

FADEAWAY #64 is a fanzine devoted to science fiction and related fields of interest, and is produced by **Robert Jennings, 29 Whiting Rd., Oxford, MA 01540-2035, email fabficbks@aol.com**. Copies are available for a letter of comment, or a print fanzine in trade, or by subscription at a cost of \$25.00 for six issues. Letters of comment are much preferred. Any person who has not previously received a copy of this fanzine may receive a sample copy of the current issue for free by sending me your name and address. Publication is (in theory anyway) bi-monthly. This is the July 2020 issue

FOR THOSE THAT MISSED MY E-MAILED PLACE HOLDER

here is some info on recent events in my life and why this issue of

Fadeaway is seven months late.

Mail order book selling in the time of the plague has been very good for me. My weekly unit sales volume has more than tripled. I am busier now than I have been since the last century; literally on the go from 8:00 in the morning until ten o'clock in the evening when I haul myself to bed at so I can get up the next morning at 6:30 in order to be the very first person in line at the Post Office when it opens at 8:00. Free time has disappeared from my life.

It's hard to complain when so much merchandise is turning into money, but it sure keeps me hopping. I have no time for much of anything these days, and even my cherished two hours of reading time each night has disappeared in the rush to keep things going. To make matters even more interesting, ebay has been offering a ton of free listings to prop up their business, and I can hardly say no to an offer like that.

This has let to a lot of things being put on hold, including *Fadeaway*. However, recently I have been able to better manage my time and activities, and I after a long delay, here is the new issue.

The fact that I am still alive and well is a good thing, at least so far I am concerned, and I hope all of you are the same. Thus far no friends have developed COVID-19, altho a fair a number of friends-of-friends have caught it, and died. I'll turn 77 years old next month, and I'd kinda like to stick around to see birthday 78, but increasingly it looks like a long shot, considering the fact that there seems to be no truly effective way to get the monster under control.

The nation of China, which in the recent past enacted and enforced draconian measures to control the spread of the virus, has seen yet another flare-up in Beijing and in other populous cities. The US has much laxer standards, and there are plenty of people who don't think catching the virus is that big a deal anyway. They also don't really care about the consequences. The attitude seems to be—"So what if all the old folks die, that just means more houses and apartments come on the market at cheaper rents, with more jobs opening up for young people, and fewer old geezers to wait behind in the grocery store check-out lines." It's a foregone conclusion that our country is going to be slammed by another wave of inflections, a new wave of severe cases, and a solid wave of deaths that will likely dwarf the numbers from the first round earlier this year.

What's that disco song? Staying Alive!/? I'd like to, really I would.

Given all this, I have decided to do what I can to accomplish what I can before the virus hits me. As mentioned, I will soon to be 77 years old, which means if I get the virus I'm probably going to croak. Those in my age group who survive often wind up with serious lingering after effects. Given all that, I think it might be a good idea to try to wrap up a lot of things in my life before I do get the virus and drop dead. Getting this new issue of *Fadeaway* out is one of those things.

In addition, I have been researching and working on a number of widely diverse articles for a long time, for years in some cases. I think now is the time to just say to hell with it, and write up what I have and hope for the best. Maybe you readers out there can fill in some of the missing info.

And also to hell with waiting and coaxing all the people who have said they were going to write stuff for *Fadeaway*. Time's up. If you've written to me telling me you've been thinking about writing an article, or said you were working on an article, or some art, or an opinion piece, or whatever for this zine, then please either get the material in, or forget it. If I have to write the next few issues all by my loneself then that's what I will do. I really think this is a race with death, and I'd like to get as much stuff accomplished as I can before Death wins the race.

AND SPEAKING OF DEATH...

The cover illo this time round is by Steve Stiles, who died on 11 January 2020 from a long running battle with lung cancer. He sent me

this illo to be used as a cover, and another spot illo, right down there, to be used in this issue of *Fadeaway*, knowing he was dying.

To be honest when I got his emails and the cover letter explaining how dire the situation was I didn't pay a lot of attention. Steve had been at death's door on several previous occasions, and had always managed to cheat the grim reaper and come right back. I figured this would be yet another bounce-back, but I was wrong.

I never had the opportunity to meet Steve face to face, but I've known him thru correspondence since the end of the 1950s. He contributed art and wrote LOCs on most of the zines I turned out in this hobby. Sometimes there were gaps when for one reason or another I wasn't turning out a regular fanzine, but, I always came back to the fold, and Steve was always there, ready and willing to share his unique wacky sense of humor and his excellent cartoon art with whatever title or project I was working on. During the past ten years he has contributed many covers, both front and back, to *Fadeaway*.

I don't know what to say. I realize that everybody has to die sooner or later, but when it comes to long time friends, why couldn't it be later, as in lots, lots later? Steve Stiles made a mark on fandom, and I know I won't be the only one who will remember him for a long time to come.

COMIC CRISIS #7,926; COLLECT THE WHOLE SERIES

I'm sure everyone reading this is familiar with the latest threat to the

existence and future of comic books in America. Briefly, I thank my lucky stars that I no longer own a retail comic book/science fiction/game store, because, in addition to the problems with The Plague and the mandatory shut-down, has come the news that DC Comics will no longer be distributed by Diamond Comics. Instead, two separate companies Lunar Distribution and UCS Comic Distributors will handle that. To the best of my knowledge these are both brand new companies specifically created to handle the distribution of DC Comics. In addition, these new outfits will only handle comic books.

DC's graphic novels, hardbacks and other non-comic book printed material will be handled exclusively by Penguin/Random House, a company that serves the retail book store trade. And by the way, the new companies will only distribute DC Comics inside the United States. There is no word of any kind as to how the rest of the world is going to get their DC comics. Diamond Comics services the entire planet. This new companies will not.

Everyone in the hobby is upset/confused/astonished/horrified/ and more. Nobody knows how this will play out, but in my personal opinion this is a huge mistake on the part of DC. It appears to me that DC is about to recreate the same mistake Marvel Comics made in the 1990s when Marvel established its own distribution system to handle sales of their comics direct to the comic stores. Seen as a way to increase their profit margins by eliminating the traditional distributors, and to better their relationship with individual stores, in fact it turned out to be a very expensive disaster which contributed directly to Marvel's first bankruptcy.

That DC is trying to do the very same thing is a Big Mistake so far as I can see. In addition to the problems setting up and running this new enterprise, most of the existing comic shops do not have accounts with Penguin/Random House, the company that will be handling the graphic novels and other non comic book



print material. Frankly, considering the shaky economic status of most comic stores even before The Plague struck with its abundant problems for the retail world, the credit rating for most comic stores is so bad they would not be able to open an account with Penguin in the first place.

This means that when the stock of DC graphic novels and hardbacks runs out at the local store levels they will not be able to reorder, and will simply do without. DC may be able to put more of their graphic novel material into regular non-specialty retail book stores, but the bulk of that material is sold thru comic stores, and without this specific retail exposure, that part of their business will suffer dramatic losses, and rapidly.

Of course, this also presumes that the direct comic shop biz will continue to exist at all. The economic disaster The Plague has caused has already crushed a number of comic stores that were having problems before the virus struck. The number of comic specialty stores continues to shrink. The number is now below 2,200 world-wide. This new twist could be the blow that destroys the entire business.

During The Plague the comic book publishers have mostly stopped publishing titles, and of course, Diamond Comics, who are essentially the only distributor of comic books in the western world, stopped distributing anything until things stabilized. I didn't check to see, but there may have been a few independent comics produced, and there were probably others being posted on the internet.

Close to four months without new print comics is probably the longest I've ever been in my life without some kind of newish comic book material to read. It got me to thinking about my life-long relationship with illustrated panel literature.

I can't say that I remember the first comic I ever spend my own money on, or even the first comic book I ever read, or owned. I do remember that after hearing some kind of parenting program on the radio that talked about kids and money and assuming responsibility, my parents decided to give my younger brother and myself a weekly allowance of twenty-five cents each. Even in the very late 1940s this was really not a lot of money, but, considering that we never had any money of our own to spend before this, it was somewhat amazing to the both of us.

Of course, there were strings attached. We had to deposit a nickel of that in our individual piggy banks, which means we only have twenty cents a week to spend. What's the point of giving a youngster an allowance if you're going to impose a 25% piggy bank tax on the allowance? In addition, if any relative or friends ever gave us money, and the amount was more than a dime, we had to deposit some (most, as I dimly recall) of that into the piggy bank too.

It distinctly limited what you could buy, since twenty cents only got you two comic books, or maybe only one comic book and some cheap penny candy to go along with it. Like most kids our age we were reduced to begging and pleading for comic books and teeth rotting treats, skills well honed by the children of my generation. Hitting the parents up during grocery shopping was the best time, since every grocery store back then, including large super markets, carried a generous display of comics and magazines, plus every check-out register featured all those delicious candy bars. The folks were going to spend money for food anyway, what were a few extra dimes for some comic books?

Many larger grocery stores provided comic book reading areas when parents could drop off the kiddies and let them read comics while the adult(s) could do the grocery shopping without having to put up with whining children running around underfoot pulling stuff off shelves, or having Mom explain why she was absolutely not going to buy that jumbo box of Chocolate Frosted Molasses Puffs no matter what kind of prize was inside the box.

Once you had a few comic books in your possession, the next step was to expand your reading by loaning and trading copies with other kids. Five comics and a neighborhood full of children could easily turn into fifty or a hundred different titles read and absorbed in a couple of weeks. Of course, once you read/traded/loaned thru the entirety of the people you knew, the supply had to be replenished by begging/pleading for the newest issues as they appeared on the racks, which was a twice weekly occurrence back then.

One of the biggest advantages of owning comic books as a kid, no matter how we managed to get them, is that comic books taught us how to read, in a hurry, and very effectively. I remember vividly trying to learn how to read in the 1st grade. We had to follow the non-adventures of Dick and Jane and their stupid dog Spot, who ran, or sat, and later in the school year, walked and barked (those longer, complicated words apparently being too strenuous for beginning readers). It was boredom supreme.

On the other hand, there were those full color comics with familiar cartoon characters like Mickey Mouse, Donald Duck, Bugs Bunny and more. They were doing things in the comics, having adventures, going to interesting places, talking to other characters with those word balloons. Pantomime only goes so far in a comic book. I desperately wanted to know what those words were, and by pestering and pleading, my brother and I got adults to tell us what the words were. By following those adventures we learned how to read. I recall by the second grade almost everything in class could read reasonably well. By the third grade everybody in class could read, most of us well beyond the approved and tested “level” the school said we should be reading at.

What do youngsters use today to learn how to read? Do internet abbreviations and emojns do the job? I don’t know. Can you learn to read from a Twitter feed? Is there a Sesame Street equivalent on the internet? Most young people know how to type at a very young age, the better to function with a smart phone or a school linked computer. It’s definitely a different age. With so much material provided free on the internet modern kids probably don’t need to worry about popular culture or material to read/watch/listen to at all.

Today comic books cost so much only adults can afford to buy them. The average comic reader is also usually a collector, and the medium age seems to be going up. I’ve discussed this before, but it seems to me, now even more than ever, that print comic books are a dying medium. If young people do not come into the hobby, and as regular readers continue to age out, the circulation of print comic books will continue to decline.

It is my personal opinion that only modern advances in cheap, economical printing has keep the print comic book profitable these days, especially considering the low circulation figures most of those titles are posting. In addition, without successful merchandising into the toy, clothing, movie and TV markets I am convinced many comic book companies would cheerfully stop publishing any kind of comics at all.

The future is supposed to be in digital comics, readable on a computer or mobile device, but I have yet to see evidence that this trend is expanding much beyond the realm of the regular readers who already buy and prefer print comics. But, it’s an ever changing world, and this new crisis may well force people who want to read comics to resort of digital comics because they simply can’t find a local store that carries the print products any more. Who can say for sure? I’ve seen the “Comic Books Are Dead!!” scenario played out many times over the past seventy years, and yet they have always managed to somehow survive. But the effects of The Plague and the DC break with Diamond are very big changes, and I am not sure if the format will be able to survive this time.

AND MORE TROUBLING NEWS FROM THE PUBLISHING FRONT...

Here is some info taken directly from the *Locus* web

site: NPD BookScan reported unit sales for print books dropped 1.3% in 2019, with 689.5 million units sold, down from 698.4 in 2018. The decline was due in part to a lack of big bestsellers to compare with the massive interest in political non-fiction in 2018. Unit sales for adult fiction dropped 2.9%. By genre, science fiction had the biggest drop, down 19.7%, while horror rose 16.6% and graphic novels rose 16.1%. Juvenile fiction had a slim 0.5% drop, but young-adult fiction fell 8.1%. By format, hardcovers basically held steady, up 0.3%, while trade paperbacks dropped 0.7% and mass-market paperbacks fell 15.3%. These figures were released before The Plague struck, which has certainly caused even more problems for the publishing biz. It is definitely a strange new world.

FANZINES—FANZINES—FANZINES

I have been turning over a theme in my mind for awhile now, namely, what is the creative desire that impels an individual to write. What causes people to write fiction, or articles, or blogs, or especially fanzines. Like comic books, fanzines in science fiction/comic fandom seem to be a dying breed. Interestingly enuf outsider of fandom the print fanzine continues to survive and even thrive, generally produced by free-thinkers that have absolutely nothing to do with our hobby.

So, let’s talk about fanzines for a moment. The original desire to produce fanzines in this hobby was to reach out and contact other people who shared the same interests in science fiction/fantasy literature. The readership of the professional magazines might have been in the many thousands, but most serious fans and collectors felt they existed in a near vacuum when it came to encountering other people who shared their enthusiasm for the stuff.

Finding somebody else to share opinions and ideas was an exhilarating idea. Fanzines offered the opportunity to reach out and contact those like-minded individuals. In addition, they offered the opportunity to discuss things of mutual interest, including new books, interesting story concepts, rediscovered classics, authors met, movies seen, conventions experienced.. It was heady stuff, and within a few years of fandom being unofficially formed in the very early 1930s, there was an explosion of fanzines, the numbers being limited only by the fact that in the dark days of the Great Depression, most fans were young, they didn't have much money, and they usually didn't have access to any kind of printing equipment.

Today I am sure that many of the same basic desires for communication still motivate SF fans, but it's a whole new world. For one thing it is no longer A-Proud-And-Lonely-Thing-To-Be-A-Fan. Science fiction/fantasy/comics have become accepted mass cultural experiences worldwide. In this new century it would probably be difficult to find too many people who were not familiar with some phase of the science-fantasy experience. In addition, the internet and low cost mobile tele-communication devices have created whole new opportunities to stay in touch with friends and family, along with plenty of people who share similar interests and ideas. Add to this the explosion of social media platforms that make it extremely easy to connect with people who have similar interest, no matter how broad or narrow they may be, and I sometime wonder why fanzines survive in this hobby at all.

And indeed, it would seem that just on the basis of observational evidence, that fanzines are a vanishing breed. The number of print zines has shrunk dramatically in recent years. Even the number of fanzines available in electronic format has been winnowing down over the past five years. But the species is not quite extinct. Fanzines continue to be published, (including this one), abet mostly in electronic form these days.

Turning to the current batch of titles still being published, one of the most consistent and prominent you will probably encounter is *OPUNTIA* by Dale Speirs.

Opuntia is one of the longest running fanzines still being produced, starting up in 1991, and it is also produced on what most people would consider to be an impossible schedule. This is a perzine deluxe. Dale writes the entirety of each issue, and every two weeks, like clockwork, another new issue comes out. How the hell does he do it, most people wonder? I've wondered that myself at times.

