy, leaving a pleasant memory but no residue - and the ones listed are typical.

There are four SF books so bad I threw them out after I read them - not traded, threw out, and that after buying them new full price. They are Laumer's THE MONITORS, Jakes's BLACK IN TIME, Fox's KOTHAR AND THE MAGIC SWORD ... and a book listed on this page, Greenfield's WATERS OF DEATH. It is a travesty of an ecological horror story about the seas decaying. Save your money, save your time. /// What? Oh sure, there are worse books that I didn't buy at all.

Hey, I've discovered yet another Ian Covell automatic reflex: when he sees the name "Ron Goulart", his fingers write "15". As Spock would say, fascinating. /// HAIBLUM's INTERWORLD is an attempt to write a hard-boiled detective story about a multi-dimensional chase. It doesn't work out quite as well as it could.

The cumulative effect of HEINLEIN's Future History gives PAST THRU TOMORROW its 95, more than any of the component parts get. Heinlein's best work, for my opinion, was done in the late 1950s (see above), but he is consistently 75 and 85 thru his career. Lately, increasing insertion of politics and sermons has made his stuff less fun to read - all that libertarian propaganda detracts from the story. Still, aside from FEAR NO EVIL, all his books are worth reading.

Frank HERBERT started well, with two solid works. What happened since then is hard to say, but the general direction of his work has been downward. His characters become harder to follow. He explains less and less. In HELLSTROM'S HIVE, there is a battle underground in Oregon between a troop of nasty CIA agents and a swarm of even nastier ant-men. The reader by this time doesn't care which side wins.

HODGSON's NIGHT LAND is a tale set in a far-future darkside canyon of Earth, where only one metal fortress contains light and human life. Unfortunately the author tries to tell the story in a pseudo-Jacobean English that makes tough going more than once. Many readers may just give up. Ruined a good story. Too bad. /// L. Ron HUBBARD used to write fine SF before he shifted his talents to playing God for 100,00 gullible dumb Scientologists.

The books by John JAKES vary in quality from abysmal to almost good. He can do straightforward herioc fantasy well enough, with no more than the usual impossible feats.



When he tries social satire - forget it! ON WHEELS is the story of an America completely paved over with super-highways, where everybody lives in cars and trailers and it is a federal crime to go slower than 50 m.p.h. It came out with perfect timing in 1973 ... just as the oil embargo hit us. /// BLACK IN TIME is about a time-travelers war to manipulate history. The two sides are (roughly) the Black Panthers and the Ku Klux Klan. You can see just what's coming, right? The travellers always seem to land right at the crucial moment to interfere at "Fifty Great Scenes from Afro-American History". Ugh.

The 85 for KORNBLUTH & MERILL's GUNNER CADE is mainly for the effective way in which the character of the hero is unfolded. Cade is a trained warrior in a pseudo-Japanese future society, very rigidly stratified: daimyo are "stars", the shogun is "The Power Master", the Emperor is a powerless figurehead. The warriors (like Cade) are pseudo-samurai, trained until they are wholly faithful to "klin" or Zen philosophy. They are ascetic, lethal, and very naive about the outside world. /// Cade ultimately discovers he has been conned, and then ...

About R. A. LAFFERTY - either you really like his word-drunk style, or you hate it bitterly. There seem to be few fans who take an intermediate position. The Lafferty way of writing is unmistakable: wide sweeps of parallelisms and puns, personal asides, judicious comments, obscure pedantic references that may be true or may be totally invented on the spot. If you never tried Lafferty, try SPACE CHANTEY for a start; it's more or less traditional space opera, captain and crew exploring strange worlds. Or plunge right into EASTERWINE - why not? This is the biography of one of Lafferty's egocentric computers.

What Ira LEVIN does is take themes from science fiction and water them down until they are simple enough for "book-of-the-month" club readers to accept. Then he writes them up into best sellers. I'm not laughing. I wish I could do it myself. /// As SF, his books don't make it. Thus, ROSEMARY'S BABY is about possession and the fears of a pregnant woman. STEPFORD WIVES is an attempt at suburban gothic horror: the men of a village are murdering their wives and replacing them one by one with barbie-doll androids. One wife discovers the truth. (Yawn.)

If Keith LAUMER was consistently bad, I'd just place him on the "don't bother" list and that would be the end of it. But every once in a while, amid those dreary un-funny endless Retief stories and unconvincing action-adventure chase routines, he will produce something good like EARTHBLOOD or BOLO. Sigh.

As most of you must know by now, MALZBERG specializes in first-person narratives by incompetent astronauts or diplomats, who keep on thinking that everything will be fine once they clear up some details. In fact, everything is falling apart - missions, marriages, chess games, the planet Earth, the universe - and there is no way they are ever going to be able to fix it. Hm, yes, depressing. In one or two cases, though, Malzberg has found a topic that needs exactly that kind of gloomy approach, and it is quite effective: HEROVIT, APOLLO. Naturally fans of hard-science rah-rah stuff hate a writer who tells them that the whole space program is not only useless but literally insane. Malzberg thus has loads of enemies in SF, who attack him whatever he does.

Vincent McHUGH'S CALEB CATLUM'S AMERICA is a picaresque novel about a family of American folk heroes named Catlum relatives of Paul Bunyan and Davy Crockett and all the rest. It runs from about 1770 to about 1900, and covers most of North America: revolution, civil war, railroads, sailing ships, talking animals, strange weather, John Henry, etc. The style is lively and you never can tell who's going to show up next. Fun to read. Part fantasy, part historical romance, part fable.

Most especially noteworthy is this: CALEB CATLUM is one of the sources for Robert Heinlein's TIME ENOUGH FOR LOVE. No, this is not some literary critic trying to

second-guess an author. Heinlein on more than one occasion has praised CATLUM in print, saying more people should read it. But the book appeared in 1934, when most SF fans were blind to anything but space opera, and somehow it never got the fannish reputation it deserved. /// There's another McHuch book also worth searching for: I AM THINKING OF MY DARLING, about a man trying to locate missing wife in a plague-stricken American city. Marty Massoglia and I obviously disagree on the quality of the book.

I have the same problem with the heroic fantasies of Michael MOORCOCK and the juvenile space adventures of Andre NORTON: there must be 20 or 30 of each and they all blur together in the memory so I can't even remember if I read them or not. So I don't list them. /// The Moorcock "Runestaff" and "Eternal Champion" and "Elric" series are repetitions and quickly become trivial. Moorcock's surrealist secret agent, Jerry Cornelius, didn't even interest me into trying more than one book. On the other hand, between churning out the Eternal Champion and Jerry Cornelius tripe (what wasted energy!), Moorcock did produce a few good novels, which I list.

You ever hear parents or critics refer to SF as "crazy Buck Rogers stuff"? If you want to know who Buck Rogers is, the novel ARMAGEDDON 2419 A.D. by Nowlan contains the original 1929 saga of Captain Anthony ("Buck") Rogers who slept for four hundred years in a radioactive coal mine near Pittsburgh. He awoke to find America under the rule of the wicked Air Lords of Han. Well, now ...

Some books you might have missed: Mitchison's MEMOIRS OF A SPACEWOMAN - about a "first contact" specialist who has to unravel the languages and attitudes of some very curious alien races (parasitic warts, butterflies with psychic blast powers). ---- Nabakov's ADA, about an alternate world in which Russia colonized all of North America in the 15th century and the familiar landscape is overlaid with strange place-names. ---- Norden's ULTIMATE SOLUTION, in which a New York cop collaborating with the Gestapo in 1975 (twenty-five years after the final German conquest of America) is set to track down the impossible rumor of one surviving Jew in the U.S. He knows they were all killed by 1960; he has visited the death camp on the Hudson, now a museum. But he has his orders, so ...

Why did I read all John NORMAN's "Gor" books if they are so bad? I was doing a review of Norman's work for a fanzine, and decided I should read all his stuff to give him a fair chance. Suspensions confirmed: his work is awful. It gets worse as the series moves along - less action, more whips and chains, more lectures on how women love to get beaten and tortured, more inane philosophy sandwiched between beatings. /// Only the first two are even tolerable. Not worth opening. I learned my lesson - no more reviews of cruddy series books.

Edgar PANGBORN is consistently good. He has a connected series placed in a post-Holocaust world 300 years from now - Davy, Eve, Company - that has total believability and characters you are sorry you can't meet in person. I could make the case for DAVY being the best single novel of science fiction on this list. /// PEAKE's first two "Gormenghast" novels rate high. Unfortunately he died before the third one was in final shape. It was published unrevised and incomplete. A shame. /// Two more writers from outside SF proper you should try: Marge PIERCY and Thomas PYNCHON. /// One writer to avoid like plague: Don Pendleton. He does the "Executioner" series, if that's a clue.

Mack REYNOLDS churns out book after book crammed with lectures on history and economics disguised as dialogue. I rate some of the books as pretty readable because the lectures are interesting, and Reynolds knows his topics. Instant education in left-wing social theory. /// Ayn RAND also fills her books with lectures, not as well done as Reynolds, much longer, much more boring. For those who like elitist claptrap posing as "libertarianism". ATLAS SHRUGGED, about the collapse of U.S. industry due to government intervention, is over 900 pages of invective, larded with SIXTY-PAGE speeches by the protagonist. Skip the speeches and read the good parts (the collapse scenes).



