



Written by Dick Lupoff in behalf of Self & Wife Pat; and I have concluded that the "oposo" double appellation is really rather silly. Opo it is, and will be circulated through both Apa F [November 27] and Apa L [December 3]. If/when I do a zine especially for LASFS I'll resurrect Oso with #6. For purposes of page numbering on the bi-apan Opo I'll use the earlier date, which happens to be the Apa F date; that's appropriate anyway, as Opo was originally an Effzine before it went biapan (in fact, long before Apa L was so much as a gleam in Bruce Pelz's gleamer). That's Colophon Week for this week.

HUGO WEEK: Last week, unless I have been betrayed, you all received a copy of my initial open letter to the members of the Hugo investigation committee [ahem!] appointed by Pacificon II. One of my questions at the end of the letter dealt with revising the voting procedure so as to obtain majority winners rather than plurality winners. Now arrives the fiftieth and final STARSPIKLE with final figures on the 1964 voting for Hugos, and the figures bear out the desirability of reform in this area.

In the voting for Best Novel, for instance...the category usually rating the greatest interest among voters, and the greatest recognition from the Big Outside World, STARSPIKLE reports the voting to have gone this way: Cat's Cradle 30, Dune World 51, Glory Road 54, Way Station 63, Witch World 54, no vote (in this category) 15, No Award 7. Disregarding the last two figures, a total of 252 Novel ballots were counted, of which 63 were cast for Way Station bringing Clifford Simak the prize. That happens to be exactly 25%.

Should one-fourth of the voters give the biggest prize of the science-fictional year? I think not. I think it ought to take 51% [or, for the sake of purists, 50%+1], and this can be accomplished by reforming the voting and counting procedure. Under the present system there is a danger of an organized (or merely united!) minority imposing its will upon a divided majority. More likely, a winner will be selected with all fides bona, but it is a poor victory.

In other categories the same pattern was followed last year. Probably second highest in interest -- perhaps even first, in the fannish world, but unnoticed Outside -- is the voting for Best Fanzine. Well, AMRA received 72 votes to win, followed by YANDRO (51), STARSPIKLE (48) and ERBDOM (45). Seventy-two happens to be precisely 33 1/3% of 216, the total number of Fanzine ballots cast. Again, should one-third of the voters award the Hugo, or should a majority?

The winners' percentages in the other categories were: Prozine, Analog 34%; Short Fiction, No Truce with Kings by Poul Anderson, 37%; Artist, Emshwiller, 31%; and Publisher, Ace Books, 37%.

I personally feel that the question of majority versus plurality winners is the most crying matter with the present Hugo set-up; later open letters will include some of the above material, plus a rather ingenious solution brought to my attention by George Scithers. It involves a system of sequential voting which bears a seeming resemblance to Proportional Representation, but it is not PR, and does not suffer from the latter's well-known faults.

Null-Q Press

BOOK WEEK: Many weeks ago I started to say something here about Valley of the Flame by Henry Kuttner, but never got around to giving my final evaluation. Well, it was a frustrating book...Kuttner's gimmick of temporal quasi-distortion through metabolic acceleration is a nice one, and his Amazon-basin felinoid/humanoid race is tantalizingly presented. Unfortunately, with such lovely bases for deeply involving development, he saw fit to make the story largely a routine chase-and-fight sequence. He handled it beautifully, no dispute, but the book could have been so much more than it is, that I felt let down by it.

SWORDSMEN IN THE SKY Edited by Donald Wollheim, Ace, 1964. This is supposedly a book of ERB-type interplanetary sword-epics, but only two of the four long short-stories in the book are that. [The fifth, a Kline-Venus vignette, is very short and very bad, and will hereafter be ignored.]

The best of the batch is "The Moon that Vanished" by Leigh Brackett, from TWS for October, 1948. Set on the classic stfnal Venus of steaming swamps and debauched derelicts, this story has all of the atmosphere that made its type great in their own petty way; the characterization is good for the length, and the action never fails to keep the reader's interest. Bravo!

"Kaldar, World of Antares" by Edmond Hamilton, from a 1933 Argosy(?) is a second-rate pseudo - Barsoomian adventure, most notable for showing up how much Hamilton improved in later years.

"Swordsman of Lost Terra" by Poul Anderson is nothing but a historical swashbuckler rather uncomfortably fitted out as far-distant-future SF. From a 1951 Planet it, too, is interesting chiefly as early Anderson...although the concept of the devilish bag-pipes is nice too.

"People of the Crater" is a polar lost-race story by Andre Norton from Fantasy Book #1 (1947) and not very good either (although not too bad).

In sum, then, only the Brackett is a very good story, but it's a beauty! The rest of the book will be of historical interest to those who care, but is only second- or third-rate reading.

METEOR MENACE by "Kenneth Robeson" Street & Smith 1934 (in Doc Savage magazine), Bantam, 1964. This is the third of the Doc Savage adventures resurrected by Bantam, and like the previous two it is great rip-roaring fun. The title refers to a chunk of meteorite mounted in a miniature robot airplane, which the villain uses to freeze the brains of those who defy his demands for wealth and power.

I say it's fun, but I must add that I've reached -- perhaps passed -- my saturation point for this sort of nonsense, and I'm glad that there are no more of this ilk currently in print. If Bantam does some more in six months or a year, I may have my appetite back, but for now, No.

NOTED BUT NOT READ: Last spring's Return of the Shadow must have been successful, because Belmont is back with The Shadow Strikes by "Maxwell Grant." The previous book was so very bad that I doubt that I'll bother with the new one; if any Effer or Eller does read this, I will be grateful for your opinion, especially if you put it in context for me by comparing TSS with ROTS. Also, does anyone happen to know who Grant is this time? Avallone, Gibson, Elliot...?

We'll be in NY the weekend of December 5, and hope to make the meeting of Friday 12/4. Will it be Fanoclasts or FISTFA? Somebody?

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