Dale Speirs lives in Canada, specifically in Calgary, Alberta. He retired at a relative early age from a job as a city arborist (a tree guy, head of the department in charge of taking care of trees, cutting,

removal of fallen trees, planting new ones, park tree management, tree disease control, and lots more). Besides science fiction/fantasy, his main hobby is collecting stamps, mainly Canadian stamps. He also invested in oil stocks so he is comfortable in his retirement, and now spends a lot of time putting out this fanzine, of which issue #476 is the most recent.

It is difficult to figure out exactly what Dale's primary motivation for publishing this fanzine might be. He discusses a lot of things within its pages, especially things about his hometown of Calgary, plus books read and movies seen. The main interest for most fanzine editors is intercommunication with readers, a back-and-fourth reaction and conversations with observations, critiques, comments, ideas swapped and friendships developed. But as near as I can see Dale doesn't particularly care what the readers think about his zine as long as people just keep reading it.

When *Opuntia* was a print zine he would occasionally print snippets of letters of comment readers sent along. Since he turned the mag into an all electronic version the brief letters section has almost (but not entirely) disappeared. If you send him an LOC on an issue, or some subject he covers in an *Opuntia* issue, he never bothers to reply. Oddly enuf, occasionally he will send an LOC to other fanzines, but, again, if you write or email him back in reply, he does not respond.

If communication does not seem to be his motivation in producing *Opuntia*, then just expressing his opinions might be the motivating factor, but sometimes I wonder about that too, because there are any number of situations in which he discusses something, a book, an event, history, a movie, but doesn't offer his own opinions about the quality or even the accuracy of the material.

Issue #476, 22 pages long, offers some new insights into the personality and history of editor Speirs. For one thing, we finally learn the origin of his fanzine title. I always thought it referred in some way to opinions,



but no, it turns out the word “opuntia” is the Latin genus of the prickly-pear cactus, of which he notes two species are present in Alberta, and about which he wrote papers while an undergraduate at the University of Alberta. Who knew? I’m betting: nobody; except Dale. He also made OPUNTIA a vanity plate when he bought his first new vehicle many years back, and he still maintains it. (The vanity plate, that is.)

One of the ways editor Speirs is able to maintain his bi-weekly schedule is because he created and maintains a standard tinline for each issue. The basic layout and divisions with headers are set in that tinline, so all he has to do is write material to fill in the pages. In recent years a lot of that “all” has been photographs. Photography has become one of his other consuming personal interests during this new century, and each issue of his fanzine contains a generous assortment of photos.

This issue he has shots of different unusual vehicle vanity license plates, and he even includes some photos of himself with some of his past autos (with the OPUNTIA plate visible, naturally).

There is an ongoing section discussing and recapping OTRadio shows. This issue the editor discusses in great detail; every episode of two Carleton E. Morse serial stories in the “Adventures By Morse” program. This is overkill deluxe, since he describes every incident and detail of every single one of the episodes of the two story plots he covers. Yikes! Why should anyone bother to listen to the radio shows after this kind of treatment?

Well, you might try it anyway, because the shows are very well done. Morse was a versatile author whose primary source of income for most of his life was writing/directing/producing “One Man’s Family”, one of the longest running, and most popular soap operas on radio, aimed at a more mature audience and notably less filled with the clichés and hysteria of the normal washboard weeper. His main claim to fame with collectors of old time radio is “I Love a Mystery”, of which “Adventures By Morse” was a syndicated spin-off. You can hear the “Adventures By Morse” series for free from several sources on the internet, including otrlibrary.org

Dale also listened to the pilot episode for “Halls of Fantasy”, didn’t like it, and apparently dismisses the rest of the series unheard, a mistake if true, because while the first show was a recycled pulp mag cliché wheezer, most of the rest of the series is pretty good stuff.

He also doesn’t say much good about the first episode of “Bold Venture”, another show with plenty of good episodes in a syndicated series that ran 78 episodes. This starred Humphrey Bogart and Lauren Bacall, who owned the production. Listening to a single show of a radio series and making a snap judgment about the entire production strikes me as being very much akin to judging a book by its cover.

Continuing his look at botanical fiction (13 parts so far), this time he looks at carnivorous plants in fiction, finding a reasonable, but not abundant amount of such stories, most of them from the 1920s and early 1930s issues of *Weird Tales* magazine. His descriptions and recounting of plots makes it clear that almost all of the stories suffer from serious faults. Unfortunately he does not give his opinion on the quality of the stories; which ones might have been well written, for example, or which stories happened to be believable despite their factual flaws. I might also note there are lots of other killer plant stories he does not mention. Perhaps more of those will be discussed in part 14 of this series.

In a somewhat similar vein, he looks at the 2002 TV series “The Future Is Wild” which thru a slightly convoluted setup tries to envision what future evolution holds for planet earth millions of years after humanity has spread out to the stars. He gives an episode by episode summary, but again gives no opinion on the quality of the story, or whether he found the series entertaining, beyond noting that the FX are old but still effective.

There is a long section, five and a half pages worth, of mentions and references to scientific abstracts from assorted journals, most of which are very technical, obscure, and might be of interest to a hardcore science enthusiast reading this issue, but did absolutely nothing to me.

Then, surprise, (or not, considering), fellow Canadian Lloyd Penney has a letter at the end of the issue. He had one a couple of issues ago too.

It’s a varied mixture of material touching lots of different subjects, and most of it is interesting even if you are only obliquely aware of the material being discussed. The format is unique but very comfortable: with pages set horizontally in two columns, good sized readable type, and with illos scattered thruout to prevent any paragraph monotony.

My objection, again, is that Dale seems to recite and summarize easily enuf, but he often does not really offer his own opinions and judgments on the stuff he covers. I would personally prefer a sharper examination of the material from his personal viewpoint. Was it entertaining, was it well written or not, well presented or not, believable or farcical, and finally, were the things being discussed worth recommending to other people, or did

they fail on several levels? A recital of facts and summaries makes a lot of this issue seem more like an abridged encyclopedia rather than a personal fanzine. More editorial personality would greatly help the mix.

Opuntia #476 and all past issues are available for viewing/downloading at the efanazines.com site. By the time you read this, at least one, and maybe two new issues will already be posted there.



THIS HERE #30

There is no shortage of editorial personality here. *This Here* is a perzine in all capital letters. Editor Nic Farey is a fan transplanted from the UK to Las Vegas, a fan who maintains deep roots and connections to his homeland. In Vegas he works as a taxi driver, an occupation which generates lots of interesting incidents to report in the pages of his zine, but one that I also suspect generates a fair amount of frustration and aggravation. Having to deal with a lot of people who may be surly, drunk, ill tempered, or rude can't be the easiest job in the world.

And speaking of alcohol, he claims that he often writes his fanzine stuff while roaring drunk. Right, sure thing. Nic says a lot of outrageous things, some of which my even be true, but many of which are deliberately designed to get a reaction from his regular readers. In recent months a lot of the shock value seems to be wearing out, so I suppose he will come up with new off the wall declarations to keep the pot boiling.

Oh, by the way, did I mention that Nic is also a sort of utopian socialist? At least I think that's what his overreaching political viewpoint is. He mentions in most issues his total opposition to the free enterprise capitalist system, which he would like to see wiped out tomorrow; preferably at the stroke of Midnight, but he doesn't offer too many comments about what would replace it. (Or maybe he has and I just missed them).

Issues of this zine come out very frequently, like once a month, and sometimes more often than that, depending on how Nic feels. The pages are close packed, with small print and long paragraphs, and hardly any illos at all, so reading the issues can be a strain at times.

Nic is a fan's fan. The social whirl of fandom intrigues him, and he discusses that and the personalities in fandom a lot. He is also deeply interested in the FAAn Awards, and is this year's publicity coordinator, trying to get more people interested and participating in the event. The FAAn Awards are given out at the annual Corflu convention, which will be held next year in Bristol, England on 28 March 2021.

Corflu is a convention aimed at fanzine fans, but the attendance has generally been very small no matter where or when it is staged. Photos from the most recent Corflu #37 held in Texas before The Plague, for example, reveal a gathering of very old people, mostly male, with a total paid membership of only 65 people.

To some this is a sign of the in-breed cliquishness of Corflu, an annual gathering of Good Ole Boys who have been around fandom for a long, *long* time, and a group that does not welcome newcomers. I think to some extent that is true, but it may also just reflect the fact that fanzines in general are a fading fixture in this hobby.

It is worth noting that people involved with the convention are actively trying to change the stodgy old gaffer perspective and get new people to attend the con and also to be involved in the operations thereof. Handling the ballot publicity and trying to make adjustments so that the ballot realistically addresses categories and modern considerations is taking up a considerable amount of Nic's attention these days.

I think the primary thing he needs to work on is to get the word out to more people about the ballot, and get more people voting. With the easy availability of Bill Burns' excellent efanazines.com website, plenty of people who are not on the mailing lists of any fanzine can still visit, read, and enjoy the wide variety of fanzine titles that are still being published, along with a generous selection of back issues, and even legendary material from Ye Olden Days of Fandom Past. This rich resource should generate more interest in the FAAn Awards, and Nic's enthusiasm for the project could revitalize the whole project. At least I hope so.

This Here consists mainly of a very large letter column. Letter writers generally try to stick to the subjects under discussion and the points Nic raises in his editorials (or Egotorials as he calls them), but sometimes people stray far afield (OK, I admit it, I've been guilty of that myself).

Nic is an active participant. He has his own comments about most parts of every single letter, sometimes interjecting those comments right in the middle of missives. Everybody gets his or her say, but Nic

gets the last word, every time. It makes for a lively and ever changing, always entertaining mix. Sort of like letter columns used to be back in Ye Olden Days of Fandom Past.

Each issue also usually carries a column or an article about popular music. I have to say that I try to read these, but usually wind up just skimming over the write-ups. So far as I am concerned music is almost a totally subjective form of entertainment.

Music critics or commentators can point out if a piece of music is well presented, or played well, or if all the players are in sync, they can say if the music is enthusiastic, or moody, but when it comes to actually saying whether this music by this band is really good, whereas the songs by this other group ain't so hot, then I think they lose it. People like the music they like. They might be willing to experiment and try other types of music they are not familiar with, but no musical review is going to change anybody's opinion about a group, or a tune, or even a genre of music they have already passed their own individual judgment on.

This Here is about as lively a perzine as you will ever find. You can write Nic direct to get on his mailing list, or check out the new issues as they are posted on the efanzines.com website.

MY BACK PAGES #24

This is another intensely personal fanzine, produced by veteran trufan Rich Lynch. Every issue is composed exclusively of his articles and reviews. Generously illustrated with stunning photos in full color, there is no letter column, and altho Rich says he welcomes comments, in fact he never acknowledges or replies to any LOCs received. This makes it sort of a dead end for intra-communication between editor and readers, but it's his fanzine and that's the way he wants it.

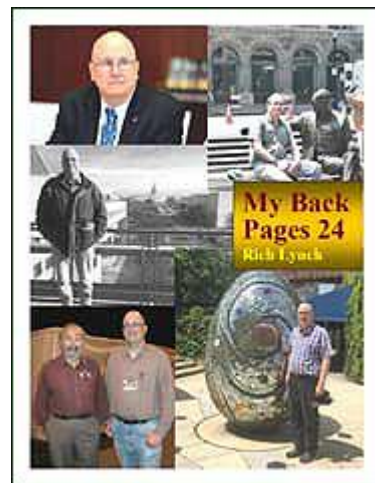
Issues of *My Back Pages* come out a couple of times per year, depending on how enthusiastic Rich is at the moment. Issues contain a wildly divergent mixture of material reprinted from other zines Rich has been involved with, in particular past issues of his SFPA apa zines, along with brief new commentaries added. On rare occasions an entirely brand new essay will be dropped into the mix, but mostly he prefers to cherry pick the past to offer seasoned material to current readers. Since most of the past articles come from fanzines not seen by most of today's fans this works very well.

If there is any kind of overarching themes to the issues of *My Back Pages* it might be Rich's enduring interest in musical theater, baseball, fan history, and international travel. Since his government job involves arranging and setting up conferences on environmental issues and carbon sequestering systems, that means he travels to many different parts of the world. Sometimes his schedule allows him a few hours or even a day or so of free time which he makes use of to explore the local city areas and their historic sights.

He always carries his camera on those sightseeing jaunts, no matter how brief they might be, and many of those photos show up in his articles. He also takes his camera when he and wife Nicki make their annual trip to NYC in January specifically to attend Broadway and off Broadway theater presentations, particularly musicals. Then whenever he attends SF conventions, the camera gets a solid workout. The generous proliferation of color photos in each issue makes this one of the most vibrant and visually interesting fanzines being published these days.

This issue he devotes more time to baseball than usual ('tis the summer, after all, even if we are not likely to get much baseball, pro or amateur in this Year Of The Plague). He discusses the time he met Willie Mays, and the time he almost, sorta, in a way, met George W. Bush while attending a baseball game, then there is an adoration about his visit to the Cooperstown Baseball Hall of Fame

There is a fond remembrance of his friendship with Steve Stiles, then we are off on a travelog, discussing his 2013 vacation with wife Nicki to France and Belgium. Since it was vacation time spent with his own money and allocated on his own time, you would think they would have plenty of time to see all the things they had planned on seeing, and enjoy the events they wanted to, but no, it turned out that the vacation was almost as harried as the off-duty hours scavenged during his government jaunts. That's the problem with most vacations that focus on Cultural Experiences; there is always way too much Culture to even begin to experience on any vacation no matter how long it may be.



There's more here, all friendly, chatty, informative, and interesting. That's the charm of this fanzine. Even if you have zero interest in a subject (as with me and baseball), Rich's writing style and enthusiasm manage to quietly seduce you into his sphere of interest and make those articles enjoyable. That's a right good talent to have, especially for a perzine that appears only occasionally.

You can find this latest issue of *My Back Pages* on display at the efanzines.com web site.

OK, TO HELL WITH IT, POLITICS TOO... I try to avoid current politics in the pages of this mag, but, things have gotten so nutsey crazy in the year 2020 that it seems unavoidable, even surrealistic to go on without somehow discussing, at least at some level, all the bizarre and tremulous happenings in the world of politics. Even before the advent of The Plague things were whacked out, but now, things are beyond fantastic.

Keeping up with the daily flow of incoming news here is a list of...

DONALD TRUMP'S MOST FLAGRENT RECENT BROKEN PROMISES

Failure to issue Presidential Pardons to Benedict Arnold and John Wilkes Booth after pushback from pardoning Navy Seal war criminal Eddie Gallagher

Never gave shiny new Batmobiles to every member of Congress who voted against his Impeachment

Never sat up that White House "Rat-On-A-Stick" fast food booth for Mitch McConnell

The toilet paper hoarders torpedoed Trump's Super Whizzer Public Toilet Franchise

Didn't name Slinky as the official toy of the new United States Space Force

Failure to position nuclear weapons at all KOA campgrounds to prevent LGTBQ campfire sing-alongs

Unable to push thru Mr. McGoo's confirmation as head of the FBI

Had to return anti-vac bribe money after COVID-19 epidemic short circuited his plans to gut the National Health Agency

Had to table his 2020 reelection campaign slogan: "Let's Bomb The Hollywood Liberals Back To The Stone Age!"

Unable to force Webster-Merriam Dictionary to stop making the "p" in pneumonia silent

Never appeared in his Little Bo Peep costume to sign graphic novels at MediaCon in Miami Beach Florida

Never held an official press conference before establishing the new Department of Origami Engineering by Presidential Decree

Didn't force the Gallup Poll people to appear in court to explain why rabid raccoons have a higher public approval rating than he does.