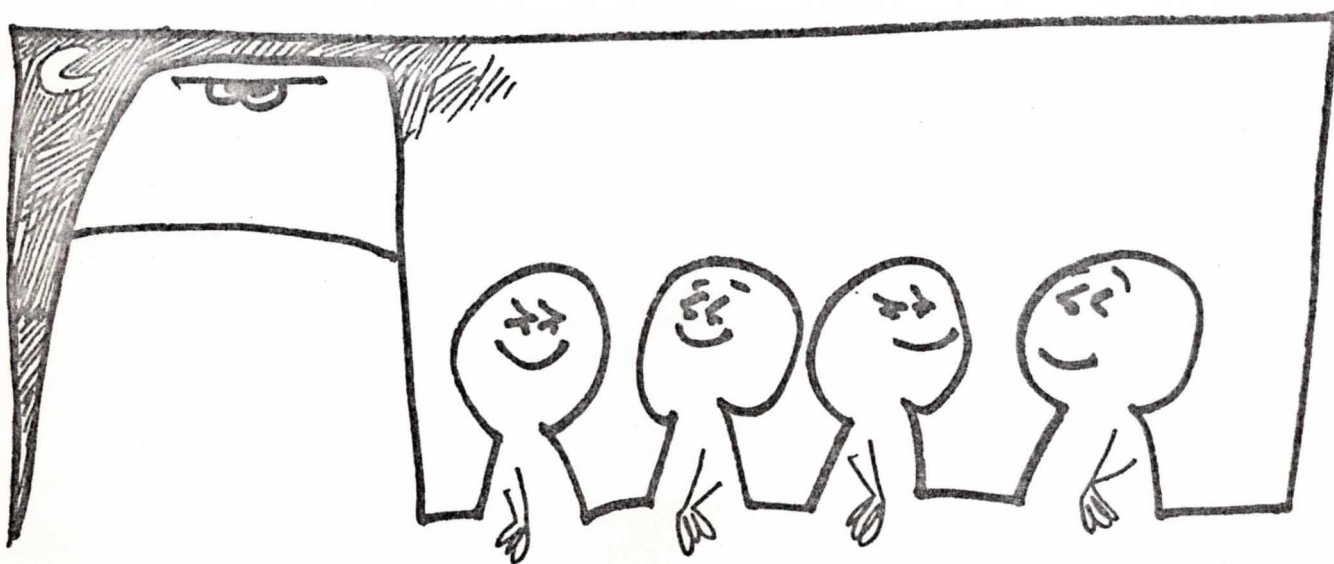
If you wonder what sort of science fiction book Adolf Hitler would have written, look at SPINRAD's IRON DREAM and RASPAIL's CAMP OF THE SAINTS. Spinrad wrote his book as a satire. Raspail is absolutely serious. The Raspail scenario has a fleet of refugees from starving India landing in southern France. His heroes want to do the noble thing, i.e. machine-gun the desperate crowds on the beach. But the government says no. Politicians lack the bravery, the courage to murder unarmed people, says Raspail, and thus the West will fall. /// A vile book.

Both Robert SILVERBERG and Norman SPINRAD started out with really junky space opera stories, and both later began to write some carefully crafted SF novels worth re-reading -- Silverberg far more so than Spinrad. That means the name is not always a sure guide to the quality of the book. Many early works are kept in print by publishers hoping to cash in on the success of the later and better books. Check the copyright dates. /// Of course, there are some fans who prefer the early action-adventure Silverberg. They also doubtless prefer potato chips to broiled trout. Oh, well ...

The books by the STRAUGATSKY brothers are just now beginning to come out in a decent English translation. They turn out to be good SF, with flair and control.

What's happened to A. E. Van Vogt? His early books were impressive, action on a galactic scale, a new plot twist every 800 words. Then he sort of stalled. His "novels" for the last fifteen years have been mostly expansions of short stories and novelettes he did in the 40s and 50s, not well done. Be warned.

Bernard WOLFE's LIMBO is a very curious utopia, in which inhabitants of a war-shattered America become exceedingly pacifist. A movement starts for the voluntary amputation of arms and legs of men of fighting age, to make sure they won't get sent to war. Of course, the "vol-amp" are soon provided with powered prosthetic limbs even more suited to physical violence than their old meat limbs. Surgery won't solve the problem, folds. /// The "vol-amp" world is shown down to minute details, and Wolfe has fun inventing his new society. Sports heroes depend on replacable legs. Women become the sexual aggressors since men without arms and legs are unable to initiate active courtship. Morality changes ...



Thanx for GG 9/10. I love statistics, and those pages and pages of PPEN results, preliminary as they are, are a ~~fantasy~~ fan's paradise. I noticed a number of interesting trends in the ratings:

1. Decreasing rating tends to be associated with increasing standard deviation. I.e., the less liked a book, the more disagreement on it. Does that make sense?

2. Number of readings is unrelated to rating, but is a good measure of what might be called "fame". E.g., everybody has heard of/read I WILL FEAR NO EVIL, but few of them liked it; not very many know STARS MY DESTINATION, but they all loved it. ((A good shot.))

3. Violently disliked books aren't read by very many people. This one makes sense. It will be very interesting to see what books come in below I WILL FEAR NO EVIL once they pass the 20 readings mark. ((soon.))

4. The higher the rating, the more likely that i have read the book. (21 of the top 25 and 4 of the bottom 25).

Of these trends, only #3 applies to the students' ratings. They've read a lot of books i missed along the way, particularly John Norman. So that's what you feed your students!

There are certainly a number of surprises in the PPENs. Phil Dick's books came in on what strikes me as reverse order of quality. And MARTIANS GO HOME, number 12 on the list, is one of my candidates for all-time turkey. The top few sf books weren't surprising, and neither were the top few fantasies. The surprising part was finding the top 2 fantasies above all the sf. I don't think THE LORD OF THE RINGS is actually quite as "universally loved" as the rating indicates. What makes it unique in this respect is its length. If you don't like it, you can't even finish it. As a result, i'd guess its gotten lots of 15s, no? ((NO))

I disagree with Gary Grady's Hugo revision idea. Of course there are differences in taste. The purpose of the Hugos is to establish a consensus. "The best of the year as agreed upon by as many people as possible". And as for the best of one year being poorer than the #3 of another: Look, the accumulated Hugos are not supposed to be a list of the best sf. Anyone who uses them that way is misusing them. They are of, for, and by their particular year. As far as that goes, a few months isn't a very long time to gain perspective. After they're given, the main value of the Hugos is historical: what did folk at the time think was the best. For instance, we can gawk at the elders who thot something called THEYD RATHER BE RIGHT was the best sf of 1954.

Incidentally, organized campaigns have a lot of effect on the Hugos as it is now, particularly in the Fan awards. I could name names, but...Anyway, Gary's system probably wouldn't make that any worse.

I've encountered sf used in non-lit courses the way Maurice Harter describes. I took an astronomy course where we read Gunn's THE LISTENERS. It worked very well for its purpose, which was in showing how astronomers work, but it was a dreadful book.

I once did a bout of student teaching and immediately gained a reputation as an exceedingly hard grader. My unstinting praise usually equalled a "B". Afterwards, even i was somewhat appalled at the fine work i had palmed off this way.

I was looking thru my old PPENs and got some of the same feeling. LORD OF LIGHT at 86?! I must have been insane that day -- should have been 96! Possibly my feelings would be better approximated if

you simply raised all my ratings by 10.

Bishop, Michael. A LITTLE KNOWLEDGE 95 The book earns this honor by having a real basket-case of a plot (ie, it carries you along), full-bodied characters, and a thoroly described and imaginative setting. Also, it's as witty as all get-out. For me this was the best new sf novel of 1977, far far better than anything that got on the awards ballot (general consensus is against me. But i persist.)

More:

- 93 Eddison, E. R. THE WORM DUROBOROS (incredible writing style)
- 92 du Bois, William Pene. THE 21 BALLOONS (a childhood favorite)
- 87 Garner, Alan. THE OWL SERVICE
- 86 Pohl, Frederik. THE SPACE MERCHANTS
- 85 Williams, Charles. WAR IN HEAVEN
- 85 Le Guin, Ursula. LATHE OF HEAVEN
- 85 Anderson, Poul. HROLF KRAKI'S SAGA
- 83 Beagle, Peter. A FINE AND PRIVATE PLACE (better than LAST UNICORN)
  
- 83 Dick, Philip. A SCANNER DARKLY
- 82 Pohl, Frederik. GATEWAY
- 78 Aldiss, Brian. HOTHOUSE
- 78 di Camp, L. Sprague. THE GOBLIN TOWER (NOT as funny as it tries to be)
- 78 Pohl, Frederik. MAN+
- 77 Bellairs, John. THE FACE IN THE FROST (cracks up near the end)
- 75 Bester, Alfred. THE STARS MY DESTINATION (good, but so what's so great?)
- 68 Leiber, Fritz. CONJURE WIFE
- 63 Bova, Ben. THE MULTIPLE MAN
- 58 Bova, Ben. THE STARCROSSED
- 58 de Camp, L. Sprague. THE CLOCKS OF IRAZ
- 57 McKillip, Patricia. HEIR OF SEA AND FIRE
- 54 Pohl, Frederik. AGE OF THE PUSSYFOOT
- 53 McKillip, Patricia. RIDDLE MASTER OF HED
- 43 Anderson, Poul. THERE WILL BE TIME (ever read a propagandist Anderson)
- 37 de Camp, L. Sprague. THE CASTLE OF IRON
- 24 Leiber, Fritz. GATHER DARKNESS

Chester D. Cuthbert, 1104 Mulvey Avenue, Winnipeg, Manitoba, 3/5/78  
Canada. R3M 1J5

Again I must express appreciation for the tremendous amount of work you have expended to produce GUYING GYRE 9/10 for the benefit of science fiction fans. The sheer bulk of material that has accumulated from you does prompt me to second the motion made by several of your correspondents to the effect that a consolidation of the data should ultimately be made.

I have read this year only one science fiction novel LOGAN'S WORLD by William F. Nolan. This is modern fast-paced future fiction, conveying little science, but plenty of sensational action.

My reading time has been spent mainly on ghost stories and old-time mystery stories read from the set called The Lock and Key Library, originally copyright 1909. The best two volumes of ghost stories by a single writer are Robert Hugh Benson's THE LIGHT INVISIBLE and A MIRROR OF SHALOTT. His brothers, E. F. Benson and A. C. Benson, also wrote some excellent weird tales; and all were excellent writers.



I noticed how stilted and cold my review seemed in the latest GG. Mea culpa. I will try to loosen up in future. I also noticed, to my dismay, that I had managed to misspell John Crowley's last name several times in the review. More breast-beating.

As everyone now knows, Crowley received no Hugo nomination and has lost his chance for a JWC award. I admit to a degree of bitterness, something which both the field and I will survive.

Sorry I haven't written lately but have been trying to achieve prodrom (which is not the same as condom -- quite.) Have finished a novel tentatively titled THE HORN which is presently at Del Rey/Ballantine (submitted, not necessarily accepted) and am working on another one now. This one is titled ASSASSIN GENERAL. One of the things that I've learned about writing is that the actual writing is the least fun part of the job. This may be because I'm a lousy typist. It's not the writing that bugs me, but the typing. The most pleasant part of the process is the research. For this work I had to pick up a bit of medical information, along with a dose of psychology and some knowledge of Esperanto.

Have enjoyed the magazine very much but (you knew that was coming, didn't you?) I find a certain attitude jarring. Like any other vulnerable person, I am loath to make new enemies (the line forms on the right) but I'd loathe myself more if I didn't blurt out my reactions.

Somehow there seem to be several unspoken presuppositions. Some of your readers seem to feel that sf is somehow inherently superior to other forms of literature. That is simply bunk. I wish when I'd attended high school the teachers had concentrated more on the classics and less on "candy cane" literature. I'll agree that it's better for a student to read, say, the novelization of STAR WARS than nothing at all, but I wasn't aware that those were the alternatives. It's my experience that most people, when given a free choice, will choose an item which is congruent with their level of incompetence. I believe that school should be a place where one learns to become a contributing member of a society, rather than merely another none-too-discerning consumer.