The 1968 List: A Coos Bay Kid's SF and Fantasy Reading

by Dale Nelson

For Pierre Comtois

Did you make your own magazines when you were a youngster? That was one of my favorite activities.

Many issues of my home-made magazines survive in storage after more than 50 years. They're just a fraction of an estimated total of over 200 that I produced from the second half of 1967 to the end of 1969. Marvel Comics imitations account for most of them. Occasionally, somebody in the same grade at school would buy one of them from me.

Recently I took Trio #2, from mid-1968, out of the archives. My superhero called the Stalker premiered in it, and the issue featured a short science fiction story in comics form. And there was also a list of some science fiction and fantasy books I'd read. I didn't usually write down what I'd been reading. This was just something I felt like doing that day. I created a time capsule for my adult self to open.

When I wrote up that list, I was 12 years old, almost 13, living in a small house in a small town, but feeling the draw of big imaginary vistas. Hometown was a rainy Oregon coastal city, population 14,000, that was hurting from its overdependence on the vicissitudes of the lumber industry.

Ours was a small house – Zillow says 1,074 square feet, with two bedrooms for a family of four. My parents and my sister had those two official bedrooms. You got to my room through the kitchenette. A folding door separated the two rooms. My room held the washing machine. There was no dryer; Mom hung damp laundry on a clothesline outside on warm, dry days, or on a collapsible wooden rack in my room on the frequent cool, wet ones. It was also a storage room with Dad's work bench, and a bed for me. Most of the closet shelves held household goods like towels, but on one shelf I stored my comics, standing upright. This room held the family bookshelf, with Dad's accounting textbook and books about mines, a copy of Ditmars' "Reptiles of the World", Dana's Manual of Mineralogy, and a Bible atlas. The back door, a sliding glass panel, was beyond the foot of my bed.

It may sound Spartan, but, unlike some kids I knew, I did have my own room; and I was content with it. On the other hand, the sf I saw on TV wasn't enough to suit me. The only TV sf I saw was Star Trek and occasional teleplays of The Outer Limits in syndication, a rare Saturday afternoon movie, and the like. The Nelson family didn't have cable, so we received just the NBC affiliate.

I was eager to read the stuff. My book sources then included the public library, the 7th- and 8th-grade school library, the classroom "book club," a waterfront second-hand furniture store, and several stores that carried new paperbacks, notably the PayLess drugstore downtown. PayLess had racks of books, not just a spinner or two. Maybe it sounds like there would have been lots of books available; but none of these sources was an abundant provider.

And, even if the stores had provided lots of sf offerings, I couldn't I have bought more than a few paperbacks a year, on my weekly allowance. Most of my funds were spoken for, committed to keeping up with each week's new Marvel comics. Those, to be sure, provided an unceasing flood of sfnal ideas and imagery. Still, I did manage to find a fair bit of reading in my favorite genres.

The public library shelved science fiction books with other fiction, alphabetical by author's name. The sf volumes had a yellow cloth sticker on



the spine with an orange drawing of a rocket ship and an atom. There weren't very many such books.

I checked out a book or two at a time. Backpacks hadn't come in yet. I might carry a book under my arm, pressed against my side, under my coat to keep the rain off it.

My 1968 list bespeaks one proto-fan's early explorations of sf (and fantasy, too, since it listed Tolkien's *Hobbit* and *Lord of the Rings*). Many months would pass before I discovered fandom, with all the leads for reading it would bring, and moved to a different town, where I'd earn more pocket money and where pickings were a lot better than in Coos Bay.

I thought it would be interesting to revisit the 1968 list and, in an indirect way, to visit my young self as a representative small-town proto-fan, and compare my opinions from 1968 with my views in 2020 as an adult after rereading those same stories.

The 1968 list included four books not discussed here, Tolkien's *The Hobbit* and the three books of *The Lord of the Rings*, which I loved more than any of the others, giving them a unique 4+++ rating. Everyone today knows about Tolkien and the passion his works still evokes in many readers. So, rather than talking about Tolkien, I will discuss four other books that I'm pretty sure I read within a year of the compilation of the 1968 list.

Now, if you wish: in imagination, before they ban it, open a cyclamate-laced grapefruit Fresca soft drink, and for background music choose from Aretha Franklin's "Think," Donovan's "Hurdy Gurdy Man," the Stones' "Jumpin' Jack Flash," Herb Alpert's "This Guy's in Love with You," Cream's "Sunshine of Your Love," Johnny Cash's "Folsom Prison Blues," Simon & Garfunkel's "Mrs. Robinson"... and take a look at...

THE 1968 LIST

Not using a theoretical 1 (poor), twelve-year-old D. N. rated the books from 2 (fair) to 4 (excellent) and added very brief comments on a few of them. How do I see them now? For the most part, I realized that I see most of them now not too differently from how I did then. I've become a little harder to please, but almost none of this rereading was just a pure chore.



Asimov, Isaac. *Asimov's Mysteries* (1968)

Here we have Asimov's memorable very first published story, "Marooned Off Vesta," in which escaping water pushes the remains of a shattered craft, inhabited by a few survivors, towards a colonized asteroid and safety. This is a Kiplingesque story of men in great danger who keep their heads till a solution is figured out, and then treat themselves to a stiff one. I probably liked this story the most. The sequel, "The Anniversary," is forgettable.

Wendell Urth, a sort of futuristic Nero Wolfe, is the consulting detective or reasoner in four of the other stories. "The Singing Bell" concerns bubbles of lunar pumice – the best ones emitting sweet sounds when tapped; these are extremely valuable objects for which a criminal might kill. When they have a suspect, police can administer a psychoprobe that will reveal the truth, but it can be used only once. Hence career criminals seek to be probed for a minor offense; thereafter, they may commit bigger crimes without fear of being probed to detect their guilt. Police investigators try to be as sure as possible that their suspect is guilty before they probe him. Urth gets the guilty man to provide that evidence by means of a simple, clever trick.

"The Talking Stone" is a silicony -- a telepathic creature like the horta of *Star Trek's* "Devil in the Dark" episode in that it doesn't breathe air and it lives in rock of interest to human miners. (As I discovered when I poked around online, I'm not the first person to notice the similarity. It doesn't seem to me that I made the connection in 1968.) Urth figures out where a fabulous asteroid of high-grade uranium is in orbit, by evaluating the dying thoughts of a silicony.

The solution of "The Dying Night" depends on Urth's exploitation of the then-"fact" that Mercury doesn't rotate, but always presents one side to the sun while the other side remains in darkness (as in Nourse's "Brightside Crossing," which I read at this same period). Commenting on the reprinted story, Asimov admits that Mercury's rotation was discovered in 1965.

"The Key" is the final Urth mystery, something of a science fictional version of Poe's famous treasure-and-code mystery, "the Gold-Bug."

This fanzine has readers who know sf a lot better than I do; so, tell me: wasn't it the case that the sf magazines (and the mystery mags and the magazines that featured weird fiction) really went in for revenge

stories and poetic justice endings 60 years or so ago? When fans like us wrote our first stories, weren't they often this sort of thing? So we'd probably have liked "Obituary," with a plot involving a time machine and a much put-upon wife, and "Star Light," where, as always, the perfect crime doesn't pay.

Asimov acknowledges that "What's in a Name?" isn't science fiction. Some readers may feel that Asimov didn't quite play fair in this one. My best friend and I liked puns 50 years ago more than we do now. Maybe we liked "A Loint of Paw" when we were boys.

"The Billiard Ball" is the book's last story. If there's a mystery, it's whether or not murder was even committed.

Did I really read "Pâté de Foie Gras" and "I'm in Marsport Without Hilda" at age 12? I sure didn't bother in 2020.

This book received a 3 out of 4 rating in my 1968 list. I might knock a half point off if I were rating this now.

-----. **Fantastic Voyage (1966)**

Asimov wrote this novel from the screenplay for a 1966 movie. These many years after I first read it, I enjoyed revisiting it as a period piece: a Cold War espionage/sci-fi thriller complete with alpha-male agent wolfishly pursuing the brainy, gorgeous assistant assigned to a preoccupied middle-aged scientist. Take the book for what it was and those cringe-making scenes possess a certain period appeal.

Asimov also knows just what he's doing when he invokes "hyperspace" – friend of so many space operas – and a "form of energy not part of our normal universe" – he's making the fantasy of super-miniaturization "plausible."

A defector scientist who knows vital secrets has been injured in an assassination attempt, and a blood clot must be destroyed from within his body by a team that will use an atomic submarine to reach their target. Down there, at bacterial scale (but not all the way down to molecular scale), the crew encounters hazards as Benes's body becomes a bizarre and dangerous terrain; plus, one of the crew is a traitor. Grant has to figure out who is committing acts of sabotage that will force the crew to abort the mission.

Asimov must have tackled the book – reportedly written in a few weeks for \$5000 – as a challenge, to see how many of the scientific implausibilities and unbelievabilities he could anticipate and – sort of – figure out a response to.

I'd have read the book long before I saw the movie. My 1968 list: 3 ("It's all right when the action FINALLY starts"). That still sounds reasonable.

Beagle, Peter S. The Last Unicorn (1968)

This novel doesn't appear on my mid-1968 list, but I read it before another 12 months had passed.

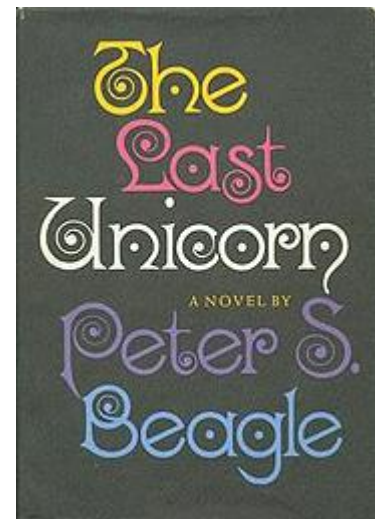
The children's section of the library contained Lloyd Alexander's five Prydain books and the Narnian Chronicles by C. S. Lewis, but, so far as I remember, the only fantasy I found in the adult section was *The Lord of the Rings*, Poul Anderson's *Three Hearts and Three Lions*, the book by Barbara Byfield that I discuss below, and this book, which was brand new at the time. I hardly knew what to look for. *The Once and Future King* probably was in the collection, but I don't suppose I'd heard of it as a major fantasy novel.

Beagle's sophisticated novel of the last unicorn, the insecure magician Schmendrick, loyal Molly Grue, and wistful Captain Cully (who wants to be the subject of a Child ballad) was certainly aimed at adults.

In paperback, the Tolkien books had been a recent spectacular success. Casting about for more Tolkien to sell, Ballantine gathered a number of short works, such as *Farmer Giles of Ham* and *The Adventures of Tom Bombadil*, into its Tolkien Reader (Sept. 1966).

As an introduction to the Reader, Ballantine included "Tolkien's Magic Ring" by Peter S. Beagle, reprinted from *Holiday* magazine (June 1966). Beagle had already published an engaging motor-scooter travelogue, *I See by My Outfit*, in which LotR is said to be a "private Gospel" between himself and friends, in 1965.

But now this, his own fantasy novel, *The Last Unicorn*, might have been the first hardcover fantasy to be released with dust jacket copy invoking Tolkien. Viking Press gave it a publication date of 1 March 1968.



“Like Tolkien’s *The Lord of the Rings*, this odd, evocative, and brilliant book utilizes an imaginary world to connect profoundly with the real questions and aspirations of thoughtful and sensitive readers. *The Last Unicorn* may well join that widely read masterpiece as a book that speaks with a mysterious but tangible resonance to a receptive audience.” So read the front inside flap. That made the novel a must-try book for me.

Compare the evident slowness of publishers of hardcover books to the opportunism of paperback publishers! They began to invoke Tolkien quickly, once the Ace and Ballantine reprints were selling many thousands of copies. For example, Lancer’s first Conan release, *Conan the Adventurer*, appeared in 1966, promising not only “a hero mightier than Tarzan” but “adventures more imaginative than *‘Lord of the Rings.’*”

However, whatever else one might say about *The Last Unicorn*, it’s a novel whose eucatastrophic ending is preceded by incidents that are very un-Tolkienian, such as the irreverent passage about a former-days vogue among magicians of turning water into wine. That seemed immature – a snark at the Christian belief that the miracles of Jesus were made through his divine nature and were not effected by sorcery or conjuring tricks.

Early the next year, the Ballantine *Last Unicorn* cover was one of the most beautiful American paperback designs published to date, a wraparound painting by Gervasio Gallardo and a minimum of text. It had no blurbs! The use of wraparound paintings – sometimes by Gallardo, but often by other stylish artists – was to be an attractive feature of the Ballantine Adult Fantasy series. The interior typography – surely it’s Garamond – was dignified and something distinctive, and would reappear in other BAF books.

The cover price was 95c, like the Tolkien books, and that was perhaps a bit pricey for a mass market paperback in 1969, but Ballantine’s confidence, by them, and in the fantasy genre, is suggested by the way the designers did not try to make the book look specifically like a Tolkien knock-off.

Ballantine launched its Adult Fantasy series in March 1969 with Fletcher Pratt’s *The Blue Star*. The publisher used the emblem of a unicorn’s head – not, for example, a dragon -- to draw attention to the series. There can be little doubt that the emblem was suggested by Beagle’s novel. Unquestionably the sales of the Tolkien books were the primary impetus for the flowering of paperback fantasy, but it seems likely that the sales of *The Last Unicorn* also nudged publishers to look with favor on fantasy.

I had a little flowering of fantasy of my own. In March 1968, I wrote my longest story to date, an untitled tale of 15 very short chapters. Up to that point I’d written only science fiction or weird stories, all of them brief. My villain, the “Crimson Gargoyle,” might have owed something to Beagle’s *Red Bull*.

As a kid I didn’t rate *The Last Unicorn*. Today I might give it 3 out of 4, but frankly I don’t know if I’ll ever read it again. It’s kind of a Sixties youth-culture period piece.

Blish, James. *Star Trek* (1967) and *Star Trek 2* (1968)

Little needs to be said about the content of these books. I wrote in 1968: “3 3/4 ... or so.” I liked the second book more. It included Blish’s adaptations of “Arena,” that is, the Gorn one, a boyhood favorite of mine, and “The City on the Edge of Forever,” plus six other stories. “50c each, and probably worth it.” These would have been among the first sf books I owned. My memory is that Coos Bay’s PayLess Drugs was where I bought the first book.

The back cover copy introduced the three prominent characters: “CAPTAIN JAMES KIRK ... must make decisions in his contact with other worlds that can affect the future course of civilization throughout the Universe.” “SCIENCE OFFICER SPOCK -- Inheriting a precise, logical thinking pattern from his father, a native of the planet Vulcanis [sic], Mr. Spock maintains a danger Earth trait...an intense curiosity about things of alien origin.” “YEOMAN RAND – Easily the most popular member of the crew, the truly ‘out-of-this-world’ blonde has drawn the important assignment of secretary to the Captain on her first mission in deep space.” Of course, the crewmember with the beehive hair appeared in fewer than ten episodes.

The second *Star Trek* book came to me by way of the “READ Magazine Paperback Club.” Kids interested in participating filled out a form and gave it, with the money for the discount-priced books, to the teacher. The class order was sent to the address that the teacher, but not the students, knew, no later than a certain date, and some weeks later the books arrived and were distributed in class.

For kids in towns where sf pickings were few, a club like this was a welcome source of books. At this time, when I was in 7th and 8th grade, I saw paperbacks advertised in an insert in issues of *Read* magazine, which I wrote about here at *Fadeaway* (see “READING..... SF and the Macabre in a Free 1960s Middle School Magazine” in *Fadeaway* #61, for July-August 2019, pages 3-13).