Another assumption is that classroom material is more important than the quality of the teacher. If a teacher is so incompetent that he is unable to discuss the theme of 1984, what in the pluperfect hell do some of the writers think he's going to do with THE DISPOSSESSED?

Another interesting notion is that sf would be useful in courses other than lit courses. Somehow, when I find an Anita Bryant-sort of fundamentalism on the upswing and intolerant nits incapable of distinguishing between the KORAN and an eggroll, I am not too amused at the idea of using Heinlein's much-overrated STRANGER IN A STRANGE LAND for Religious Philosophy courses. And in a country where many high school graduates cannot make simple change, much less offer a coherent explanation of socialism, communism, or capitalism, I don't want students wasting time on derivative (or even imaginative) navel examinations.

Finally, defending popular literature is a bit like defending being a jock. Only the forms of expression are different. Sad writing has no more excuse for its existence than has any other device for wasting time. I might enjoy a game on a pinball, but that's no reason for putting the machine in a classroom.

OK, I've pissed on the altar and am ready for cries of outrage and perhaps some good argument. But I had to have my say.

Craig W. Anderson, 1890 McPeak Ct., Tracy CA 95376

4/14/78

Attached you will find my latest listings for "The Project". Some real dogs in there and some goodies as well. One of them puzzled me because, once again in my storied sf reading career, I have bummed out on a novel that most everyone else seems to feel is exceptional. I loathed Poul Anderson's MIRKHEIM; thought it was dull, with little or no action, difficult to read because of Poul's circuitous prose style which seemingly takes forever to get to whatever point he's trying to make (just like this sentence) and he seems to include horrendous political polemic (wheels within wheels, within wheels, within wheels....) for the sake of including it. Whew! Charlie Brown has MIRKHEIM on his recommended list in the latest LOCUS; about the only value it has is that it finally brings to a conclusion his series on the Polesotechnic League. Well, be that as it may, I thought it wasn't much of a book.

I read in the latest LOCUS that Leigh Brackett passed away recently. I was shocked and saddened greatly by her death. She has always been a favorite of mine, both for her sf/f writing and her screenplays for Howard Hawks. As when Weinbaum, Kuttner, Kornbluth and Campbell died, causing irreplaceable gaps in the sf/f genre, so will Leigh's passing.

99 King THE SHINING  
98 Eklund THE GRAYSPACE BEAST  
96 Geo. Simpson & Neal Burger THIN AIR  
92 Harold King RED ALERT  
71 Robin Cook COMA  
62 Robert Smith THE PREY  
55 Jones COLOSSUS AND THE CRAB  
32 Anderson MIRKHEIM  
22 Jay Anson THE AMITYVILLE HORROR

Mike Resnick, Route 1, Box 26, St. Mary's Road, Libertyville 6/8/76  
Illinois 60048

Sorry -- I must have been punchdrunk from writing that list. Let's try it again: "Congratulations: you've managed to get my first LOC anywhere in more than a year."

Which is true. I write for a living. When your name is Michiner you can do a book every five years and have money to burn; when your name is Resnick and you write mostly under pseudonyms anyway, you had damned well better sell  $1\frac{1}{2}$ -2 million words a year. I do so, barely, but it doesn't leave me a lot of time to write LOCs (or an enormous desire to look at my typewriter one second longer than I have to.) Hence, while I love reading fanzines, and especially sercon ones, I prefer to shell out cash for them rather than LOCs. Yours is a happy exception.



4/24/78

Reading GG 9&10 was like jumping into the middle of a serial, not knowing what went on before. But at least I now have some small (emphasise "small") understanding of the mysterious "Project" about which I have heard so little so often.

I don't know how you can classify books the way you plan. I mean, Coney's HELLO SUMMER, GOODBYE and Le Guin's THE LEFT HAND OF DARKNESS and Haldeman's THE FOREVER WAR and Wyndham's THE CHRYSALIDS all deserve at least a 95 rating on your scale. But they cannot really be compared to each other very easily. One might look at them in terms of the mechanics of storytelling, style, even in finesse, and thereby order them in some merit hierarchy; but when each is considered separately, each stands out as the best in its own particular sub-genre of the sub-genre of sf. ((The whole emphasis of THE PROJECT is to ascertain your personal preference (PPEN).))

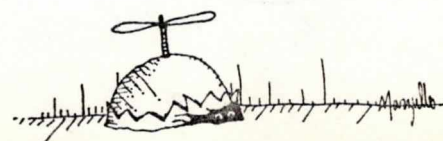
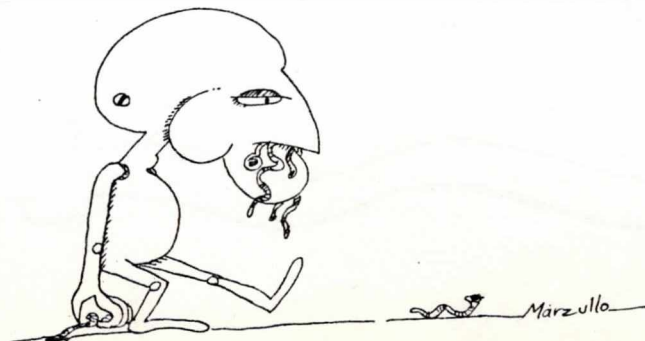
What I mean is that you are going to end up with books which have the same rating, but which are so obviously unequal in merit, but with this same order of merit differing from one person to the next. All four of the books mentioned I would recommend to neos as the best to read (at the moment), but I would emphasise one book of the four - with this book varying according to the taste of the reader. ((You're thinking correctly; I'm looking for your personal enjoyment level)) At least your scaling system I can use in my own review writing.

Regarding the list published in GG 9: it is obvious that there is a whole lot of bias there - some books which are as good as some mentioned are not mentioned at all, a discrepancy due more to marketing procedures of the books involved than to any real or perceived differences in merit. Wyndham's books have a better distribution in Britain and the Commonwealth than in the US, and Heinlein's have too good a distribution (for most titles) than any other book, giving them a better chance in the voting for their respective areas of distribution. This means that ratings for Heinlein's books would have a greater frequency for any country than most other books, while Wyndham's supporters would be largely non-U.S. in origin. ((More PPENs would fill in the gaps. Please send yours soon.))

David Williams, 2430 Dwight Way #208, Berkeley, CA 94704

1/23/78

I am so glad to finally find someone giving Swann's writing the credit it deserves (I have a hard time finding Swann fans in my area). Being first hooked by Swann after reading LADY OF THE BEES, I find that his works (of this type) are the best form for Ancient/Mythological History novels. What better way is there to write about Romulus and Remus than the way in which Swann did? His mixture of mythology and ancient history adds so much beauty and lyricism to a retelling of a legend which in some hands might have turned out to be a dry, uninspired history text.





Michael T. Shoemaker 2123 N. Early Street Alexandria, VA 22302 2-25-78

There's a tremendous waste of space in these zines due to the frequent  $1\frac{1}{2}$  spacing; and instead of improving appearance and readability it actually looks sloppier. One other gripe: where the hell is my great four page letter of June 28, 77? I'm especially disappointed because I would like for Chester Cuthbert to know that he is not alone in his liking for Jack London. Now I'll have to send him a pc since you don't pub my loc with comments on London.

As I mentioned in my June 28 letter, what you're calling the "standard deviation" is really  $\frac{1}{2}$  of the range. The real SD would be far smaller numbers, since they are the square root of the variance.

I thought it would be interesting to pull out the ten most controversial novels from your composite list, so here they are:

Time of Changes - 25.14  
Time Enough for Love - 22.96  
Cemetary World - 22.88 (It's hard to understand why there should be such enormous divergence of opinion on this one.)  
Andromeda Strain - 22.72  
Sirens of Titan - 22.96  
Ubik - 22.59  
Barefoot in the Head - 22.57  
Creatures of Light & Darkness - 22.43  
Beyond Apollo - 21.95  
Book of Skulls - 21.79

I'm surprised Dhalgren didn't make it. Certainly I've heard it called everything from the greatest to unreadable. Here are the ten least controversial:

LOTR - 5.54	Hiero's Journey - 8.99
The Tombs of Atuan - 6.60	Earthman Come Home - 7.78
Martians Go Home - 6.65	Watership Down - 8.18
Rite of Passage - 7.47	Rocannon's World - 8.80
Double Star - 7.78	The Hobbit - 8.99

One very interesting phenomenon I observed was that the range grows larger as the evaluation rating grows smaller. In other words your evaluators agree better about which novels are very good than about which are not so good. Come to think of it, I suspect that the range would once again decrease as the ratings got to the very low numbers. It's probably that middle range from the 40's to the 70's which sparks the largest disagreement.

You know, the great problem with your giving us  $\frac{1}{2}$  the range instead of the true variance or standard deviation is that it only takes evaluator to cause an enormous range. In other words it is a biased statistic measure because it fails to weigh each evaluation which agree get no weight. It is only the wildly disagreeing stat which counts in your system. Unlike the variance, your system is not legitimate measure of agreement. ((If the problem can be rectified by showing the square root of the standard deviation, there's no problem.))

The name of the Wells novel is First Men in the Moon. The three most appalling aspects of the composite list are: 1) the poor showing of H.G. Wells's novels; 2) the absence of Earth Abides; 3) the absence of Bring the Jubilee.

Your comment at the bottom of page ten is very revealing as regards the problem of rating inflation. As I've said before, I think the evaluations in general have been very lenient. Even I have not been as strict as I should have been in the 60-80's area. It appears however that I value

a rating in the 50's and 60's etc. more highly than most other evaluators.

You'll remember that the only time I used the fill-in sheets was on the Van Vogt books, and I found that the F-1 numbers were consistently lower than my PPEN rating. This is probably because for me books have a gestalt effect beyond the categorizations available on the F-1 sheets.

Bratman's comment on NERVES is just incomprehensible to me.

I still don't buy Blenheim's opinion on Compton since I don't know of any bad Compton books. *(He has retracted that opinion.)*

I cringe everytime I see someone proclaiming with pride how they avoid the "classics", as Jakobic does on page 31. It take real mental gymnastics to categorize and actively avoid books as dissimilar as Shakespeare and TOM SAWYER, or any other bizarre pairings of "classics" that one could come up with, I can't help but think that such people would hold a different opinion of the "classics" if they ever gave them half a chance. Even within narrow categories one can often find something enjoyable while hating the category. For instance, I dislike most Victorian novels (mind, I do not consider Melville at all Victorian), yet I think a great deal of HARD TIMES, and also enjoyed TESS OF THE D'URBERVILLES, and I think Austen is excellent within her narrow limits.

I am much in agreement with the spirit of Franson's letter.

Brett Cox: I've read practically no Spinrad, but I thought his novella RIDING THE TORCH, which I read just recently, was outstanding.