The blurb on the front of *Star Trek 2* says: “The ultimate trip! Worlds beyond time! Worlds beyond ken!” In February 1968, when *Star Trek 2* was published, Kubrick’s movie *2001: A Space Odyssey* was still two months away from theatrical release. In 1969 it would be relaunched and marketed as “The Ultimate Trip” (<https://movieposters.ha.com/itm/movie-posters/science-fiction/2001-a-space-odyssey-mgm-1969-psychedelic-eye-one-sheet-27-x-41-1/a/7072-83151.s>). *Star Trek* and Bantam Books got in there first.

"Worlds beyond time" might allude to two teleplays retold by Blish: "The City on the Edge of Forever," with Harlan Ellison's outstanding script -- and to "Tomorrow Is Yesterday." That one is a mediocre caper-story in which the Enterprise goes back to Earth of the 1960s and appears in American skies as a UFO, and Kirk and Sulu have to steal Air Force film that shows the ship from the future. "Worlds beyond ken" -- "ken" meaning "knowledge" was as unusual usage then as it is today. For most kids in 1968, "Ken" was Barbie's consort.

Oh, and February 1968 was also the cover date of the first science fiction magazine I ever bought: an issue of Analog. Galaxy and F&SF might've been available, but if they were I don't seem to have paid them much attention, and I wonder if Analog was the only sf magazine offered for sale in Coos Bay stores at the time. Anyway, I bought that issue not for the first part of the Harry Harrison serial, The Horse Barbarians, or for the Poul Anderson story or anything but the feature article on Star Trek. It focuses on the technical stuff: the design of the Enterprise, the meaning of the various levels of warp speed, phasers, tricorders, etc.

I loved that article, but didn't catch fire from anything else in the issue, and probably never bought another copy of a science fiction magazine till I moved from Coos Bay and, in an Ashland supermarket, spotted the September 1969 Amazing with artwork by Steranko for a Harlan Ellison story, "Dogfight on 101" (late titled "Along the Scenic Route"). I was a Steranko nut at that time. I even persuaded my sister to buy for me a 1970 issue of Marvel's Our Love Story with his artwork. By then, he was coming to the end of his work for Marvel comics.

Back to 1968. September saw Ballantine's release of The Making of Star Trek, a fat 95c paperback with a photo insert. I pored over that. Interesting to note: Bantam's The Making of Kubrick's 2001 didn't appear till April 1970.

Since I didn't reread these, I won't give them current ratings, but I might keep these copies, which I've hung on to for so many years, till my dying day for sentimental reasons.



Byfield, Barbara Ninde. The Glass Harmonica: A Lexicon of the Fantastical (1967)

Somehow I came across The Glass Harmonica at the public library. I relished the author's amusing and profuse illustrations. Her fine-point pen drawings featured the likes of trolls, dwarves, lanterns, candles, peasants, wizards, caverns, crags, hags, alchemists, garrets, ghouls, tinkers, weapons, and dragons, done in a scratchy manner with lots of dark corners adorned with spiderwebs.

Just now I said "dwarves" -- not "dwarfs." Byfield's usage reflected Tolkien's, and there's at least one drawing that depicts a scene from The Fellowship of the Ring, namely Gandalf striking the Moria-bridge with his staff and breaking it, to prevent the dreadful Balrog from pursuing the wizard's companions.

Probably creating her book around 1966, in the thick of the Hobbit Craze, Barbara Ninde Byfield (1930-1988) may have been the first 1960s writer, outside fannish circles, to pick up "dwarves" from Tolkien and put it into public print.

Byfield continues, "Dwarf doors, particularly those set in the rock sides of mountains, are not always visible at first. A magic word ... may be necessary to make the outlines of the door appear, or they may be apparent only on certain days of the year. ... Keys are not unknown for opening the doors, but by and large the operative device is the spoken word." Surely she's alluding to Tolkien's Moria-gate.

And also: "Dwarves most often appear at mealtimes, unexpectedly, particularly when there is something very good to eat in the kitchen." She'd surely read The Hobbit as well as The Fellowship of the Ring. In an appendix on weapons, Byfield shows that the preferred weapon of Dwarves is the battle-axe (while that of Elves is bow and arrows). That's Tolkienian too.

Like Tolkien's Gandalf, Byfield's wizards are "choleric when presented with incompetence or stupidity. They may take new names from time to time." They often travel without revealing their identities, favoring wide-brimmed hats, but are "touchingly fond of casting off" their disguises "and revealing themselves at opportune moments." Surely Byfield had a scene in The Two Towers in mind.

Fortunately, dragons may be readily dispatched by a blow struck at a soft spot in their armor. When a sword is broken, "it may be mended... and once reforged it is better than before." Byfield says Elves live in tree-houses or caves. Was she remembering Lothlórien and the dwellings of The Hobbit's wood-elves?

In quoting from The Glass Harmonica, I've emphasized remarks that sound Tolkienian. Her way of visualizing spider-webs (pp. 10, 51, 138) reminds me of Tolkien's way of drawing them. Whether Byfield was deliberately imitating Tolkien or not, I undoubtedly made a subconscious connection.

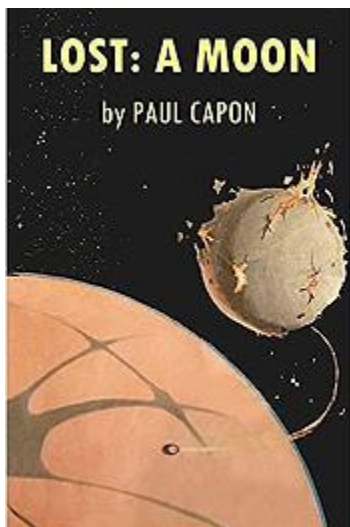
However, Byfield makes extensive use of non-Tolkienian sources, including traditional fairy tales, popular medievalism, and old cinematic vampires, but one part of the book's charm is that it doesn't let on to its content as imaginary, e.g. by alluding to any fairy tale by title. Instead, the tongue-in-cheek pretense is kept up that *The Glass Harmonica* deals with "the mystical order of things."

Without getting carried away by her own cleverness, Byfield is witty. A memorable drawing of a scaly, weary demon is a clever allusion to Jean-François Millet's painting of the Man with the Hoe. Of course, I didn't get the joke when I was a kid. (In the same way, when I heard bits of Mozart's *Barber of Seville* in a Bugs Bunny cartoon or a brief quotation from Bach's *Air from BWV 1068* in the *Yellow Submarine* movie, I hardly knew what I was hearing. In fact, I never thought the latter was anything but part of the movie's soundtrack till I was older. But I liked it.)

When, on a few occasions, Byfield notes things that relate to points of traditional Christian doctrine (e.g. when she says that witches' familiars like to have a bit of a consecrated Host as a birthday treat), it may be with the same ironic tone as that with which she treats folklore and popular fiction, but it's regrettable. As a kid, I don't suppose I caught on.

Veteran fan Dainis Bisenieks told me that *The Glass Harmonica* was much liked in fannish circles. A paperback edition appeared in 1973 as *The Book of Weird*, with a glued binding that was apt to fail. I wouldn't be able to swear that I read *The Glass Harmonica* cover to cover when I checked it out from the public library, perhaps after compiling my 1968 list, but that I pored over it I know.

Though I didn't rate this as a boy, now I would award it a personal rating of 3.5. If I had to winnow my book collection way, way down, this mostly likeable book would keep making the cut, but admittedly in part just for sentimental reasons.



Capon, Paul. *Lost: A Moon!* (1955)

Raggedy Ann publisher Bobbs-Merrill released *Lost: A Moon*. Offered to the market for library books aimed at youngsters, the novel's cool idea is that the Martian satellite Phobos is actually a hollow metal sphere.

Curiously, according to Wikipedia this notion was floated by the Russian scientist Shklovsky... around 1958, i.e. three years after Capon's book was published. I wonder how prolific British author Capon (1911-1969) came to proffer this notion thus early. Maybe he was just lucky, like Jonathan Swift who, in 1726, he posited two Martian satellites – which were not observed till 1877. Moreover, Donald Wollheim exploited the idea that both Phobos and Deimos were spaceships in a novel published the same year as Capon's (see below).

Anyway, to return to Capon's book: after they have seen strange lights in the sky for several days, a famous painter and his teenaged daughter and her male friend are kidnapped and taken to Phobos. The moon is in fact a computer, emotionless but aggressive in its acquisition of information, which it seeks from its three Terran captives and a sailor which it has confused with William Shakespeare. It was built by the Martians hundreds of years ago, who evidently have left their home world. Deimos also is an artificial satellite, but it apparently has worn out in the course of time.

The teenaged characters briefly visit Mars, and here the description of the fauna reminded me a bit of Stanley G. Weinbaum. Ruins of the old Martians remain. The two get back to Phobos, and then the girl's father effects a second escape, to Earth, with the destruction of Phobos (hence the book's title). I think Capon tried to include some plausible physics while writing a pretty fair entertainment for young readers.

My list's annotation: "A good S.F. story. It is about Mars. I loved it, so will you, if you like S. F." Rated 3 ¼ out of 4 possible. Today? Oh, 2.5, I suppose.

Christopher, John. *The White Mountains* (1967)

This well-known novel is a post-apocalyptic story in which the Tripods conquered the earth a hundred years ago and "cap" adolescents at age 14, placing a mesh on their heads that affects the brain. Society is now peaceful, a semi-medieval arrangement in which curiosity evidently doesn't survive the capping process, and there are things one doesn't talk about. The metal cap implanted on one's head ensures docility. Occasionally, capping doesn't work properly and the victims become insane Vagrants, looked after but kept on the margins of society.

There are also a few humans who have escaped capping and who survive in alpine hideaways, and it's the White Mountains that 13-year-old Will, his cousin Henry, and the French teenager with whom they take up are determined to reach.

Their journey is arduous. Will injures his ankle, catches a lingering illness, and receives a wound that becomes infected, as well as enduring hunger and weariness. The wound is inflicted by the French youth, Jean-Paul (Beanpole), who realizes that Will carries a tracking device placed under his skin while he was unconscious after being brought aboard a Tripod.

Earlier, Will had recuperated in a French community that he was tempted to join by submitting to capping, since the people are happy, he is welcomed and promised high status, and he's attracted to the pretty Eloise. But her joy at the prospect of going away somewhere to serve the Tripods dismays Will.

The tensions that arise between Will and his cousin add realism to the narrative. The journey started thanks to Will talking with a stranger who feigns insanity, passing as a Vagrant and calling himself Ozymandias. He supplies Will with a map.

This part – the idea of a boy being able to get from the Winchester area of England to the Swiss Alps – was a bit less plausible. It's also a handy convenience that the boys found grenades in the Metro during their exploration of a vast ruined city, one of which, lobbed by Will in midair, takes out the Tripod that menaced them.

The society of the Capped is like the Village in the TV series *The Prisoner*, which I would encounter a year after writing the sf list, with the important difference that, reading the book, one doesn't have the sense of pervasive surveillance; but the Tripods exert even more power over the minds of their subjects than the human masters of the Village do.

John Christopher approves lying and theft as needed by the fugitive boys since this is like "war" (p. 168 pb). He gives some attention to weather and terrain, but all descriptive passages are brief, in keeping with a target readership of middle-school-age boys.

The book's a pretty good read, but I thought perhaps Christopher could have made the fugitive theme a bit more intense. My mid-1968 list of sf and fantasy books didn't cite the two sequels, but the master reading list I began to keep in 1974 says I did read *The City of Gold and Lead* and *The Pool of Fire* too.

Like *Huckleberry Finn*, *The White Mountains* is essentially a running-away-from-home story. Will leaves his father and mother and never regrets their absence from his life. The last we hear from either of them is Will's mother saying to him: "I will not discuss it with you [the possibility of Will having a room of his own]. If you say another word, I shall speak to your father" (p. 44).

This wasn't the last running-away-from-home novel on my 1968 list.

The 12-year-old DN said: "In this book, you'll learn the plight of several boys in the future. A fairly new book." I gave it 3 out of 4. I'll stick with that now, all these years later.

del Rey, Lester. *Outpost of Jupiter* (1963)

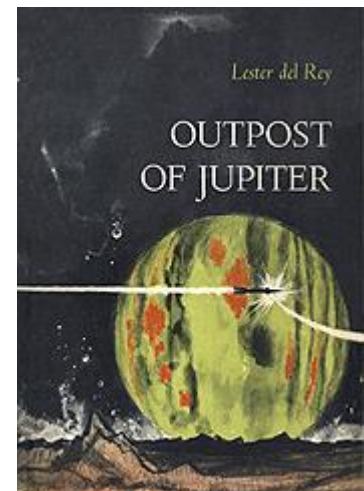
I suppose that I'd have said Lester del Rey was one of my favorite authors when I was 12. In 1968, I liked this novel a lot and assigned it a 4+. It moves right along. The hero is Bob Wilson, age 18, stuck on Ganymede with his father, who has had a stroke. Bob will not be able to get back to Earth in time to start his college studies in linguistics. However, as it turns out, he plays a key role in communicating with the inhabitants of Jupiter, who turn out to be friendly despite what looked like an unprovoked attack in space.

The plot includes an outbreak of an extraterrestrial plague. Despite the existence of advanced spacecraft capable of flying at a million miles an hour, computers used punch cards and Bob operates a typewriter.

A weakness of the plot that might not have been obvious to youngsters is the delay Bob and his friend Red choose to make in revealing that an alien ship has landed and that a spoiled little girl communicates with its crew. The delay helps maintain suspense and lets the boys, rather than their elders, deal with the Jovians. The boys "don't figure it was worth worrying people more than they are right now" when people are coming down with the sometimes fatal illness (Chapter 10). OK, but that seems like a pretty big secret to keep to yourself.

Today this gets 3.5 as superior sf for young readers. A real plus was the absence of del Rey's too-common weird attribution of emotions to robots.

----- The Runaway Robot (1965)



Roger Simpson is governor of the Ganymede settlement. When he tells his family the good news that they've been recalled to Earth, 16-year-old Paul is devastated when he learns his faithful robot Rex must stay behind. Paul sneaks off the ship to Earth just before takeoff.

Rex had been sold to a Ganymedean fungus farmer, but ran away because he wanted to see Paul one more time, even if from afar, before takeoff. The two flee the spaceport together and hide in one of their secret caves. Paul schemes to get to Earth together with the robot. Rex is hired by a crusty freighter captain and Paul stows away on Becker's ship...

It's Rex who tells the story. Del Rey presents the robot as a machine that can feel lonely, embarrassed, excited, or a sense of wonder, and is completely loyal; when "he" is reunited with Paul and is hugged, Rex feels "full of some crazy emotion."

For the purposes of this article, and perhaps back in 1968, I read a 1966 Scholastic Press paperback printing. A curious fact, though, is that the original 1965 edition was published by Westminster Press. Westminster Press published books at the liberal end of the religious spectrum. In 1966 they released *Situation Ethics: The New Morality* by Joseph Fletcher -- who was once almost as well-known as Bishop James Pike.

Fletcher denounced what he regarded as "legalism" and contended that whatever was "loving" was good, which, depending on circumstances, might include abortion, non-marital sex, lying, homosexuality, euthanasia, suicide, and so on. I don't suppose this 1966 book was Westminster's first publication relating to humanistic morality with a religious patina.

For many years now, situation ethics has been par for the course in the mainline churches, such as United Methodist, United Church of Christ, Unitarian, Episcopalian, Presbyterian Church of the USA, and many members of the Roman Catholic Church, etc.; but it was certainly controversial at the time. (Of course, the now-mainstream "new morality" remains unacceptable to many thoughtful religious persons.)