I've read a lot of Cabell, but I did not bother rating his work because it is so hard to compare it to the other novels I've rated. Also it's hard to remember very precisely how I felt about them. I enjoyed JURGEN a great deal. I also enjoyed, in approximate order, HAMLET HAD AN UNCLE, THE FIRST GENTLEMEN OF AMERICA, THE CREAM OF THE BEST, FIGURES OF EARTH, THE KING WAS IN HIS COUNTING HOUSE. I found THE SILVER STALLION and THE HIGH PLACE to be very boring. All this was read when I was 14. I tried SMIRT, but gave up half way through because I couldn't understand it; I ought to give it another try as I was probably too young then.

Brian Earl Brown: I read LITTLE FUZZY with apprehension, because, like you, I expected it was going to be too cutesy. I was very pleasantly surprised to find that it is not overly cute. I liked it a lot because Piper had an excellent sense of, and ability to describe the manipulation of power (This ability is best displayed I think in THE COSMIC COMPUTER and SPACE VIKING). On the other hand, I didn't care for THE OTHER HUMAN RACE because it did seem like an overly crude exploitation of the elements in LITTLE FUZZY. The sequel seemed too much like a potboiler written to cash in on the popularity of the first novel.

As you know, D.G. Compton is my favorite contemporary SF author. Recently I finally got around to reading most of his novels which had been unread. The only one I have yet to read is THE QUALITY OF MERCY. In looking through old GG's I find that Don D'Amassa, Don Keller, and myself are the only ones who really like Compton. The three of us agree very closely on THE SILENT MULTITUDE, with Don and I at 87, and Keller at 84; and on THE MISSIONARIES, with D'Amassa at 85, and Keller at 82. A comparison of Don's ratings with mine is interesting:

Me	Don
----	-----

Synthajoy	- 93 - 68
The Unsleping Eye	- 92 - 77P
The Silent Multitude	- 87 - 87D
The Missionaries	- 84 - 85
Chronocules	- 82 - 82D
Farewell, Earth's Bliss	- 82 - 76
The Steel Crocodile	- 77 - 88



As can be seen, my two favorites are Don's least liked, and his favorite is my least liked. We agree on the three middle novels, and I think he undervalues F.E.B.

All of Compton's novels are difficult in some way, either through slow pacing or complex narrative structure. I found THE MISSIONARIES and THE SILENT MULTITUDE to be very slowly paced. SYNTHAJCY is told in a series of flashbacks; THE UNSLEEPING EYE alternates between 3rd. person narration focusing on the protagonist, and the 1st. person narration of a secondary character; and FAREWELL, EARTH'S BLISS is told in multiple shifting viewpoints, which are hard to follow at times.

It is my personal observation that THE SILENT MULTITUDE seems to be the most generally liked Compton novel in fandom. I've even heard people who don't like Compton say TSM was "OK." I think there is a definite reason for this. TSM has Compton's most exotic science-fictional gimmick: an organism that eats cement is destroying man's cities. The exotic always seems to appeal more to SF fans. Needless to say, none of Compton's other novels feature such exotic ideas. Like Wells, Compton prefers to take a single idea (of near-future plausibility) and explore it fully.

It is interesting to note the SYNTHAJCY-STEEL CROCODILE dichotomy in our ratings. These two novels do form a related pair. They are structurally and thematically very similar. Both feature women revolting against a dehumanizing technology. Both women are responsible in some way for their husbands' deaths. One can imagine that Abigail's fate at the end of SC is the same as Thea's in SYN. My love of SYN and disappointment for SC rests on the following points:

I felt the focus of SYN was on Thea revolting against an idea, whereas in SC the idea was so closely tied to politics and the power structure that the revolt seemed to be against the suppression of the power structure than against the idea itself. I find the latter a bit tiresome in comparison. Moreover, I felt the SC was too bogged down in its religious underpinning for the motivations of Abigail. In SC I was unconvinced of Matthew's acceptance of the Colindale, but possible I was misled because Abigail believed so strongly that Matthew would reject the Colindale. Also in SC the bit about Abigail's brother strains coincidence something terrible. SYN, on the other hand, has some of the most absorbing writing I've ever seen in SF. The insidious, oppressive atmosphere of the scenes between the flashbacks, which describe Thea's confinement in an asylum is brilliant, surpassing even CAMP CONCENTRATION. This superstructure erected around the main story allows the novel to be viewed ambiguously: is she mad? or are the people in the asylum driving her mad? It's a frightening evocation of brainwashing, or "re-education" as it's called today. The whole book is a tour-de-force of characterization; note especially the scene of her revulsion during the production of the sex-sensitape.

THE UNSLEEPING EYE is likewise brilliant. One of the two or three best SF novels of the 70's in my opinion. I'll probably discuss it at some length in the next TSL. FAREWELL, EARTH'S BLISS had the potential to be a classic, right up there in the 90's. It's hardnosed, un-romantic picture of the brutal life in a space colony of criminal exiles is invigorating for its freshness. It has much the same feeling as "The Cold Equations," or "What's it Like Out There," in its basic outlook. Unfortunately, it is seriously marred by some flaws and loose ends in its plot.

You'll note Gil, that my new additions to my rating list are : SYNTHAJCY, 93; THE UNSLEEPING EYE, 92; FAREWELL, EARTH'S BLISS, 82; and THE STEEL CROCODILE. 77.



Laurine White 5408 Leader Ave. Sacramento, CA 95841

So John Crowley's THE DEEP was a tour-de-force? I had no idea what the story was about, since I got lost among all the Red and Black names. I don't exactly worship at the altars of Science and Technology, but I'm no believer in the psuedoscience found in CHARIOTS OF THE GODS and the Bermuda Triangle books. Humankind developed its own civilizations, rather than learning everything from super-intelligent aliens. I do give credence to the phenomenon known as ghosts...

What Fred Jakobic wants is a book report, not a book review. To find out the story, he can read the plot synopsis on the cover or the dustjacket. A good book critic will include a brief synopsis and give his reaction to the book, and why he feels that way, with concrete examples. Fred is a hard rater. I wonder what he feels is worthy of an 85 or 95? I also wonder what he read so many Scorpio novels, when he rates them so low.

Stella Nemeth 61 Zornow Drive Rochester, NY 14623

3-9-78

Thank you for GUYING GYRE 9/10. I wondered what the Project would turn into once it really got going. I seemed like a good idea even if all you ended up with was a stack of file cards with the ratings on them. Your students could use them to help them discover the books that were fun or "worth reading."

What you are ending up with is even better than that. If I had been asked to list fandoms favorite 500 books in the order in which we, as a group, love I respect them, I couldn't have done it. I don't think any one of us could have. Together we have done just that, one book at a time.

I didn't see any surprises in the rankings; as I looked them over. I kept saying, "Yes, that book is fractionally better than this one is, taken in its own con text."

When I was working on the ratings I sent you I kept wondering if the thing could work without noting differences in difficulty as well as the ratings. It does work, as long as you rate each book in its own context.

Someone mentioned that your PFEN's added to a short description of the book would be an almost ideal devise for choosing a book. Those short descriptions exist. Lynne Moldom did a group (a couple of hundred I believe.) as a N3F project. If you contact N3F you should be able to get a copy of them as well as the new group that should be coming out soon. You would probably need permission to publish them right away. I've only seen a few of them but she has the ability to describe a book in two to five sentences and describe it accurately.

Gary Deindorfer 447 Bellevue Ave. Trenton, NJ 08618

2-9-78

Have you read Phil Dick's A SCANNER DARKLY? Fascinating, but it seems to me it could just as well have been set back in the 60's as in the 90's. Maybe not -- putting it in the 90's enabled Dick to juxtapose the autobiographical head stories with his own strange inventions such as the scramble suit.

Speaking of Sturgeon, have you ever read THE DREAMING JEWELS? This is one of the most mysterious and beautiful novels I have ever read. He captures that feeling about the circus world and circus people that can't really be put into words. I must be a world within a world, sort of like fandom, but maybe even more so. Sturgeon worked as an acrobat in a circus when he was younger, I believe. Whatever, he manages to convey the subtle vibrations of the circus world in this book.

Y'know, it seems to me that Strugeon has been somewhat forgotten by the younger generation of sf readers. I really do think he is one of the

great mind magicians of our time -- kind of a buddha, really -- and I really do think that people of a hundred years from now will regard him as one of the major writers of the 20th. I wish they would put out a big thick 600 page book of his stories and novelets and novellas, like they did for Heinlein's Future History series. Of course, numerous story collections of Sturgeon are in print, but somehow collecting them all-together with a long in depth preface would, I believe, convey the full force of Sturgeon's genius and incredible compassion and empathy to the younger generation of readers. Someday I'd like to do a lot of research and attempt to show how and why I feel Sturgeon is one of the truest and deepest precursors of writers like Disch, Aldiss, Dick, Cordwainer Smith and some others -- the writers who write from the inside out, from the inner world to the outer world, not from externals inward like most of the older sf writers, even the good ones. somethin like dat.

Eric Mayer 125 Congress Brooklyn, NY 11207

Easter

I'm delighted to see the 1st returns from The Project. It's quite useful. Say one wants to familiarize himself with Heinlein's juveniles or try-out a new author. There's always the chance you might pick up an uncharacteristically bad effort - a quick look at The Project diminishes that possibility - rather like soliciting 20 + opinions would.

I think The Project is even more valuable for teaching purposes. By using students' actual opinions as a guide, teachers can pick out books of maximum interest. Has such a survey been tried before? It might be worth a write-up in an appropriate publication.

George J. Laskowski Jr. 26081 Marlene Roseville, Michigan 48066 4-23-76

I like the zine, GUYING GYRE. It's fantastic. There's so much in it that it is impossible to absorb in one sitting or reading. Now I have more ideas to present to the school board when I try to get the Science Fiction class in my school next year. If I fail again, I'll try again, but I won't give up. Part of the trouble was that no one told me the correct way to go about getting a new course started. I was shifted from principal to vice-principal to the head of the English Department, back to the principal to ... I finally pinned down the head of the English department: I have to present a course outline including the books to be read, and approximately how much writing would be done. So I will have that ready, probably by fall.

This past month I also attended a Teacher's Conference in SF, conducted by Marshall Tymn at Eastern Michigan University (see my con report on Conclave), and I am also in touch with Roger Schlobin, who teaches an SF course at Purdue University. All of this should help my case.

To find 10 short stories to list as favorites would be very difficult. I would have to think long and hard about it. However, here are a few I would choose immediately:

"Enchanted Village" by A.E. van Vogt  
"The Last Question" by Isaac Asimov  
"A Rose for Ecclesiastes" by Roger Zelany  
"The Cold Equations" by Tom Godwin  
"The Winner" by Westlake  
"A Death in the Family" by Clifford Simak  
"The Bard" by Isaac Asimov

Those are all I can think of, off-hand, that have made deep impressions on me. The biggest problem would be finding an anthology which would have at least half of them.

Michael Carlson 3585 Lorne Ave. #7 Montraal Quebec H2X 2A4

Thanks for GG 5/6, which prove conclusively that there is nothing most fans like better than cataloging and making lists and rating things. Perhaps we should all have been librarians. Or at least members of the Record Review Board on American Bandstand.

Having taught reading at a number of colleges and secondary schools, I know how important it is to merely start some people reading...but I cannot forget what Father Berrigan told my boss when he was conducting his training program at Danbury St. Prison, anyway, Berrigan told him, "It's not how you read, it's what you read!"

And in the end I'm forced to agree -- because at a certain level you might as well not be reading at all.

So it puts me in a position like Gorra's, though there's no problem in ratings--there is a spearate process working inside and outside the genre, though eventually all books are judged by the same standards, and I think writers like Disch, LeGuin, and Delany are as good as most of the better mainstream writers. And there are sf people like Dick whose work we need, even if he writer not as well.

I refuse to make my own list, however. My year end lists are enough.

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Michael A. Banks P.O. Box 312 Milford, Ohio 45150

2-28-78

You're right in your estimation that most SF courses are being conducted/taught from the standpoint that SF is Literature. I lecture on SF quite a bit at local high schools and universities, and, for the most part, the instructors for the courses are people from the English department. (The course at the University of Cincinnati is team-taught by the head of the History Department and a biology professor, though; that particular course emphasizes the effects of literature in general and SF in particular on the real world, and studies the "Science in Science Fiction".) Furthur, most of these instructors have less than a nodding acquaintance with SF; i.e., they've read or heard of "Stranger In A Strange Land", and beyond that know Wells and Verne. I'm attempting to do something to remedy that situation, however. Right now I'm in the middle of putting together a book for Silver Burdett Co. which will serve as "guidance material" for those teaching SF. One tack I'm taking with the book is to have the teachers get the students really involved with SF (besides reading and discussing it) by way of creative problem solving and extrapolative exercises, structured, along with the text, to create a hopefully "science-fictional" viewpoint amongst the erstwhile students. (The book, incidentally, will be published in December of this year, or thereabouts, and will be marketed mainly to high schools --if this goes well, I'll be doing a revised version for the college market.) That's just one approach, of course; as you say, there are unlimited possibilities.

I could go on with the topic -- I could write a book, as a matter of fact -- but we'll leave it at that this time around.

Your comment about looking at why "Dhalgren" is such a controversial book . . . hmmm. I may be lining myself up for potshots, but I'd like to give you some of my observations on the book. First, the only people I know of to whom the book appeals to are those who make a practice of disliking anything popular, and "enjoying utter crud for the sake of appearing to have some extra level of awareness, or whatever. (I'm sure you know the type.) I don't really see the quality in the book, if it is there at all; I think Delany lucked out in coming up with something so radically different that it 1) caught attention; 2) made many people feel that there simply had to have some tremendous message; 3) appealed to those types mentioned above. Agreed/Disagreed? Consider the implications in your answer to this question: Would "Dhalgren" have been published if



Delany hadn't had ten years or so behind him as a published author? My answer is NO! Sometimes I think the reason why books such as "Dhalgren", and the works of people like John Updike, are published is the fact that the author is established, in one way or another, and -- either through "contacts" (a much-maligned concept) or the fact that the author is established -- is thereby better able to take a chance on his or her work.

Laurie D.J. Mann 5501 Elmer St. #3 Pgh, Pa 15232

3-3-78

My perennial gripe (I guess I mentioned this last time, too) is that your artwork isn't very good; the covers are particularly bad. I only found one sketch good and amusing: The one which reads "i have no reason to smile...my dimples just fell out." My only other gripe was that you didn't have a complete WAHF action anywhere. I have no way of knowing if the PPENs Tom Morley, Jim and I did ever get to you. ((see note #1))

What do you mean "What is WATERSHIP DOWN anyway?"? It was a very popular Richard Adams book, which, I believe, came out in 1974. I had to read it my freshman year in an SF class and hated every (it seemed like 2000+) page of it. WD is an awful story about rabbits. It is fantasy. ((oh)) If I rated it above a fifty on my PPEN, I plead temporary loss of memory.

I've read about 2/3rds of the books that scored over an 80, and do agree with most of the ratings. I was really pleased to see THE DISPOSSESSED score so high. Most fans I've talked with do not really like the book that much. I enjoyed it very much, and can never decide whether it or LEFT HAND OF DARKNESS is my favorite Le Guin book.

The most amazing thing about your students' PPENs is that three Gor books scored above an 85. What do you have, a class of male chauvanists and female masochists? Also, did 85 people really read HELL'S GATE (Koontz) or is that a typo. ((No, It's one of my favorite "give out" books.))

A few comments on Buzz Dixon's review of Star Wars. Sure, the Italians and Japanese have been making space war movies for years. They were dreck with a bad script, inept plotting, horrible special effects, poor acting and worst dubbing. STAR WARS, on the other hand, has a good script, excellent plotting, superlative special effects, competent acting and ok subtitles. That's what has helped to make SW so remarkable; not that it hadn't been done before, but because it had finally been done right. Nine and a half million dollars is not a terribly unreasonable sum to give a director with a previous success. How much was spent on CLOSE ENCOUNTERS, twenty million? While some of CE's special effects were even more spectacular than SW's I think that, for the money spent, SW was a much better buy than CE. Even if CE does outgross SW in the end. But I do doubt that. The big lizard was not a dinosaur - I don't even think that was Lucas' intent. (By the way, I only saw it in two shots: One with an Imperial Stormtrooper on one just after they discover the craft R2D2 and C-3PO crashed to Tatooine in, and the second one next to the cantina) The creature wasn't sure more than five feet at its shoulder, and maybe nine feet long. Impressive, yes, but it shouldn't sound like a huge brontosaurus. According to most press release, Luke is 20, although the age sometimes varies, depending on what you read. No! Though there are mostly Caucasians running about, several blacks are in evidence at Mos Eisley. Furthermore, we don't know what races the Imperial Stormtroopers are as we never see them without their helmets. Despite all my complaints, I basically agree with Buzz Dixon's main thrust of the article - that SW is a film experience, and the class space opera movie in existence today.

Fred Jakobiec: Harlan Ellison wrote more than one novel. There was DOOMSMAN which was also an Ace Double, and, of course, SPIDER KISS (originally ROCKABILLY) a book about an early rock singer from the South who had a manager named "the Colonel" and had a frontpiece which read "This is not

a book about Elvis Presley." I think there may be several other Ellison novels about, in the form of his "inner city" escapades.

D Gary Grady: Even though I've ranted and raved about the ridiculousness of the Hugos, I'm an award freak, so I always vote for them and await their announcements. For the most part, they do seem to give credit to those works and people who do deserve it. The idea of a rating system Hugo, rather than the type of balloting we do today, does sound feasible (although, admittedly, I've never had anything to do with the logistics behind tabulating Hugo ballots) and might even be fairer than the current system. Over the past few years, some members of each committee seem to have had access to computer facilities. Should future concons be so fortunate, perhaps the rating system would even be as easy to figure out as the Australian ballots are. Of course, for this suggestion to even see a glimmer of hope, it would have to be formally presented at the next Worldcon business meeting, and even then I don't think it could be officially even voted on until the following year.\*\*\* Wouldn't Barbara Cartland be considered a mainstream best-seller category all by herself? If so, then the sharecropper's daughter couldn't be seduced until after she married Mr. Fonzarelli. Would be revealed that her family really weren't sharecroppers at all, but had lost their fortune in the Depression, and became rich again after WWII when oil was discovered on their property.

Marice Harter: I didn't find Ellison's DANGEROUS VISIONS books to be particularly dangerous. I read them just before my senior year in high school and was fascinated by them. Now that I've read more sf, I can see that the ideas weren't always as new or original as the authors claimed. \*\*\* DHALGREN was not particularly dangerous either. Boring, yes! (I waded through about the first two hundred pages before giving up) But not dangerous or even controversial. \*\*\* STAR TREK made relatively few "daring comments" on what was going on in society in the Sixties. Occassionally, it tried to desperately, particularly on the race issue. While it was often good escapist fun, it was rarely good social commentary.

Ahh, Gil- I still prefer sf short stories to novels, however 99.9% of all the sf short stories (novellas, novelletes) that came out in the last year were totally unreadable. I just sent in my Hugo ballot, and it reads more like some-thing that I would send in to the FAAN awards. I could only nominate one novel (GATEWAY) and three short stories ("THE SCREWTLY SOLUTION") by Raccoona Sheldon. (Alice Sheldon's other pen name), "JEFFTY IS FIVE" and "WORKING WITH THE LITTLE PEOPLE," both by Ellison). Just about every time I sat down to read an ANALOG, GALAXY, or F+SF last year, I'd start to read a story and would immediately loose interest. Though I do prefer short stories, I think I've actually read more sf novels in the past year (chipping away at my huge backlog) than shorter works.

A couple more PPENs for you: GATEWAY (Pohl) 89 DYING INSIDE (Silverberg) 91 NIGHTFALL (Silverberg) 75 QUEST OF THREE WORLDS (C.Smith) 81 THE NONEXISTENT KNIGHT (Calvino) 88 THE CLOVEN VISCOUNT (Calvino) 68 MICHEALMAS (Budrys) 60 THE SHINING (King) 60 STAR SMASHERS OF THE GALAXY RANGERS (Harrison) 61 THE STAINLESS STEEL RAT (Harrison) 78 ON THE BEACH (Shute) 53 BRING THE JUBILEE (Moore) 81 THE THING SORCERERS (Gerrold & Niven) 83.

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Martin Morse Wooster 2108 Seminary Road Silver Spring, MA 20910 2-20-78

Dickson, DANGER--HUMAN! (The Book of Gordon Dickson)--77

Dann, STARHIKER--37

Pohl and Williamson, STARCHILD--28

Pohl and Williamson, ROGUE STAR--22

Bloch, THE BEST OF ROBERT BLOCH--69

BONUS! A LOC FROM VERT SAYS IN.

I did short reviews of the two Pohl and Williamson books for Don Miller, and ended one review by calling the book THE PITS and the second (ROGUE STAR) beneath the pits. Easily the two worst novels by major authors in the field I've ever read.

And I know you don't index collections as of yet, but I thought they would be useful when you finally do get around to them.

On to VERT 4. Although Glicksohn complains in the current TITLE that only three people would be interested in it, he was wrong. I like VERT very much--certainly one of the most open and engaging fanzines around. ((I think he meant because it was about him.))

The discussion about finding friends through fandom was interesting.