I wonder if there was an intended link between this kind of humanist ethical reasoning and del Rey's book.

Thus, the novel raises matters of theft, lying, disobedience to parents, etc. The robot finds itself confused sometimes when Paul advocates behavior it has been programmed to see as wrong. Mostly, though, del Rey seems simply to be telling a mildly entertaining story.

In this unspecified year, humans coexist with Mercurians, Martians, Plutonians, and Venusians. The author evidently simply decided not to let science interfere with his story. When he wrote this book, del Rey presumably knew (from the 1962 Mariner 2 mission) that Venus's atmosphere was nearly a thousand degrees Fahrenheit and, thus, despite what we read in *The Runaway Robot*, not a place for Earth people to go for vacations, let alone a hospitable world for native humanoids.

According to the 1979 *Science Fiction Encyclopedia* edited by Peter Nicholls, this novel was actually written by Paul Fairman from del Rey's detailed outline.

My 1968 verdict on *The Runaway Robot*: 4+ ("Beneath its seemingly childish title there lies great SF.") Now? 2.5. It hasn't aged well.

-----. **Siege Perilous (1966)**

According to Nicholls, this novel too was written by Paul Fairman from an outline by del Rey; but del Rey's is the name on the book.

My memory is that I bought a used copy of the Lancer paperback of *Siege Perilous* at H&H Furniture Company, a rundown waterfront second-hand store. *Siege Perilous* might have been the first sf paperback I ever bought, not counting a few books acquired through the Scholastic Books school "club." H&H seems rarely to have got in any "pocket books" of interest to me. But this one attracted me because of the enticing cover art by Freas.

The scenario: Fred Hunter has been stuck on a space station for ten years, unable to return to Earth because of a severe injury. I guess the idea is that Earth's greater gravity would be too much for him to survive. His wife has died and his son is now a grown man. For some reason the son has never come to the space station. Astronauts do come up in shifts. International tensions preoccupy Earth's governments.

The space station is suddenly invaded by mysterious individuals in antiquated-style helmets. Also a madman named Paulson seems to be in charge. When the invaders are heard talking, their diction is that of pulp-style movies. Hunter, Callaghan, and Sandy, the book's sketched-in love interest, try to figure out what to do.

The men sabotage the station such that when the invaders fire three of its atomic missiles at earth, the missiles simply go into earth orbit and are destroyed from the planet. There's a lot of slipping around through air ducts, etc. On page 106 one of the invader's helmets is removed to reveal an ugly alien face.

The author must have written this short novel very quickly, as a pot-boiler. I repeatedly had an impression of inattention to detail, but chose to keep reading rapidly. It certainly is not worth reading again, and

wouldn't have been worth reading at all, so far as I'm concerned, except that it fits the "it-was-one-of-my-first-sf-novels" project.

It's obviously contrived. Hunter's injury and his isolation quicken our interest and get our attention in the first few pages; before long the loneliness theme is dropped and, what's more, we discover, without any explanation that has registered on my mind, that he probably will be able to return to earth after all, with his lady, who during the course of the novel has done virtually nothing.

The key element of the story is that the Martians speak in B-movie lingo. It's presumably meant to be amusing, but for me that worked against the development of much suspense or eeriness. The movie angle has some plot justification: the Martians have formed their impressions of earth people from the movies, and Hunter is able, as the book concludes, to assure the Martian leader that we're not really like that and are interested in fair play, trade, etc. Readers expecting a slam-bang conclusion will have been disappointed, but I was able to close the book feeling that I'd been mildly entertained -- and was glad the book wasn't a page longer.

My 1968 review: "It's pretty good. Available only in paperback as far as I know." Rated 3 out of 4. Now? 2.5. There's no reason to bother with it unless you have some extrinsic reason, as I did, for reading it.

Knight, Damon (editor). Beyond Tomorrow (1965)

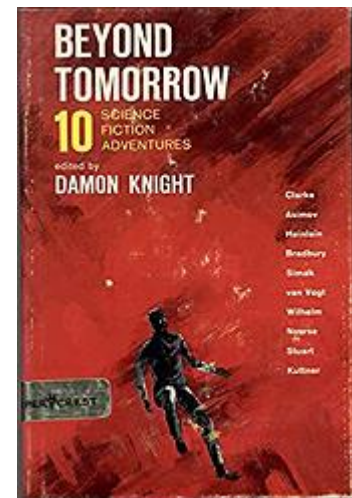
Knight assembled what must have been one of the first science fiction anthologies aimed at schools and the children's section of public libraries -- and what must remain one of the best anthologies ever, whether for youngsters or adults.

Beyond Tomorrow includes such classics and Hall of Famers as Asimov's "Nightfall," Bradbury's "The Million-Year Picnic," Heinlein's "Coventry," Simak's "Desertion," Stuart's (Campbell's) "Twilight," and van Vogt's "The Seesaw." Only less famous than those are Clarke's "The Deep Range," Kuttner's "Happy Ending," Nourse's "Brightside Crossing," and Kate Wilhelm's "The Mile-Long Spaceship."

That's quite a batch of standout stories to have read before your 13th birthday.

Knight seized this opportunity to recommend "More Good Reading in Science Fiction." He lists 14 books, none of which was specifically intended for kids -- so Knight's list must have got some adolescents into the adult section of their public library to look for Asimov's *The Martian Way and Other Stories*, Simak's *City*, etc. Knight leaves it to his readers to discover that several of these authors had written books intended for youngsters: Heinlein's acclaimed juveniles such as *Tunnel in the Sky*, Asimov's *Lucky Starr* books, Nourse's *Trouble on Titan*, *Star Surgeon*, and *Raiders from the Rings*.

As a 12-year-old, I particularly liked "Nightfall" -- now identifiable as a good example of sf's stories set in worlds that are inhabited by people like us, but with gaudy features that would preclude humanlike life or even any type of life. I also approved "Twilight," "The Seesaw," "Brightside Crossing," and "Desertion." I gave the book a 3 ¾ rating. Now? Sure, 3 ¾ still makes sense to me. It's good enough to put on the same shelf with *The Science Fiction Hall of Fame Vol. 1*, the short story collection edited by Silverberg.



Pohl, Frederik (editor). The Ninth Galaxy Reader (1966)

When you stepped inside the Coos Bay public library, the children's section and a small gallery were to your right. From the gallery, I remember a large abstract painting, probably in acrylics, titled "The Lord of the Rings." Decades later, when I sought information about it, the library staff tried to help me but weren't able to tell me anything.

When you entered the library, to your left were the magazine area and the adult fiction shelves. It was on this side of the library that, perhaps in 1966, I noticed a display of Ballantine's paperbacks of *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings*. My 1968 list handed out a 4+++ rating.

I discovered some volumes of *The Best from Fantasy and Science Fiction* and the *Galaxy Reader* series. If only I'd found a book called *Invaders from the Ninth Galaxy*. That was the kind of thing I wanted.

What would the 12-year-old me have made of Damon Knight's "An Ancient Madness"? The "ancient madness" is sexual love. Klef, a Fisher, comes from the Mainland to the Weavers' island to get laid and selects Mary. She's sixteen and he's her first, and, to everyone's consternation or concern, after Klef leaves the next day, she pines for him. Society is stable because everyone is genetically engineered for a particular function

that ought to be enough to make life satisfactory in this post-apocalyptic world. When argument and electronic therapy don't cure Mary, Klef himself is brought back to talk Mary out of her fixation, but he finds that there's an emotional bond he hadn't expected. But there's no place for love in this static culture.

Even at 12, though, I might well have guessed what was coming in Philip Jose Farmer's "The King of the Beasts." A specimen of that violent animal Man is preserved for zoo visitors.

Richard Wilson's "Watchers in the Glade": spaceship mutineers maroon five correspondents and two medics on a planet upon which the only food is telepathic plants that squirm in terror when an Earthman comes to harvest one. The anguish of preying upon sentient plants, the hallucinations they suffer (evidently imparted by the plants), and their isolation, can drive human beings insane or reduce them to apathy. The story is disturbing and certainly a standout entry in the category of weird sf.

Brian Aldiss's "Jungle Substitute": 2000 years from now, at the beginning of on Wellpurging Night, when an in fact mechanical bird monster terrifies the superstitious humans inhabiting the largely automated old city, Gina rescues Robin from the pointless life he was headed for. Robin has accidentally but without grief killed his mother, a Hag dressed for the savage rites of the annual event. The fugitive pair are chased by robotic law officers. This is a dystopian tale with a happy ending.

Harry Harrison's "How the Old World Died": Another story of the future in which robots dominate the world, but in this case the robots just make more robots, from available metal including damaged robots, etc. People must try to live an agrarian life, scavenging robot pieces to make wagons. Like the Farmer story, this one is very short and probably didn't impress its original readers very much.

Frederik Pohl's "The Children of Night": As I began to reread this story, it seemed to be typical of Galaxy, a satire of the Madison Avenue public relations business with no sense of wonder or excitement although set in the future. The main character, Odin "Gunner" Gunnarson, has been assigned to manipulate mass opinion in favor of a telemetry and tracking station to be built on Earth for Arcturus, which has been at war with Terrans till very recently.

Gunner is like a character in some 1950s movie about publicity, hustling about, telling one person to "Hire these girls I've marked for your staff" and another to line up appropriate food for the aliens, etc. One of the items on his to-do list is to invent a "big lie." Halfway through, the story becomes abruptly grimmer when Gunner visits a hospital, seeing children who had been maimed by the aliens who captured them when Arcturus attacked a Martian colony. Gunner thereafter meets an Arcturan representative, Knafti, who criticizes him for changing the truth and, for a reason or reasons unclear to me, says the war may have to be fought again. In desperation, Gunner arranges a tense meeting with a prominent opponent of the Arcturan base proposal, Knafti, and several others. Knafti says he did not do the maiming. Gunner gets everyone angry at him and, accordingly, willing to talk with each other. The story's implication is that differences are resolved and the base will be built – a success for Gunner who, however, doesn't get the girl, his assistant Candace Harmon. This piece's elements didn't quite come together for me in my sixties. Could I really have struggled through to the end when I was 12?

Lester del Rey presents a very anthropomorphic, or rather anthropopathic, robot in "To Avenge Man." Sam the robot realizes slowly, feels suddenly awkward, hopes, shakes off his imaginings by force of will, swears in annoyance, etc. While he (del Rey's pronoun) is left on the moon, nuclear war and nerve gas destroy the human race. Believing that aliens did this, Sam and his robot forces go out into the galaxy, and eventually to Andromeda, teaching the inhabitants of new planets about the glory that was Man, and seeking the killers of the human race. Of course, it was humans themselves who made war until they doomed humanity to extinction. When Sam learns this, he suppresses the truth.

Roger Zelazny's "The Monster and the Maiden" probably didn't please me at age 12 much better than it did now, a silly short in which dragons sacrifice one of their virgins to a knight in armor every year.

C. C. MacApp's "A Flask of Fine Arcturan" is a would-be-funny satire of business communications with characters who have names such as Goodwyn Grype, D. U. Plicate, and I. C. Abuck. A race of intelligent two-inch termites appears. The termites like to be paid in ground-up pencils, which they eat.

Larry Niven's "Wrong-Way Street" is an alien-artifact-found-on-the-Moon story, like Clarke's "The Sentinel" and Budrys's "Rogue Moon." It's also a time travel story. I don't think I'll say more than that about it – it's easy to find – except that, in 2020 and I'll guess in 1968 too, I liked it a lot more than most of the stories in this book.

John Brunner's "Wasted on the Young" is mostly dialogue between a debauched young man and a representative of the future society. Hal Page thought he could beat the obligation of 300 years of some unspecified service required to pay for his extravagant life by painlessly killing himself. However, his brain is salvaged from his suicide attempt and will become captain and crew of a necessarily sublight-speed round trip to Rigel. His interlocutor, Dobson, acknowledges that Page might go insane during those 300 years.

In the final story, R. A. Lafferty's "Slow Tuesday Night," a way to "remove" something psychological called the Abebaios block has been discovered. Now people can make decisions and live faster, making fortunes and losing them, getting married, divorced, and remarried, all in a night. With character names such as Basil Bagelbaker and Stanley Skuldugger, it's obvious that Lafferty intends farce.

An admission: I almost never care for humorous sf. Fritz Leiber's "Rump-Titty-Titty-Tum-TAH-Tee," C. S. Lewis's "Ministering Angels," and Terry Bisson's "Bears Discover Fire" are among the few humorous sf stories I like. Damon Knight's "The Big Pat Boom" might have amused me more than "To Serve Man." It's a while since I read Howard Waldrop's "The Ugly Chickens." Was that a humorous story? I believe I liked that. So I don't utterly abhor humorous sf, but as a rule I don't go to sf for grins and chuckles. Really, do very many of us? Did we as kids?

To return to The Ninth Galaxy Reader: I didn't remember any of these stories from my reading of them over 50 years ago. In 2020 I liked the Wilson and the Niven the most. My 1968 rating: 2 ("It's more advanced, more drawn-out stuff, but still sometimes interesting"). I didn't comment on any of the individual stories. I didn't care for some of these stories as an adult, either. I'm afraid two good ones doesn't lift the anthology's rating above 2.

Silverberg, Robert. *Conquerors from the Darkness* (1965)

I must have read this one soon after I wrote up that 1968 list. And whoa! *Conquerors from the Darkness* was one violent book for the kids' section of the library.

The text I read for this article was the Dell Mayflower paperback. Mayflower books were aimed at adolescents, with titles such as *My Friend Flicka*, *Jazz Country*, and *The Coach Nobody Liked*. I assume the text of this paperback is the same as the hardcover edition from Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, not a text that was amped up.

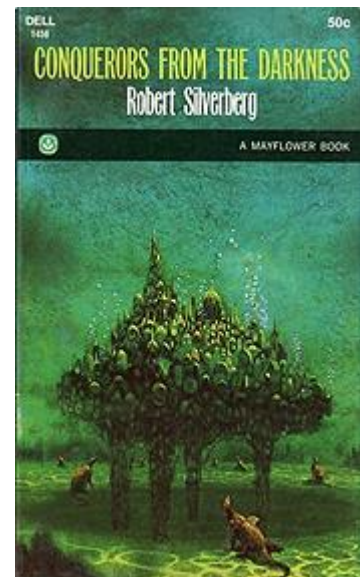
So what we have for hero is an 18-year-old who can't stand the staid ways of his home city's merchant culture with heir custom of paying tribute to the Sea-Lords. He feels driven by an inchoate urge to acquire power and resolves to get away if he possibly can. He approaches a group of Sea-Lords on the pier and says he wants to leave Vythain; will they take him? When one of the tribute-takers threatens him, Dovirr throws him into the sea.

Dovirr's opponent climbs back onto the pier and goes for the unarmed Dovirr with his sword, but is disarmed by the chief Sea-Lord, the Thalassarch Gowyn. Then Gowyn tells Dovirr to run the man through in cold blood. You'd have expected the hero of a Young Adult novel to take a stand for the defenseless man's life. But Dovirr obeys Gowyn.

I read the novel figuring, "Okay, Silverberg's going to show Dovirr Stargan undergoing one or more crises that will humble him and make him a man of mercy." None of those crises happen. Dovirr faces challenges to strength and courage, from other Sea-Lords, from pirates and then from the Star Beasts, but he goes from success to success, at last becoming the lord of this future Earth.