I doubt that Gary Farber's use of fanzines to find people he likes would work with everyone--the images presented through print are not the same as images gathered at cons. I somehow have a reputation in Washington, for example, as being "the world's tallest three-year old"; but when I entered the apa I belong to, one of the members said that because I use a somewhat formal style in reviewing and sign the reviews (and virtually everything else) with all of my names, that I was a fifty-five year old clergyman with a spinster sister and seven cats! I would hope that I was somewhere between those two extremes; but the first impression was that of Martin-Wooster-in-person and the second was Martin-Morse-Wooster-through-his-writing.

But Gary is right about making acquaintances instead of friends at cons. This is because cons (at least around Washington) are held far enough apart that one can remember who one met at the last con, but not remember them very well. As an example, I can vividly remember being cruelly snubbed by Patrick Hayden in April and having an hour-and-a-half talk with him in October. So it goes...

How many people do I "know" through fandom? I can't answer that, unless someone is willing to define the term for me. I can say that fandom has provided me with a good deal of fine reading, many good times some great times, and introduced me to many geniuses I would never have known had I stayed in mundania. What more needs to be said? (Besides, if I keep this up, it'll sound more and more like an obituary...)

Schakarllah, Chick 20 N. Main St. Newmarket, NH 03857

My all-time favorite SF novels? My favorite two are easy to pick. FLOWERS FOR ALGERNON by Daniel Keyes and DOUBLE STAR by Robert A. Heinlein. These two are examples of why I love SF. After that it gets hard to pick just three. I have so many I enjoyed. I guess BRAINWAVE by Poul Anderson and SLAN by A. E. Van Vogt. I suppose number 5 could be RINGWORLD by Larry Nimen. (But not my favorite stories by him, that is his short story "...Not Long Before The End!")

But I might have also picked THE MARTIAN CHRONICLES by Ray Bradbury, MORE THAN HUMAN by Theodore Sturgeon, MARCOSCOPE by Piers Anthony, EARTH ABIDES by George Stewart, THE WAR OF THE WORLDS by H. G. Wells, THE COMPUTER CONNECTION by Alfred Bester, Most stories by Heinlein, and others.

I also have a great fondness for series like John Carter of Mars, Lenmans, Skylark, Fu Manchu, Phanton, Doc Savage and the like.

I wonder what your picks would be or other peoples. Is this for a poll or just your curiosity? If it is for a poll I would very much to see the results, and hope you do one for short stories, too. ((Half and half, chick, half and half.))

I like your review of DHALGREN very much. Sounds like a very interesting book; I will read it when I get the chance.



Jan Howard Finder P.O. Box 428 Latham, NY 12110

You are a fiend; I'm still not even unpacked and you want me to loc your zines. I did glance thru GG5/6. The mind boggles at the amount of work both you and the contributors have put into the PROJECT. Don D'Am-massa is something else. Hell, I have trouble just reading the zines that I want to read, let alone all of them. If I gave up on putting out a zine, I could do better, but that is all the fun and misery. Besides I can't even read all the zines I get. Can you read Turkish? There are now 2 turkish zines. (NOT YET)

Oh yes, I have found some fen out here in Manhattan,...KS. To celebrate we are organizing a con: TOTOCON! 26-7 Mar 77, Come on out. Maybe I can get you, Bev Friend and Jim Gunn on a pannel on the teaching of SF. Interested? (Sure, but ...)

Hmmm, school is starting, I must check with the Manhattan & Juntion City High Schools and see if they are teaching SF. If so I shall get their teachers to drop you a line. I'll try and make you famous. Have you ever thought of applying for a grant to teach the teachers in the Service dependents schools over in Europe how to use SF and incorporate it in your PROJECT? That would be a tough way to see Europe. SF is taught in the dependent schools. The teachers who do teach it usually don't know very much about it and use 50 year old texts. Let's see \$50,000 should cover travel and expenses.

Ira Thornhill 1900 Perdido Street, Apt.B97 New Orleans, LA 70112 (OLD)

Gil:

About my PPENs: I worked thru the entire list twice--made a few changes the second time obviously but left it more-or-less the same as I tend to feel first impressions or best except in those cases where I felt I'd misused the scale. I've also added two or three books. And will be sending several more (in fact, that's my first project as soon as a few spare days become available to go thru my shelves--and should be aided by the fact that I'm in the process of adding still more shelves.) You'll also notice that I tended to block-vote some things that I read many years ago (before I quit reading SF the first time) such as Burroughs. In doing so I tried to score the book--and not the thrill that a ten year old got out of discovering those books in a neighbor's storage room. If I could have scored (PPENed) PRINCESS OF MARS the first time I read it I'd have given it two or three million at least. Naturally. You'll also notice that I'm a P.K. Dick freak and enjoy the "New" Heinlein at least as much as the old. And I noticed that the Highest PPENs went to those books I'm always having to replace because they wear out from being often borrowed (more properly, forced upon friends) Consider adding a few of the better known anthologies (or even individual short stories) to the list. I can't imagine trying to teach a class in SF without using bits & pieces of DV or ADV; Sf Hall of Fame; and a few other such. It might also be possible to add several histories and books of "criticism" to the lists. Everybody should read The Immortal Storm and at least some of The Issue at Hand--and possibly others. ((One step at a time, Ira; one step at a time.))

Rod Snyder 3600 Ripple Creek Austin, TX 78746

I'm afraid I can't be a whole gob of help to your Project, since I don't read much sf. The sf novels I've read in the past year can be summed as follows, to give some indication, and I've tacked ratings on just to make their mention worthwhile here:

Dick--THREE STIGMATA! 96  
Farmer--VENUS...HALF-SHELL: 75

Niven--RINGWORLD: 93  
Vonnegut--BKFST OF CHAMPION: 37

I read mostly in the mainstream when I do read books, but like Jackie Frank's situation, that isn't often. Fandom takes up a lot of that precious free time of mine, though I keep promising that will change Real Soon Now.

Not that I'm a statistics buff, but I enjoy scanning the numbers ratings inside GG. I know that they're as linear as one can get when evaluating a book, but they do tell, however generally, which classics and never releases we dilettantes of the sf reading field can count on for a decent time. Vets and academes may scorn your methods, Gil, but if the encouragement of a mere dabbler counts for anything: Keep going! I know it sounds as if I have interpreted the Project as a ratings game to benefit fens like me rather than your students. But I know it has been originally for both, and as long as I am getting something out of GG I might as well sound a bit grateful; you're at least doing an earnest, competent job of forwarding the progress of any GG reader who has not read extensively in sf but wants to and enjoy himself at it.

Just last week my mother, not an sf fan, brought home a Norton book she'd picked up somewhere for me on a whim. Which might have been a mistake, except that I am fascinated now by the prospect of trying out my first Andre Norton title after going through Ellison, Dick and a little Le Guin and Brunner, authors like that. Chase down those prime cuts with a bit of shortcake. I don't know it if can be called a backward slide or not, but I know it is not the normal type of evolution for an sf reader. I've had a weird time of it as an sf reader anyhow. Started out with Heinlein.

Roger Schlobin 802 N. Calumet Rd. Chesternut, IN 46304

First of all, the book lists by themselves are valuable without the ratings. The only other effort I know of where so many titles can be found is JoAnn Burger's complete yearly listings. For example, Don D'Amassa had the Alan Garner titles I'd forgotten. Your composite listings in 5/6 continued are the same excellent bag. This brings me to my first suggestion. Isn't it time for something more of a composite list? My initial reaction was to separate GG, and add my own evaluations and send them to you. Is it possible perhaps to do this and receive whole, replacement GG's in return? I'm sure many people like myself (buried in business) would find this a great way to answer. *(I would like to see some...)*

Two other major issues seem to run through GG: teaching SF/F freedom verses discipline, and the bias of the ratings.

The major problem in many of the negative reactions to SF/F courses is, I think, two fold. First, many teachers get stuck with it and do not have the knowledge or the self possession to allow students freedom. At various cons, I've advocated HS teachers doing courses on a thematic basis. I figure this way they can read enough quickly to feel comfortable withing a certain area (ie robots) to let their students roam a bit. Secondly, there is the problems of the students themselves. There are those that haven't read any SF/F, those that have read a lot, and those who think they've read a lot. All need some direction toward growth: humility: and the well reads, the missing pieces and often historical & thematic awareness. (There is also the attitude expressed in Mike Gorra's letter: I don't know anything, but I know what I need to know.) My solution to this all is to teach a structured course -- in a sense. I use the University of KA films to introduce the historical context,

and I refer back to it as I talk about antcedents & context. I introduce themes and list them on handouts - again I integrate them as we talk about individual works. I try to give some indication of fans and zines - again in regard to the particular works. I used 22 handouts: Locus poll, secondary & primary bibliographies, time line of SF/F, Hugo winners, definitions of SF/F, etc. OK, that might take care of the neos and know-it-alls, but what of the well-read? Simple, I use papers, not exams. All the papers must do is cover the material we've read; they can be on anything within that framework. The well-read individual can substitute work by whatever author we're reading, or, if necessary, a work by an author with a similar type of work. I find this leads me to new things, enriches the discussion, and gets me excellent original papers (I do ask that they touch base with me; this is a buffer for the know-it-all.) The results are great. Everyone contributes to everyone else's knowledge. In fact, my classes usually finish a bit early and we spend remaining class meetings on the words of an author. Everyone reads a short story or novel they haven't read before and everyone throws their bit in with me playing traffic cop. *(I wish it could work like that in high school...)*

Andrew Sigel 424 Greenleaf St. Evanston, IL 60202

The future is now the most intriguing feature of GG. I think the focus will have to be narrowed down quite a bit in the coming months, or it will become a monster, taking up all your time until you are forced to abandon all your unimportant activities like teaching, eating, breathing... get the picture? I have been having much fun and excitement going over various ideas for SOTH and have made some changes I think are for the better, and reading GG I have come up with some I think may work. It's your decision.