Earth is now a world of 50 floating cities. The oceans are inhabited by the Seaborn Ones, who began as humans genetically altered before Earth was conquered and most of its science forgotten. The planet had been flooded a thousand years ago by the Dhuchay'y, aliens remembered as the Star Beasts. The Dhuchay'y conquered the world before there were enough Seaborn Ones to fight these loathsome amphibians. Their return someday is dreaded. (It's not stated in so many words, but the idea seems to be that the egg-laying Dhuchjay'y are like Terran fish that go to a certain place to spawn, go away, and then return to spawn again. Silverberg might not have spelled this out because the implication would be that the Dhuchay'y live to be a thousand years old.)

When they reappear at last, they prove to be foul-smelling, hideous monsters – just what a young reader might have hoped for-- and Silverberg describes the slaughter inflicted on them by the Sea-Lords and by the mutant Seaborn Ones in merciless hand-to-hand combat without apology. The returned Dhuchay'y, Dovirr thinks, had got out of practice as warriors and hadn't expected the people of Earth to put up much of a fight. They used their cannon and heat-ray device ineffectively against so many organized opponents. The climactic battle was a rout. Dovirr looks forward to the time when the united people of Earth might be able to go to the stars and bring war to the Star Beasts. Does the book glorify violence? You better believe it does.



As in one or two early battles on deck, Silverberg makes mention of Dovirr walking in blood. I remembered Robert Louis Stevenson's great boys' book *Kidnapped* (1886): Specifically, there's the battle of the ship's roundhouse, swordsman Alan Breck's blade running red to the hilt, and dying mutineer Mr. Shuan crawling with blood flowing from his mouth; and the next day when David Balfour stands on deck: "it was broad day, and a very quiet morning, with a smooth, rolling sea that tossed the ship and made the blood run to and fro on the round-house floor"; and Alan and David sit down to breakfast "about six of the clock. The floor was covered with broken glass and in a horrid mess of blood, which took away my hunger."

So I suppose if an editor challenged Silverberg about the gore, he might have invoked Stevenson. Since this book doesn't appear on my 1968 list, I don't have a rating for it. I am sure I read it. I remember playing with one or two kids in the neighborhood and taking the name "Dovirr" for myself in whatever it was we were playing, but I think that met with puzzlement and I let it go. I didn't rate it then; now I'd hand out a 3.

----- Time of the Great Freeze (1964)

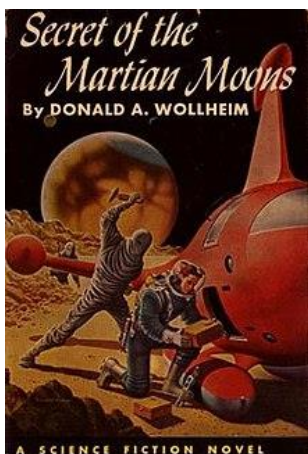
Seventeen-year-old Jim Barnes is a nicer fellow than Dovirr Stargan, and his father is one of the men who, with Jim, are exiled from the second New York, a city a mile under the glacier of the new Ice Age. Intolerable to the city's aged rulers, their offense was communicating by radio with London, so to London they will go.

On the surface, they encounter wolves, a blizzard, and several groups of nomads: a suspicious group of moose hunters, then the "Dooney folk" who demand a life as toll, then the hospitable Jerseys, who are walrus hunters. One of their number leads them to the edge of the solid ice, where they find Viking-like sailors who carry them and their solar-powered sleds to the European ice, after Jim uses judo to defeat their champion.

Three of the eight men die in the course of this journey. One man falls into a crack between ice masses, which close over him. Another is killed by the Dooney tribesmen, and a third contracts a fever that takes his life. The surviving five left are accosted by scouts from London, who have been instructed to kill them. However, Jim befriends a young Londoner, who proceeds to fill him in on history, including the fact that King George III freed the American colonies.

Time of the Great Freeze seems to me more tightly constructed than *Conquerors* from the Darkness although the latter is the shorter book. Freeze works with themes of self-isolation, suspicion, hospitality, etc., where *Conquerors* is more of a pulp adventure. In Freeze, Earth's catastrophe is due to a belt of cosmic dust – perhaps suggested to Silverberg by Conan Doyle's "Poison Belt" – but in *Conquerors* Earth's flooding was engineered by aliens who, however, can be beaten in an hour of hand-to-hand carnage.

The 1968 DN awarded this public library find a 4 rating. No, I can't go that far now, but 3 or even 3.5 would work for me. It's superior sf for youngsters.



Wollheim, Donald. *Secret of the Martian Moons* (1955)

Maybe they'd had more of them at one time, but by the time I was exploring its stacks, the Coos Bay public library offered only a few of the 35 or so Winston science fiction novels aimed at adolescent boys. This was one of them. Through the experiences of teenaged Nelson Parr, we learn that, 3,000 years ago, inhabitants of a planet circling the star Vega fled the arrival of interstellar Marauders (as they conceived them to be) in two globular ships that became the "moons" of Mars when they began to orbit the planet around the time of the English Civil War. They observed abandoned cities on the surface of the Red Planet but stayed put.

Explorers from Earth couldn't figure out how to open the sealed rooms on Mars or discover the secret of operating the obviously amazing machines that the Martians had left behind. At last, authorities on Earth insisted that the Martian colonists, who were not self-sufficient, come home.

Nelson's father and a few others resolved to stay behind and live off stores, to try to discover the Martians' secrets. In order the better to spy on the Red Planet – where some signs of activity had been glimpsed – they flew to Phobos and Deimos, which is where the individuals who'd been poking around the Martian cities had come from. The Phobosians have tired of their excessive fearfulness, but the Deimosians retain an extreme cautiousness and a determination to preserve their society exactly as it is. They kill Nelson's companion after the two go to Deimos in order to observe Mars from that vantage point.

(Wollheim is casual about scientific and technical plausibility, imagining, for example, portable telescopes able to detect the difference if crates have been moved outside the door of a Martian city... from

about 15,000 miles above the planet's surface. For another -- he doesn't let little details about gravity impede the story. And also everybody speaks English.)

Then the Marauders return to the solar system. The Deimosians flee into interstellar space again, never to be heard from. The Phobosians are willing to ally themselves with Earth's people. It turns out that the Marauders are Martians. They'd taken to space millennia ago -- just to go on vacation -- and have now returned. They're not out to conquer Earth at all but just want to spend some time at home before they take to space again in their thousands of spaceships. By the way, they're humans. They all have red hair and they are descended from cavemen deposited on Mars by yet another star-traveling race. (We also read of the Malakarji, which is close enough to "malarkey" to arouse suspicion of a confession by the author that was an open secret.)

Young Nelson has various adventures before all this gets cleared up.

In 1968, I gave this book an enthusiastic 4+ rating. Not now, though! 2.5.

----- **Secret of the Ninth Planet (1959)**

This book is another science fiction "juvenile" published by Winston. It's the fourth and final book discussed in this article that doesn't appear on the 1968 list. I loved it. This was what I was looking for when I read sf.

The novel builds a mood of unease. In the near future, our young hero and his father and their expedition mates are on an archeological mission in the Andes, and young Burl Denning notices, one morning, that though he sees no clouds, the sunlight is a bit dimmer than expected. He finds too that radio transmission is impaired. Turns out that unknown aliens have installed a sun-tap station in a remote mountain valley there, which is stealing solar energy from the earth and already causing temperatures to fall and imperiling crops.

Burl and his father receive a message in a rocket from California that tells them where to look. Having some dynamite with them, they are able to blast their way into the sun-tap station, but can't stop it running until Burl grips a device that energizes his body such that he can operate the controls. With his special ability, he becomes a member of a spaceship crew set to visit the other planets where sun-tap stations have been installed and turn them off; otherwise, it's likely that our sun will go nova.

The good fortune of finding an experimental anti-gravity ship capable of traversing the solar system is, of course, a too-obvious convenience from an adult reader's perspective. I doubt very much that it bothered me at age 13.

The book owes a lot to the Andean setting and the eerie change in the sky with which it begins. Wollheim establishes these things with a few strokes, but they help to conjure a receptive mood. As *The Secret of the Ninth Planet* continues, Burl & company approach Mercury to shut down the first extraterrestrial sun-tap station. They photograph it and it destroys itself.

Then they go to Venus. Penetrating its clouds, the mission from Earth finds a shallow-water world with occasional muddy spots above the waters, and one of the men is attacked by a slime-creature before the humans depart, having knocked off another station.

Mars proves to be inhabited by insect-like creatures who seem oblivious to the significance of the sun-tap installation in their midst. One of Burl's comrades unwittingly comes under the control of the mysterious sun-tap aliens while exploring the Martian base. Our heroes leave an A-bomb to demolish it (and, presumably, the Martian residents, who turned dangerous).

The next two installations are on Callisto and Iapetus, and in the vicinity of Saturn the earthmen fight off a ship of the aliens. I reveled in all this over 45 years ago.

Wollheim wraps up *The Secret of the Ninth Planet* with what I called "action" (= violence) as a youngster. There's a skirmish on Pluto, Burl is made unconscious, and he finds himself with one of his comrades on Triton, making a quick alliance with the Neptunians there, whose world the Plutonian villains mean to make to their liking by having our sun go nova. The Earth ship leaves Pluto orbit and easily (!) finds the Tritonian invaders' base, which is also the center of their religion.

Burl discovers that representatives of various species are kept in a sort of zoo by the Plutonian sun-tappers. This reminded me, and possibly reminded me at the time, of the Keepers' zoo in the Star Trek "Menagerie" ("Cage") episode. Burl sets them free and vengeance is wrought on their captors (and sometime sacrificers). My impression is that the sentence "Something furry and green leaped high in the air and came down in the middle of the Plutonians" crossed time to linger vaguely in my memory.

Pluto is revealed to be a world from outside our solar system, and Triton was its moon till Neptune's gravity captured it; that's the secret of the book's title. In a way Wollheim got it right, that Pluto isn't a planet of our solar system. Of course, the 2006 decision that denied Pluto's status as a planet didn't deny its solar origin.

Wollheim was having some fun with what was perceived at the time about Pluto's abnormality as a small solid planet rather than gas giant, and its strange orbit, going with the idea that it and Triton came from some other solar system.

Sentiment drives me to give this old favorite a 3.5.

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So, then: was that a complete list of all of the sf books I had read up to sometime in July 1968? No, but that must be most of them – their titles preserved because I wrote down those titles and ratings as a little feature in one of my home-made magazines.

All the way back on 4 February 1967 I'd gotten a copy of the Whitman Classic edition of Wells' *The War of the Worlds*, as an 11-year-old, and surely I read it right away. I wrote the date in the book and have kept that book all these years. But I don't remember reading things like *The Wonderful Flight to the Mushroom Planet* or the Tom Swift books.

Without doubt the books I've just discussed did come from the earliest period of this sci-fi fan's career. I was a young kid, and I blundered about trying to find sf that wasn't too grown-up for me or too juvenile. That 1968 list was a one-off that provides a unique glimpse into my reading tastes and experiences at that point in my life. Only a little over a year later, I would discover sword-and-planet and sword-and-sorcery books and would be enthralled by Burroughs and Howard. Tolkien would remain my favorite author, but they were two others who would fascinate me – at the same time that I'd also discover fandom and fanzines (at the end of 1969). But that is an epoch of its own.

I had remained faithful to *Star Trek* despite the poor quality – which even I could sense – of the third (1968-1969) and final season. It was on its very last legs when we moved from Coos Bay to Ashland. But an unexpected thrill – in Ashland, as it turned out, we could get two TV stations, and I caught a few teleplays of *The Prisoner*. I loved it, though I didn't always get to watch it; it was up against *Ironside* on the other channel, which was more to the taste of the other TV watchers in the family. I had to wait ten years to see the series, on a public TV station at that! By then I was a high school teacher.

Sf and fantasy got their claws into me back in my early teens, had kept them there, and would never let go.



Dale Nelson: Writer Of Stuff, has been a science fiction fan and a member of fandom for most of his life. Before retirement he had an interesting career as a wild animal trainer teaching English to obstinate college students at Mayville state University. He writes about science fiction, comics, fandom, and other things and still reads both the literature and the fanzines devoted to the literature.

The Fly: The Story and the Movies

By

Tom Feller

“Beam Me Up, Scotty” is a phrase that has become part of our popular culture since it was first spoken in *Star Trek: The Original Series*. It refers, of course, to teleportation. Gene Roddenberry used the concept in

order to save the expense of showing a space ship taking off and landing on a planet. Later he concluded that it made it easier to get the story started.

Like most of the ideas in that show, it was already old by then. Doctor McCoy was the only character on the show who ever expressed a concern about what happened to the soul during the process. Occasionally, something would go wrong, such as in “The Enemy Within” episode written by Richard Matheson, “Mirror, Mirror” written by Jerome Bixby, or the first Star Trek movie written by Roddenberry himself.

One science fiction story that shows teleportation going very, very wrong is “The Fly”, written by George Langelaan and originally published in the June 1957 issue of *Playboy*. It has been adapted into five films and even an opera, (which, I am sad to say, I have never seen).

In the story, Francois Delambre, industrialist and narrator, is woken by a telephone call in the middle of the night by his sister-in-law Helene to inform him that she has just killed his brother, her husband Andre. Set in Lyon, France, Francois had been allowing his scientist brother to use an old workshop in his factory as a laboratory. Francois, however, did not know the nature of his brother’s experiments for the French Air Ministry because they were classified. He later learns that they involved teleportation.

Francois calls the police and accompanies the chief detective, Commissaire Charas, to the crime scene at the factory. Andre has been crushed by a steam-hammer, and Helen confesses to having pulled the switch. Because of her pre-occupation with flies, she is judged insane and becomes a patient in a mental hospital for criminals. Meanwhile, Francois becomes guardian of his nephew Henri.

After a time, Helen gives Francois an account of the events. According to Helen, Andre’s experiments with teleportation began with a successful attempt with an ashtray before an unsuccessful attempt with their pet cat. After reworking the apparatus, he successfully transmitted their pet dog. Before announcing his success, he decided to try transmitting himself, but the result was disastrous. A fly entered the transmission chamber during the experiment, and Andre finds himself with the head and one arm of a fly while somewhere around the neighborhood there is a fly with a human head. Attempts to reverse the experiment are unsuccessful as are the attempts to capture the fly. At Andre’s request, Helene kills what is left of him with the steam hammer to erase all evidence of the experiment, and she destroys Andre’s papers. Francois and Charas never decide if Helene’s account is true, but they do agree that she is insane.

Born in Paris and bi-lingual, British writer George Langelaan (1908-1972) had a life that would be worthy of a movie. He worked for Britain’s Special Operations Executive during World War II. In 1941, he parachuted into France, where he was captured by the Germans but later escaped. He wrote up his World War II experiences in the memoir “The Masks of War”. He was also a friend of occultist Aleister Crowley. “The Fly” is his most famous story, and it has been reprinted many times. Another story, “Strange Miracle”, was adapted as an episode of Alfred Hitchcock Presents, and his story “The Other Hand”, originally published in October, 1961 issue of *The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction*, as an episode of Night Gallery.

The first film adaptation of “The Fly” came out in 1958, only a year after the story’s first publication. The screenplay by James Clavell (1921-1994) follows the story fairly closely, except that the setting is changed from France to Canada and the ending is not as downbeat. Clavell was the son of a British Royal Navy officer who was stationed in Australia at the time he was born. The younger Clavell served in the Royal Artillery during World War II, but was captured by the Japanese. He used those experiences as the basis for his novel “King Rat”. By the Fifties, he trying to break into Hollywood as a writer, and The Fly was his first script to actually be filmed. He later wrote two episodes of Men Into Space and the screenplays for The Great Escape, The Satan Bug, and To Sir, With Love which he also directed. His best known work is the novel Shogun. It and “King Rat” are two of the books in his seven novel Asian Saga series.