Assume GG will continue as a quarterly (lets say March, June, Sept. and Dec. as an example). I think a good idea would be for each issue to have a special focus. The March issue could have a section on sf in the previous year. This would be welcome as it would give people an idea of what is new and good, and help assure that people will have read enough to nominate and vote well on the Hugos. The June issue could have a section listing all books with an 80 (85?) or over rating having at least 10 ratings behind it. The Sept. issue could be your school issue recapping students of the previous school year. This is a crucial issue as it reminds everyone if the initial reason for the project, and because GG #4 was so good. And the Dec. issue should have a summary of the categories with all the books that belong in each one (the second part of the Project). Each issue (except for the Sept. issue) would have the regular section where people would send in their ratings of books. Hopefully this would drop off eventually as everyone sent in their big first list, and would soon include only the 4 or 5 read recently. It may not, and to save yourself I would recommend you cut out some of the commentary if you can possibly bring yourself to do so. I hope I haven't waxed overly prolific on my ideas; I seem to like organization and end up preaching this like to others. *(I would need help. When would you be arriving?)*

Brief remarks here in this paragraph, basically things off the top of my head. Don't combine the ratings by fandom with the ratings from your class. It wouldn't work. The series by C.S. Lewis is the Narnia series, not the Nardia series, as stated in GG #4. And the question that has been puzzling me the longest: Why, when you are stating a personal preference number, are you not allowed to end it in a 0, a 1, or a 9? Is this merely capriciousness on your part or is there an allegedly good reason for this strange policy? I am sure we are all eagerly awaiting your response on this. *(There is a reason. Someday we discuss it...)*



Patricia O'Donnell--Ballon  
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March 9, 1978

Editor of GUYING GYRE:

I have just had the pleasure of reading one of your publications in a SF class at the University of Pittsburgh, PA. It is the best fan-zine I have seen. If it is possible may I subscribe? Please send any info that you can. You have many fans here in the east. (Also many fans at Pitt.)

Again may I say congratulations on a great publication.

PPENs From Pauline Palmer:

- 77 Niven/Pournelle--MOTE IN GOD'S EYE
- 76 Kurtz, K.--Vol. 1 THE CHRONICLES OF THE DERYNI
- 57 Bradley--HUNTERS OF THE RED MOON
- 67 Moorcock--AN ALIEN HEAT
- 73 Biggle, Jr.--THIS DARKENING UNIVERSE
- 76 Moorcock--THE HOLLOW LANDS
- 65 Clark--RENDEZVOUS WITH RAMA
- 87 Kurtz--Vol.III THE CHRONICLES OF THE DERYNI
- 84 Kurtz--Vol.II: THE CHRONICLES OF THE DERYNI
- 85 Zelaney--DOORWAYS IN THE SAND

Stanford Burns P.O. Box 1381 Glendale, CA 91209

2-24-78

Thanks for sending GUYING GYRE 9/10. I'm beginning to get annoyed, however, that you aren't using any of my LoCs. Not even a WAHF! FOR SHAME!!!!!! But Gil, you have got to do something about your layout. (DONE) Presenting all that information without visual breaks is a bit too much. Have you thought of doing your zine in two columns the way Glycer does PRE? Page after page of text is visually boring. ((They get better when/if you read them.)) Have you thought of asking Rotsler of some of the other local artists for some illos? Yours all seem so alike they run together in my memory. The standard deviation tells you something, but not really enough. Have you run any correlation co-efficients in relation to the answer's age, sex, job, etc.? You've presented a lot of raw data, but no conclusions. What, for example, is the correlation between reading space opera and the answer's frequency of sleeping with dead horses? Ya gotta keep those things in mind.....

Perry Peckham 1741 P St. N.W., Washington D.C. 20036 7/24/77

Another reason I wrote was to throw in some more PPEN's. I'd like to comment on the novels, something I couldn't do obviously with the first list I sent, it being numbered in the hundreds.

L'Engle-A WRINKLE IN TIME: 95-I believe this to be the best childrens book ever, unless the HOBBIT can be considered a childrens book, and this might even be better than Tolkein's work. It deals with the classic themes of love and greed elegantly without an over loading of sentimentality.

Phil Dick-SLANS OF THE ALPHANE MOON: 78-This book starts off great, the idea of a mental institute earth colony that had been abandoned for a few years forming into a clan system depending on your particular mental illness is brilliant. Not to mention the great idea of having your hero being a slime mold who dies in the middle of the plot but proceeds to spore back to life. Unfortunately, the novel degenerates into little isolated gun and word battles.

Lester Del Rey-ELEVENTH COMMANDMENT: 76-This more or less tradesman's novel about an overpopulated earth is saved by a very surprising ending.

Cordwainer Smith-NOSTRILLA: 84-Smith has an incredible imagination. But this great work of his lacks both believable character development or emotions with any depth attached to them.

Phil Dick and Ray Nelson-THE GANYMEDE TAKEOVER: 78-Another Dick novel that could have been better. In this story, everyone who survives goes through many interesting personal changes, but the novel is too short, many of the emotions are too stereotyped, and so many of the events are such downers (like one of the hero's being kicked to death accidentally), to carry through everything the author seems to promise us at the beginning.

Swann-TOURNAMENT OF TOSSES: 78-Nicely written piece of medieval fantasy. The characters in this story are much more realistic than most modern fiction about this era. Unfortunately, this book, which could have been rated much higher, is just too short to be considered a novel.

Moorcock-THE SWORD OF THE DAWN: 77-One of the Runestaff series, this being the third. The first two-thirds of this novel were by far the best writing for the series I have seen yet. However, an over contrived ending brought this book down to only a "good" rating.

Moorcock-THE SAILOR ON THE SEAS OF FATE: 82-I'm usually not that impressed with S and S, but this new Elric novel, placed second chronologically in the series, is well written and interesting. The idea of having a weak, albino superman is something that Moorcock should be congratulated on.

Before I leave you in this letter I, with my incredible talent of nosing in on other people's business, have another idea for GG. A lot of reader's I'm sure are left a little cold by seeing a novel rated by just a number. Perhaps, while performing a rating service, you can begin to invoke discussion about certain novels, perhaps preferably books that don't get much coverage. This could work by asking in each issue, short comments, a paragraph or two, about each

of a small list of sf works. For this issue coming up, you could ask friends and frequent contributors to discuss a couple of books to show how it is supposed to be done. I think it would be most interesting and helpful to see five or ten comments about lesser known works such as Coney's and Geston's novels.

Jim Goldfrank, 11859 St. Trinian's Court, Reston, Virginia 22091  
8/4/77

At the time your card arrived, I had just finished the PHOS which I enjoyed as always, but found my self enjoying the GG alot more. Fantastic lot of information/intelligent comment. Made me want to participate a bit and thus the page of current reading. The fill-ins do take a while. As you remarked, the answers come awfully close to plain old guess figures.

I note relatively little fantasy gets rated in with the SF, except perhaps for DeCamp/Tolkien. Good fantasy like good sf deals with ideas.

Some discussion in GG about how schools turn students OFF reading with traditional approach. I remember reading stuff which I had previously read and enjoyed, and then hating it in class. Analyze always analyze. That doesn't make for kids who will grow up as readers because they enjoy it. I much prefer your approach. People on occasion have remarked "I really OUGHT to read this, or that" to which I reply "You'll sit there hating the book you ought to read, and feel guilty if you can't stand it and put it down. If you enjoy (key to the whole thing) it -- that's where it's at -- information and enrichment of experience are a frosting on the cake. And some times you have the feeling that you'll like it but that it will take effort -- and you make the effort and enjoy it." (I was amazed to find "Lorna Doone" not a sappy romance in archaic style but a darned good heroic adventure -- it was worth that extra effort.)

1977 Reading for the PROJECT. Omits anthologies, books I couldn't remember.

Non-fiction. Some of your more serious students might like to read some of the good non-fiction being generated about the field. Personal preference ratings.

Lovecraft - A LOOK BEHIND THE CTHULHU MYTHOS - Carter - 85  
LITERARY SWORDSMEN AND SORCERORS - DeCamp - 90  
Barsroom - Edgar Tice Rurroughs Martian Vision - Lupoff - 90

It can be just as much fun to read good criticism/biography as fiction.

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FICTION - All fill-in ratings

What/By/ration/comment

Note: Really good books are consistently high thru the categories.

Bummers are consistently low. Average books get mixed ratings.



Or is that stating the obvious?

BUNDUKI/ Edson/ 45

WITLING/ Vinge/ 73/ One of the best discussions of the physical im-  
plications of teleportation ever

REAVERS OF SKAITH/ Brackett/ 57/ Does a world of a dying sun re-  
present the author's old age?

MASKE:THAERY/ Vance/ 79/ One of our best stylists

2ND WAR OF WORLDS/ G.H. Smith/ 61

LAND OF TERROR/ Burroughs/ 55/ Probably the weakest of the Pell-  
ucidar Books

GREAT STONE OF SARDIS/ Stockton/ 20/ a period piece circa 1880 not  
worth reviving

MINDBRIDGE/ Haldeman/ 58

STAR COURIER/ Chandler/ 64

SPELL SWORD/ Bradley/ 69/ a weak piece in the series. Series as a  
whole gets more like a P.P. of 85

TALES OF 3 HEMISPHERES/ Dunsany/ 88/ Stylistically still unbeat-  
able. And the Tim Kirk illos!!!

DARK CRUSADE/ Wagner/ 78/ extremely powerful writing

SWORD OF SHANNARA/ Brooks/ 65/ good writing despite a serious need  
of editing and a weak beginning. Suf-  
fered because of resemblance to LOTR  
and inevitable comparison.

FURY/ Küttner/ 95/ An all time classic for color and adventure  
despite the science being out of date. Remarkable  
exploration of the psychology of and immortal.

MIDNIGHT AT THE WELL OF SOULS/ Chalker/ 95/ The most impressive book  
of the year for entertain-  
ment as well as food for thought.  
High personal recommendation

BRIDGE OF ASHES/ Zelazny/ 67

GATEWAY/ Pohl/ 73/ High on characterization and setting.

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Don't know if I've mentioned for your students Conklin's BEST OF  
SCIENCE FICTION and Healy and McComas Adventures in Time and Space.  
The first really serious sf anthologies, these had the creme de la  
creme to pick from, because no one had picked over the material be-  
fore. These are still the two all time great anthologies.

Change of subject. Does your school have a computer course? If so,  
I'd bet some of your sf reading students are in it and would be  
willing to do a bit of programming. What can you do with such mach-  
ines? Establish a bank of info -- data base -- that can be added  
to or corrected, from which reports can be run. Retrieval, sel-  
ection from the data base by author, or subject, or anything else  
that can be coded. Here a code is taken as being a condensed des-  
cription. It might be all books rated by Joe Blow. Computers also  
SORT of place info in a useful sequence. Author and title might be  
a sequence, or author and rating, or average rating regardless of  
author. The point is that THE PROJECT is getting big enuf that auto-  
mation might be a help.---

If a computer is not available, today's little hand held calcul-  
ators have more computational power than my first computer in the  
late '50's. They come in special purpose models including such th-  
ings as means and standard deviations. and at quite reasonable

price too.

More literature discussion. Reading the ratings makes me think how much I haven't read. There are the books I read, maybe one a week for the past 30 years. Then there are the books I buy because once they disappear off the stands they're gone. I have a vast selection of these, that I never got to. The ratings are good when digging into the archives. Then there is a practically infinite number beyond that that may seem to lack quality, or not be too my taste, or maybe I was just broke at the time, that I never bought. The field is just getting too vast to keep up with.

Buzz Dixon, 111-B Meyer Ave. NBU-51-0 St. Huachuca, Ariz. 85613

I just finished reading THE DARK DESIGN by Philip Jose Farmer, volume IIIa of the Riverworld series (originally meant to be a trilogy but things seem to have gotten out of hand). The Riverworld is one of the most metaphysically incredible ideas ever concocted in science fiction and -- as good as Farmer is -- it's running away from him. I'm looking forward to volume IIIb (completed and undergoing final drafting) since Nothing Is As It Seems on the Riverworld. Phil may have surprises for us yet!

Have you been watching MAN FROM ATLANTIS? Their more recent shows have had a delicious tongue in cheek air about them -- nothing ridiculous but still pretty funny. Victor Buno Walks off with the show everytime he appears as Mr. Schubert. At last count, however, MAN FROM ATLANTIS is doing poorly -- even LOGAN'S RUN (bleah!) is beating it.



Harry J.N. Andruschak 6933 N. Rosemead, #31 San Gabriel, CA 91775

Received Guying Gyre and am impressed. The project seems a worthy item, and I really ought to contribute. But I don't feel my evaluations would be reliable. I tend to let externals influence.

Take Man Plus, by Pohl. It is said to be a good book. I found it dull and silly in some parts...that castration and reaction to it. But, how much of my apathy is because I'm sitting here at JPL working on the Viking Mission, seeing the real Mars everyday. Comparing reality to Pohl's book ruins it for me.

Then there is a problem that seems more and more prevalent these days. The excellent book with a rotten ending. The Inverted World by Priest comes first to mind. After 4 sections of beautifully handled plot, we get such a phoney "resolution" that I'm surprised it got published.

Or how to evaluate The Night Land? Grand ideas, plot, concept..... and the most god-awful style imaginable, if only Fritz Leiber would re-write it, it would be more popular.

Actually, now that I think of it, Michael Moorcock would be better than Leiber for the re-write.

Then again, my mood may affect my evaluation. I've just totaled my car and feel depressed. So if I read Dying Inside, I'll give it a 45 this time around. When I first read it I would have given it 80. Which is correct?

And my tastes are low. I was reading SF almost as soon as I could reach a book. I read planet stories from age 7 onwards. Now at age 32, I still prefer novels of color and action. Not as an exclusive diet, mind you, but as part of a balanced reading program.

And so I'd say 90 for Leigh Brackett's Skaith Trilogy. Now look what your other readers gave it. ((We need your opinion for balance.))

As such, I doubt if anyone should take my evaluations seriously. Proof: I would give The Forever War about 60, yet it won both Nebula and Hugo! *((Harry, I don't think it's a good idea to give 60's!))*

Bob Sourk P.O. Box 11272 San Diego, CA 92111

6-15-77

Just a note to thank you very much for GG 5/6. It's much more involving than I'd ever dreamed. I'm only just beginning reading (plowing) through it because I've recently started working full time, but I intend to finish it before Westercon.

Needless to say, I'm placing it in the permanent section of my bookshelf along with my hardbound SF literary texts. Me thinks that if you compiled all your issues and clarified vaqueries and delected nonessentials, that you would have a better than good chance of having it published as a reference text by some college/University Press (or possibly even some big pubbing house out for the libraries monies.)

Gordon Garb P.O. Box 1866 Ft. Collins, CO 80522

2-15-76

Suggestion: Include a rating ((in your Fill-in sheet)) for scientific accuracy and credibility, obvious and easily spotted mistakes, that sort of thing. When I read SF, the science had better be at least accurate, if not challenging. *((A worthwhile idea. I'd wonder that.))*

David Dyer-Bennet Carleton College Northfield, MN 55057

3-31-76

Categorizing books in one major category per book may make things better in some ways, but can lead to problems if some of the categories relate essentially to style or form rather than content. I've finally decided that space opera is in fact a style. The Skylark series were technologically oriented, and less military. Spacehounds of IPC is a leard - or survival story, but is clearly space opera, while Tunnel in the Sky is not. Space opera centers on a large-size hero, but the problems confronting him vary widely.



Lee Carson 3412 Ruby St. Franklin Pk. IL 60131

2-77

No more "PPENS" at the moment, but 105 means that reading should be absolutely required with penalties for delay and possible harassment by secret police of an obscure but inexorable authority! ((I changed them to 98's; sorry about that.)) Which is not to say that it's such a damn good book (tho it is), but rather that persons being introduced to SF should break in on some truly basic and essential tomes of the genre - SLAN being, in my view, foremost in that regard. Similarly The Humanoids by Jack Williamson deserves a 95 or so. I might add that Phillip K. Dick should be read in as close to chronological order as possible (in my view), for proper appreciation of his technical and thematic development -- thus Dr. Futurity might be given an abnormally high rating - say 75. ((Lee, the PPENS represent what we love and enjoy - not what should be required reading. What we love, not what we need.))

Lee Carson 3412 Ruby St. Franklin Pk. IL 60131

2-5-77

Seeing that you carefully noted the pronunciation of "GYRE" as (JĪR), I was forced to my Webster's to check out the matter. I always think of Yeats when I see the word, but ignorantly felt it sounded like (GĪR) or ("Gaier"). So it seems you are a leader of vortices, rather than accomplice to malignant Scottish spirits. ((Well, almost))

It would take me a longish time to evaluate all the SF I've read or merely own. For high school readers in particular, I'd insist that they read The Demolished Man and The Stars My Destination by Alfie Bester (and any of his short story collections, despite your preference for novels). Slan (98), The World of Null-A (95), and The Weapon Shops of Isher (old AE Van Vogt) (95). StarMan's Son (Daybreak 2250 AD) by Andre (Alice Mary) Norton - if somebody gets a taste for Norton, warn about overdosage. The Long Afternoon of Earth by B.W. Aldiss (also Starship). The Crystal World - JG Ballard (also The Drowned World). Your choice of Phil Dick - THE THREE STIGMATA of PALMER ELDEITCH is perhaps best (98); MAN IN THE HIGH CASTLE; more recently FLOW MY TEARS, THE POLICEMAN SAID (85). SR Delany - anything but perhaps BALLAD OF BETA-Z and BABEL-17 (good but minor). JACK VANCE - almost anything (I didn't like Grey Prince - give that about 45). OLD STURGEON is probably a must: More Than Human, Venus Plus X. Eric Frank Russell, if available, is delightful (Wasp, etc.) The Final Programme - M. Moorcock. Sirens of Titan and Cat's Cradle - Kurt Vonnegut. Earl Zelany - couldn't say just what. May some old Asimov (Pebble in the Sky, End of Eternity - 75's) Space Merchant. (Pohl and Kornbluth - 35). The Mouse that Roared - 85 (Wibberly). A bit of old Heinlein (Ghod knows why) - Citizen of the Galaxy (75), Double Star (65), Starship Troopers (65), Stranger in a Strangeland (75).

Avram Davidson - Masters of the Maze, Phoenix and the Mirror. (95's) Nova Express - WS Burroughs - for the hardy (95). For strange horror, House on the Borderland (W.H. Hodgson - 85). Ursula K. LeGuin is quite a good writer (Dispossessed, Left Hand of Darkness). A little Keith Laumer for entertainment: Worlds of the Imperium - 65. I'm sure many would enjoy Cordwainer Smith (novel - Boy Who Bought Old Earth - 75) -- his short stories are also worth mentioning.

Mark Keller 101 South Angell St. Providence, RI 02906

7-13-77

Well, if you want ratings, OK I have a listing in the works, maybe 1500-2000 titles. It should be in the mail real soon now (end of August, anyway). What set it off was reading Marty Massoglia's ratings, and the realization that people might believe his statement that Jakes on WHEELS is better than Sarban!

## OF CITIES AND STARS AND SEVEN SUNS....

by Greg Hills

A city a billion years from now, filled with quasi-immortal people, served by almost perfect machines, surrounded by a desert arising from neglect, with only one other inhabited spot left on Earth, and with legends of mighty, star-spanning empires far in the past....

A notion of vast grandeur, is it not? And as may be testified by almost anyone who, in their youth, read Arthur C. Clarke's The City And The Stars, it is beautifully and lovingly explored by a writer who can convey to the reader some fragment of his own delight and awe at the wonders he is dreaming up. Even Clarke's wide-ranging and flexible imagination cannot begin to picture the reality of such a society, let alone describe its workings. So he leaves such matters to our own imaginings whilst vigorously painting a masterpiece on which we can hang them. A city appears, where most of the inhabitants grow violent and ill if forced to think of anything beyond its walls; and in that city a single mind--just one--that is free, that reaches out to hold a star, wonderingly, in its gaze. A fantastic tale...and upbeat without optimism.

But that book was written years ago. And where, now, are there to be found such sagas? In Dhalgren? Slaughterhouse Five? By Jerry Cornelius or Jherek Cernelian? Dominic Flandry? The worlds of Winter and the dying Earth?

Well?

These are all fine books, characters, and settings--each in its own way--and are stylistically better, the plots more varied, the science more...scientific, the cultures realistic.

And in these last two points lies the problem. Realism and probability are fun, but sometimes I yearn for the limpid extravagance and vision of older stuff, for the guttering flames to be stoked back to their previous, vigorous, roaring life.

I don't advocate a return to those days. There is none. Sf has advanced. No, what I would like to see is a looser hold--a guidedly looser one--on probability. A few really far-out cultures, a little more guesswork and stardreaming.

These are the aspects from which has developed the modern sf domain. Even in the vilest pulp one's mind was forced outwards, to the stars, inwards, to the atom, around, to strange civilisations. The aim was to create the most fantastic Universe possible, and to hell with statistics and probability (they were still correct surprisingly often)!

What has been lost? Older fans call it the Sense of Wonder; New Wavers call it the pulp tradition; many younger fan have never read any of it and so don't know it. Other young fan just know that the new stuff doesn't "chew" the way the old stuff from their early reading days did.

It is the Vision: Man against all comers, the sword of science in one hand, the shield of the enquiring mind on the other forearm. Instead we squat on the twin rugs of Realism and Mysticism before the deep and dim abyss of cynicism. Gone are distant ages and bright-eyed hero(ines). Instead we have 2600 A. D. and Beowulf Shaeffer. Tired, cynical Flandry. Ambisexual people on a frigid world. All good stuff; I revel in it. But it's not enough.

I want to spend my 50th birthday on a planet of Alpha Centauri; my 100th at the Galactic Core; my 200th in Andromeda; my--

Till then I'll sit back and read Tau Zero, The Blood Red Game, The Green Hills of Earth, the Lensman series, The Man Who Sold The Moon. And some newer stuff that almost makes it: Ringworld, Rendezvous With Rama, 2001, The Company of Glory, just to keep up with today and reality and the sparks that may yet catch again....