The film and its two sequels were financed by Robert L. Lippert (1909-1976), but distributed by 20th Century Fox. Lippert started out as a theatre owner and at one point owned 113 movie theaters. He got



into making movies himself in order to assure a supply of programming for those theaters, and he was involved in over 300 low budget movies either as either producer or financier. Among those films were *I Shot Jesse James*, *The Baron of Arizona*, *Superman and the Mole-Men*, *Project Moon Base* (screenplay by Robert Heinlein), *The Quartermass Xperiment*, *She-Devil*, *Kronos*, *The Alligator People*, *The Day Mars Invaded Earth*, *The Last Man on Earth*, and *Rocketship X-M*. He also employed down-on-their-luck actors such as George Raft, Veronica Lake, George Reeves (later TV's Superman), Sabu, and Robert Alda (father of Alan Alda). He was also the first producer to hire Samuel Fuller as a director. Although not well received by critics at the time, Fuller's films became much admired by directors of the French New Wave as well as by Martin Scorsese and Quentin Tarantino.

Kurt Neumann (1908-1958) both produced and directed the first film version of *The Fly*. He came to the United States just as the Nazis came to power and worked mostly as a B-movie director during his career, which ended with his untimely death shortly after *The Fly* was released. Besides westerns, mysteries, musicals, and comedies, he directed several Tarzan movies starring Johnny Weissmuller and Lex Barker as well as the science fiction films *Rocketship X-M*, *The She-Devil*, and *Kronos*. *The Fly* was his biggest commercial and critical success.

Andre Delambre is played by Albert David Hedison (1927-2019), billed as Al Hedison in this film, but as David Hedison for most of his career. He was one of the stars of *Voyage to the Bottom of the Sea*, had a central role in the 1960 version of *The Lost World*, and played the role of Felix Leiter, James Bond's best friend, in two Bond films. His first film was *The Enemy Below* starring Robert Mitchum, and he played the title character in *The Son of Robin Hood*. He guest-starred on many television shows, including *Wonder Woman* and *Project U.F.O.*, was a member of the cast of the soap opera *Another World* from 1991 to 1996, but turned down the role of the father in *The Brady Bunch*. Late in his career, he played Jor-El in an obscure direct to video movie called *Superman and the Secret Planet*. In *The Fly*, Hedison himself, rather than a stunt double, played the title character under the heavy make-up.

Vincent Price (1911-1993) needs no introduction to readers of this zine. Although he played the title character in *The Invisible Man Returns* and had a memorable cameo in *Abbott and Costello Meet Frankenstein*, Price was not primarily associated with horror movies for the first fifteen years of his film career. Instead, he worked mostly as a supporting actor in films such as *Laura*, *Brigham Young*, *Song of*



Bernadette, Keys to the Kingdom, and many others. One of his few starring roles in a non-horror film was in the 1950 film *The Baron of Arizona*, directed by Samuel Fuller and produced by Robert Lippert, and he showed a talent for comedy in *Champagne for Caesar* starring Ronald Coleman. He became known for horror films starting with *The House of Wax* and then for working with horror gurus William Castle and Roger Corman. In *The Fly*, he plays Francois Delambre.

British actor Herbert Marshall (1890-1966), the son of actors, plays Charas, whose title was changed in the film from *Commissionaire* to *Inspector*. Marshall lost a leg on the Western Front during World War I, but had a highly successful acting career despite having to use an artificial leg. During World War II, he worked with amputees while maintaining a busy acting schedule. He was the star of Alfred Hitchcock's *Murder*, co-starred with Greta Garbo in *The Painted Veil* and with Bette Davis in *The Letter* and *The Little Foxes*, and had important supporting roles in *Foreign Correspondent*, *The Moon and Sixpence*, *Duel in the Sun*, *The Enchanted Cottage*, *The Black Shield of Falworth*, *Midnight Lace*, and *The Razor's Edge*. Fans of old-time radio will remember him as the star of *The Man Called 'X'*. Although not primarily known for science fiction films, he appeared in the Fifties Sci-Fi films *Riders to the Stars* and *Gog* and in the film adaptation of the Jules Verne novel *Five Weeks in a Balloon*. Reportedly there was one scene in *The Fly* that required many takes because Marshall and Price would burst out laughing at the dialogue.

There were three other notable cast members. Helene is played by Canadian-born actress Patricia Owens (1925-2000). *The Fly* was, unfortunately, the peak of her 40 film movie career, which included supporting roles in *Island of the Sun*, *X-15*, and *Sayonara*. Since the story is told in flashbacks from her point of view, she was integral to the film's success. Charles Herbert (1948-2015) played Phillippe, Andre and Helene's son, whose name was changed from Henri in the story. He was a very busy child actor at the time, appearing in *Houseboat* with Cary Grant and Sophia Loren and *Please Don't Eat the Daisies* with Doris Day and David Niven.

For Kathleen Freeman (1919-2001), *The Fly* was just another acting job for which she plays Emma, a character who does not appear in the original story. Her film career starting in 1947 and only ended just before her death in 2001. They included *Singing in the Rain*, eleven Jerry Lewis movies, *A Place in the Sun*, *The Greatest Show on Earth*, the 1952 version of *The Prisoner of Zenda*, *The Seven Year Itch*, *Myra Breckinridge*, and *The Blues Brothers*. On television, she guest-starred on many shows, mostly situation comedies, and had recurring roles in *The Bob Cummings Show*, *Topper*, *The Donna Reed Show*, *Hogan's Heroes* as a woman in love with Colonel Klink, and *The Beverly Hillbillies*. She also co-starred with Dom DeLuise on the short-lived sitcom *Lotsa Luck*. On stage, she earned a Tony nomination for the musical version of *The Full Monty*. She was one of those actresses whose face you always recognize but can never remember her name. Besides *The Fly*, her other science fiction/fantasy films included *Inner Space* and *Gremlins 2*.

The Fly was so successful that Lippert financed a sequel, *Return of the Fly*. It came out the following year, but with a lower budget, of course. The original movie was filmed in color, for instance, but the sequel only in black-and-white, and they recycled sets from the original. Price, whose salary was the single biggest line item in the film's budget, reprised the role of Francois, but no other cast members from the original appeared.

This sequel is set fifteen years after the original when Phillippe (Brett Halsey) is grown up, but still suffering psychological effects from the events of the original. He is determined to complete his father's research. Things go wrong, of course, and Phillippe becomes "PhillippeFly". It didn't help that Phillippe's assistant (David Frankham) intends from the start to betray him and steal the secret of teleportation. I would say that the sequel is almost as good as the original, and some critics argue that it is actually better.

Edward Bernds (1905-2000) both wrote and directed *Return of the Fly*. He had started out in radio and worked for Frank Capra and Columbia Pictures as a sound engineer in the Thirties. He became a director in the Forties with *Three Stooges* short films as well as films in the *Blondie* series, based on the comic strip. In the Fifties, he directed films in the *Bowery Boys* series, and in the Sixties, he re-united with the *Three Stooges* for their feature films. He also directed Elvis Presley in *Tickle Me*. His other sci-fi movies included *World Without End*, *Queen of Outer Space* starring Zsa Zsa Gabor, and *Valley of the Dragons*.



Brett Halsey (born 1933 as Charles Oliver Hand) was a prolific actor in films and television. His films included *The Atomic Submarine*, *Lafayette Escadrille*, Roger Corman's *The Cry Baby Killer*, *Return to Peyton Place*, *The Seventh Sword*, four films directed by Italian horror director Lucio Fulci, and *The Godfather Part III*. On television, he guest-starred on *Highway Patrol*, *Perry Mason*, *Buck Rogers*, *Columbo*, and *The Dukes of Hazzard* among others. His one opportunity at TV stardom came when he co-starred in a show called *Follow the Sun*, but it was cancelled after one season. In 1961, he won a Golden Globe for being "The New Star of the Year", although he never actually became a big star.

The second sequel, *Curse of the Fly*, appeared in 1965. Although it keeps the family name of Delambre, the father's name is changed to Henri (played by Brian Donlevy) and the son's to Martin (George Baker). Although that is the name of the son in the original story, Henri is supposed to be another, previously unknown, son of Andre. There is also a character known as Inspector Charas (Charles Carson). Presumably, he is either the son or grandson of the investigating detective in the original.

One night Martin picks up a hitchhiker named Patricia Stanley (Carole Gray) who has just escaped from a mental hospital. She suffered from a nervous breakdown and has a habit of running around with little or no clothing. They decide to get married after knowing each other for only a week, and he brings her home to meet his father and brother Albert (Michael Graham) at their remote Canadian mansion. Patricia is curious and discovers their experiments in teleportation. The Delambres have successfully developed the process, and, at one point, Henri teleports to Great Britain. The film has a feel of a haunted house story, but the Delambres are surprisingly unlikeable, especially when compared to the first two movies. Another surprise is that there is no actual Fly monster, but only disfigured humans. I guess the film's make-up budget was much lower than the previous two. Overall, it also represents a big drop-off in quality.

This film was filmed in England, financed by Lippert, produced by Jack Parsons, and directed by Tasmanian-born Don Sharp (1921-2011), with whom Parson had previously made a horror film

called Witchcraft. Sharp was best known for directing films such as *The Kiss of the Vampire*, *The Devil Ship Pirates*, *The Face of Fu Manchu* starring Christopher Lee, the 1978 versions of both *The Four Feathers* and *The Thirty-Nine Steps*, and *Psychomania*, the last film of George Sanders. He first worked in theatre in Australia with an interruption for service in the Royal Air Force during the war and then migrated to England in 1948 to break into movies. He had some modest success as an actor, including a role in the British science fiction radio serial *Journey into Space*, but found more success as a writer and director. Among other films, he was the second-unit director of *Those Magnificent Men in Their Flying Machines*. On television, he directed a few episodes of *The Avengers* and *Hammer House of Horror*.

Brian Donlevy (1901-1972) was an American actor known for playing tough guys in supporting roles. His few starring roles in "A" pictures included *The Great McGinty* directed by Preston Sturges and *Wake Island*, and he was nominated for an Oscar for Best Supporting Actor for the 1939 version of *Beau Geste*. He started out as an actor on Broadway and permanently moved to Hollywood in 1935, where he established himself as a star in "B" movies and a supporting actor in "A" films, usually as the bad guy. Among his "B" movies were *Human Cargo* with Claire Trevor and *Crack-Up* with Peter Lorre. He had important supporting roles in the 1939 version of *Jesse James*, *Union Pacific*, *Destry Rides Again*, the 1941 version of *Billy the Kid*, the 1946 version of *The Virginian*, and *The Errand Boy* starring Jerry Lewis. His science fiction and fantasy films included *The Remarkable Andrew* as the ghost of President Andrew Jackson and *Gamera the Invincible*, and he played the title character in both *The Quartermass Experiment*, aka *The Creeping Unknown*, and *Quartermass 2*, aka *Enemy from Space*.

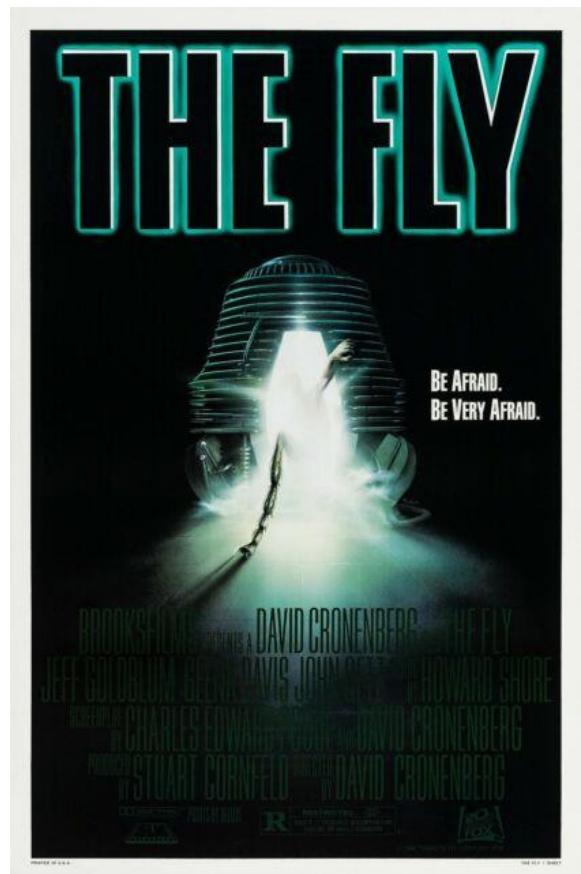
On early television, he appeared on many anthology shows, many of them broadcast live, and starred in a radio and later a TV series called *Dangerous Assignment*, which he produced himself. He later guest-starred on *Wagon Train*, *Rawhide*, *Perry Mason*, and other TV shows of the time.

Sometime after 1980, Kip Ohman, a producer, contacted Charles Edward Pogue, a writer, about remaking *The Fly*. Pogue had never read the original story or seen the original film, but he quickly remedied the situation.

Pogue and producer Stuart Cornfeld presented the idea to the executives at 20th Century Fox, which now owned the rights to the original film, and they gave Pogue the money to write the first draft of a remake. Cornfeld and Pogue had the idea that the transformation should be gradual rather than instantaneous. The people at Fox hated the idea, although they did agree to a distribution deal.

Cornfeld and Pogue took their idea to Mel Brooks, (of all people), because Cornfeld had worked on *The Elephant Man*, which was filmed by Brooks's production company. Brooks, however, made Cornfeld fire Pogue and hire Walon Green to re-write the script. The re-written script was not quite to Brooks' and Cornfeld's satisfaction so they brought Pogue back to finish it. They chose David Cronenberg as their director, and he insisted on re-writing the script once again, although when the film was completed he gave Pogue co-writing credit. Michael Keaton, Mel Gibson, John Lithgow, James Woods, Richard Dreyfuss, Willem Dafoe were all considered for the male lead, and Jennifer Jason Leigh, Linda Hamilton, and Laura Dern for the female before they settled on Jeff Goldblum and Geena Davis. Chris Walas was brought in to supervise special effects, including make-up, and filming took place in Toronto from 1985 to 1986. It was released in 1986 and won the Oscar for Best Make-Up.

In this version scientist Seth Brundle (Goldblum) succeeds in creating a teleportation machine. He experiments on himself, of course, and, as in the first two films, a fly wanders into the machine during the process. However, the problem is not immediately obvious, and Brundle even believes he has succeeding



beyond his wildest dreams when he discovers that he is stronger, more intelligent, and even more potent when he has sex with his girlfriend Veronica “Ronnie” Quaife (Davis).

Unfortunately, he begins to gradually transform into a monster, both physically (at one point Goldblum had to wear 5 pounds of make-up that took five hours to apply) and psychologically. The horror is very intense, and critics have compared it to *The Exorcist* in that regard. The two lead actors are excellent, enabling the viewer to suspend their disbelief, and their relationship is just as important a part of the film as the horror. The film was both a commercial and critical success, and one of the few times that I would say that a remake was better than the original, even as good as the original *Fly* film was.

Some critics called the transformation a metaphor for AIDS since the hysteria concerned the disease was peaking around the time of the film’s release, and Cronenberg himself has described it as a metaphor for aging and terminal illnesses. The phrase “Be Afraid, Be Very Afraid” was first spoken in this film by Ronnie. Reportedly the line was suggested by Mel Brooks himself.

Canadian-born David Cronenberg (born 1943) first became known for his horror/sci-fi films such as *Scanners*, *The Brood*, and *Videodrome*. He started writing at an early age, but was also interested in science. He majored in English at the University of Toronto while developing an interest in film and cites William S. Burroughs and Vladimir Nabokov as influences. After making short films, his first feature-length one was the film *Stereo*, which he followed up with *Crimes of the Future*, the horror film *Shivers*, the car racing and biker film *Fast Company*, another horror film called *Rabid*, which starred porn star Marilyn Chambers, and *The Dead Zone*, adapted from the Stephen King novel.

This version of *The Fly* belongs to what critics call his late-middle period. His later films include *Dead Ringers*, *Existenz*, *M. Butterfly*, *Spider*, *A History of Violence*, *Eastern Promises*, *A Dangerous Method*, and adaptations of two novels, J.G. Ballard’s *Crash* (not to be confused with the Oscar-winning film) and Burroughs’ novel *Naked Lunch*. In 2004, *Strange Horizons* named him the second-best science fiction film director of all-time behind only George Lucas. That same year *The Guardian* listed him as number nine on their list of 40 best film directors, and in 2007, *Total Film* named him number 17 on their list of all-time greatest film directors.

Jeff Goldblum (born 1952) is one of the best and most underrated actors of his generation and is a far better one than David Hedison, as much as I’ve always liked the latter. Besides *The Fly*, for which he received a Saturn Award, many of his best films were science fiction or fantasy, which may explain why he has never been nominated for an Academy Award. (His short film *Little Surprises* was nominated in the Best Live Action Short Film category.) His other SF/fantasy/horror films include *Jurassic Park* and two of its sequels, *Independence Day* and its sequel, the 1978 version of *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*, *Thor: Ragnarok*, *Guardians of the Galaxy Vol. 2*, *Hotel Artemus*, *Transylvania 6-5000*, *The Sentinel*, *Earth Girls are Easy*, and *The Adventures of Buckaroo Banzai Across the 8th Dimension*. His other films include *Death Wish*, *Annie Hall*, *Nashville*, *The Big Chill*, *The Right Stuff*, *Silverado*, *The Life Aquatic with Steve Zissou*, and *The Grand Budapest Hotel*. He also starred in two seasons of *Law and Order: Criminal Intent* and appeared in one episode of *Ray Bradbury Theater*. Besides acting, he is an accomplished jazz pianist.

Goldblum’s co-star in *The Fly* was Geena Davis (born 1956) to whom he was married at the time. She is a graduate of Boston University, where she majored in drama, and worked as a model before breaking into movies with *Tootsie*. She won an Oscar in the Best Supporting Actress category for *The Accidental Tourist*. She was nominated in the Best Actress category for *Thelma and Louise* and for Golden Globes for *A League of Her Own* and *Speechless*. She did win a Golden Globe for portraying the first female President of the United States in *Commander In Chief*, a television series, for which she was also nominated for an Emmy and for a Screen Actor’s Guild award. Her other sf/fantasy/horror films include *Beetlejuice*, *Transylvania 6-5000*, *Earth Girls are Easy*, and the *Stuart Little* movies. Besides *Commander in Chief*, he starred in a TV show called *Sara*, which lasted only 13 episodes, *The Geena Davis Show*, which lasted only one season, and the TV versions of both *The Exorcist* and *Coma*. She also had a recurring role on *Grey’s Anatomy*. Like her ex-husband, she is an accomplished musician.

The remake was successful enough to spawn a sequel. Among the actors considered for the lead were Keanu Reeves, Josh Brolin, and Vincent D’Onofrio before settling on Eric Stoltz. Cronenberg was not available to direct, so it was first offered to Sam Raimi, whose ideas for the sequel did not match the ones of the producers. Chris Walas, who had supervised the special effects and make-up in the original, became the director

instead, and this was his first film in that role. The only actor to reprise his role is John Getz, who had played Stathis Borans, Ronnie's ex-boyfriend, and he is in two of the sequel's better scenes.

Footage of Goldblum as Seth from the first film was used rather than pay him to appear. Davis is replaced by Saffron Henderson, who is shown giving birth to Seth and Ronnie's son Martin. Ronnie dies in the operating table, and Martin is adopted by Anton Bartok (Lee Richardson), an industrialist who had financed Brundle's experiments and now plans to cash in. Martin has fly DNA and grows to adulthood in only five years. He is confined to a laboratory, and his only friend is scientist Beth Logan (Daphne Zuniga). They fall in love, but, unfortunately, the fly portion of his DNA emerges. I would call this film competent, but nothing special.

Chris Walas (born 1955) worked in special effects both before and after becoming a director. He started with Piranha and also worked on Airplane, Galaxina, Dragonslayer, Scanners, Raiders of the Lost Ark, Return of the Jedi, and Enemy Mine before working on The Fly. He was best known for creating the title characters for Gremlins. After The Fly II, he directed an episode of Tales of the Crypt and the film The Vagrant. He also worked for Cronenberg once again when the latter directed Naked Lunch.

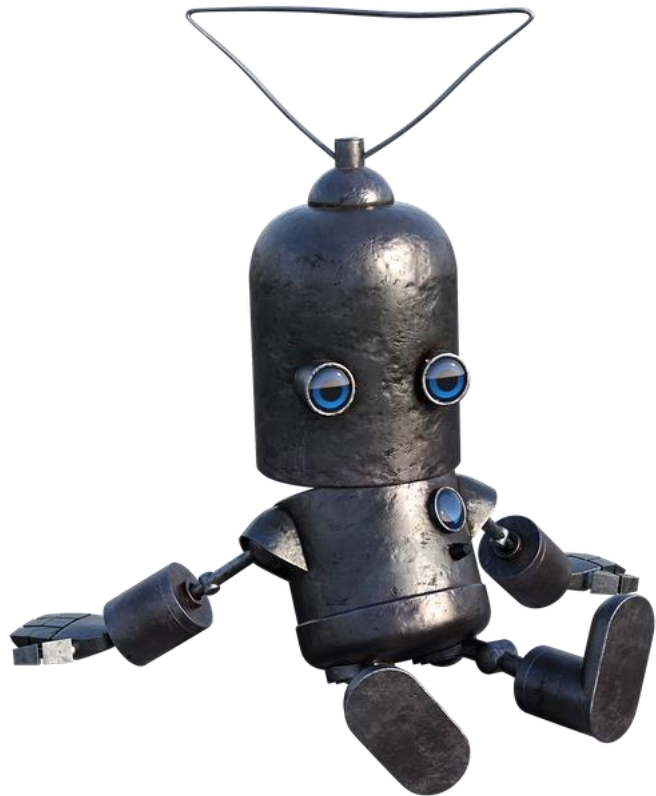
Eric Stoltz (born 1961) was nominated for a Golden Globe for the film Mask, a Tony for a revival of Our Town, and a day-time Emmy for directing the cable movie My Horrible Year. His other films include Fast Times at Ridgemont High, Jerry McGuire, Memphis Belle, the 1994 version of Little Women, Rob Roy, The House of Mirth, and Pulp Fiction. On television, he has had a recurring roles on Mad About You, St. Elsewhere, Grey's Anatomy, Madame Secretary, Will and Grace, and Once And Again and was a cast member for one year on Chicago Hope and for 18 episodes of Caprica, a prequel series to Battlestar Galactica. He eventually became a television director of episodes of Law and Order, Boston Legal, Grey's Anatomy, Nashville, Madame Secretary, and Glee. He is currently one of the producers of Madame Secretary.

It is quite remarkable that a short story written by the now obscure George Langelaan could become the basis of films directed and acted in by such a diverse group of individuals. The directors included competent "B" movie directors Kurt Neumann, Edward Bernds, and Don Sharp, the special effect wizard Chris Walas, and David Cronenberg, a true auteur. The actors included Brian Donlevy and World War I veteran Herbert Marshall, who both started out in silent films and appeared in some all-time classics, Al (David) Hedison, Brett Halsey, and Eric Stoltz, who never became big stars but appeared in many movies and television shows, Jeff Goldblum and Oscar-winner Geena Davis, who were "A"-list movie stars at the peak of their careers, and Vincent Price, who was one of the most iconic actors of the 20th Century.

As I mentioned earlier, this also marks one of the few times that I think a remake was better than the original. The 1986 film is not just a horror classic, but a classic period, while the 1958 movie, which gave novelist James Clavell his start, was one of the better sci-fi horror movies of the Fifties. Even the sequels are not that bad, especially the 1959 one which was almost as good as the original. When you compare them to the typical sequels, they look even better. As a whole, the series is one of the better ones in the history of science fiction/horror films.



READER REACTON



Taral Wayne taral@bell.net

I don't think I would spend the money on those old Batman comics in book format ... but I would steal one. For the sake of argument, I'd like to be given one. I don't buy many comics at all, but so far as I buy then they tend to be more recently than that. I bought a Freak Brothers compendium only three or four years ago, for instance. I bought the Complete Magnum Robot Fighter, as another example. I even bought a copy of the three volumes (so far) of Modest Medusa, a contemporary on-line story that I've grown fond of. And a science fiction comic about how Britain pioneered the colonization of space after WWII. But I don't think I would buy an expensive edition of 50s Batman stories. Batman ANIMATION, on the other hand... I just finished my collections of both the 1990s Batman The Animated Series, and the later version, The Batman – which isn't as good, but still pretty good. Oh, and Batman Beyond. I'm not a fan of Bob Kane artwork, either.

///It may be a matter of perspective, or it may be a matter of exposure, or lack thereof. A lot of library systems these days have taken to stocking ebooks, including graphic novels in ebook form, which they loan to their patrons. Most of the early Batman Omnibus collections are available as pixel loaners, so you might check out a few and look them over. I think you would find the story quality and characterization to be very strong. (By the by, you can't download or save those kind of library loans. I dunno how they prevent that from happening, but they have somehow managed it, and somebody said if you attempt to save/download one of those e-books you get a warning, and the next time you get suspended. I dunno about that either, I check out physical books from my library).

We are truly living in a golden age so far as collecting animation and old movies. Who would have thunk all those TV cartoon shows, the bad as well as the good, would someday be available in dvd format? There are still some shows from the 1950s and 1960s I would like to find, but I suspect its just a matter of time for most of the stuff. I picked up another complete "serial" of the mid 1950s Crusader Rabbit cartoons earlier this year, shows I

never that I would ever see again. I'd like to pick up the complete set of Lidsville, but the cheapest price I can find is \$140.00, which is more than I want to spend to relive a pleasant memory from the past.///

Jefferson P. Swycaffer; P.O. Box 15373; San Diego CA 92175



To begin with, delicious semi-parody, semi-commentary cover art, in a wonderful and wicked mock of old movies posters. Sometimes ya gotta laugh, otherwise it hurts too much! I had thought it was something you'd commissioned, and was delighted (astonished!) that it's an actual NASA publication!

Fun review of *The Broker's Ward*, a "penny dreadful" of the great dime-novel era. I'm most pleased by the link to dimenovels.lib.niu.edu which I have bookmarked and will plunder voraciously!

The Batman Golden Age Omnibus looks like a worthy collection of historical Batman stuff, but priced far beyond my means. (Also, old Batman doesn't start my engine. Too contrived. "Oh, look, if you spell it backwards it tells where the Riddler is holding the hostages." Yawners. Your own excoriation of the Killer Moth's faults and flaws is in line with my disparagement. Not, of course, that today's Batman is any model of realism! Yeah, just try swinging on a line from one skyscraper to another. Uh huh.....nuh uh.)

Now, on the other hand, the review of *Defender of the Innocent* is truly inviting to me, and I'll make an effort to glom a copy. I love a traditional mystery/thriller, and their first appearance in *Ellery Queen* magazine is a big and important endorsement. Also, I like collections of short stories a little better than single novels – more "to the point," more "punchy." Less time spend on complex subplots, just the meat-and-potatoes core story. Yay!

Superb article by Gary Casey, summarizing the life and work of Charles Fort. Fort seems to have done his best work when simply documenting claims of the unusual. "A man experienced a rain of frogs." Good, solid, observational natural science. That he refused to make judgments, but only recounted people's experiences, also shows a solid scientific dispassion. The fact that some of the observations he reported were unlikely to be true (or even meaningful) is one of the things that distances Fort from proper science. You can have a mind that is "too open," and you can't promote skepticism and at the same time accept whatever you're told, by anyone, any time. I suppose his method wouldn't have worked if he censored even the most arrant bull-hoey, but the sad fact remains that he *repeated* the most arrant bull-hoey, which severely diminishes the value of his method. A very interesting chap!

Intriguing review by Tom Feller of *The Power*, book and movie – I'd never heard of either! Nice and creepy, in that comforting 60s manner (the book and movie, not Tom's review!)

Fun review of *Quatermass and the Pit*, another 60s exploration of high (and weird) adventure. I *thought* the description sounded like *Five Million Years to Earth* – and so I was amused when you noted the movie was released in the US under that title. That'un I've seen, and, aye, it is wonderfully creepy, building from a slow beginning into an eerie dramatic avalanche.

Issue 63 concludes with three lovely "tourism posters" of planets distant and near, in a truly spiffing art-deco sort of style. Are these also from NASA? They're as pretty as can be! I love a good spoof/pastiche!

///The front cover, and posters on the back were all indeed commissioned by NASA and are offered for free on their website. The folks at the Jet Propulsion Lab continue to come up with new ideas, so the flow of brand new posters is likely to continue into the future.

My only complaint is that they don't actually credit the artist(s) on the project. I guess they are trying to assume the anonymous face of NASA The Institute, but as a long time comic book fan and collector, I recall the battles we went thru before the comic companies finally began allowing the names of their artist and writers to appear on their stories, so seeing the same blank corporate front image established for this project rubs me the wrong way. Not that this detracts from my enjoyment of the posters in any way tho. Check out their website to see the current range of posters already created.

So far as the Batman Golden Age omnibus series, it may be a matter of perspective, or it may be a matter of exposure, or lack thereof. A lot of library systems these days have taken to stocking ebooks, including graphic novels in ebook form, which they loan to their patrons. Most of the early Batman Omnibus collections are available as pixel loaners, so you might check out a few and look them over. I think you would find the story

quality and characterization to be very strong. (By the by, you can't download or save those kind of library loans. I dunno how they prevent that from happening, but they have somehow managed it, and somebody said if you attempt to save/download one of those e-books you get a warning, and the next time you get suspended. I dunno about that either, I check out physical books from my library).

My impression from reading all of Charles Fort's books was that he went out of his way to discard material that was clearly fictional or the result of a hoax. He reported bizarre incidents that were factual so far as anyone could determine. In some cases he went so far as to verify the information himself. The incident that comes to mind is the butterfly that spontaneously appeared in the corner of a school room on a certain day every year. Fort wrote to the teacher at that school who taught in that classroom, and verified the information. He wrote to her for several more years to ascertain that the event was still occurring.

Looking over his accumulation of facts and information it is impossible not to realize that there are quite a lot of things science does not yet understand. The fact that conventional science usually refuses to investigate these kinds of unusual phenomena is still disturbing.

"The Power" film is an underrated gem so far as I am concerned. I think Tom Feller nailed it when he said that the year it was released it was in competition with a lot of important heavy hitters in the science fiction/fantasy/horror movie genre, so it sort of got lost in the shuffle. But it remains an excellent picture and one well worth seeking out. For a long time copies on tape or DVD were non-existent or very expensive, but times have changed and the movie is now being offered on DVD at a very reasonable price.///



Gary Casey garycasey1701@gmail.com

Hi Bob, Enjoyed the article on Quatermass and the Pit. Not long ago I went on Pirate Bay and downloaded all three of the Quatermass films, watched them back to back. A ton of fun it was too. When I was 6 or 7 I crept out of bed and hid so I could see the last part of Pit on the tube. The devil imagery at the end had me hiding under the covers for the rest of the night.

Have you heard about the whispers to remove Gernsback's name from the Hugo? I get that he was a Fat Cat paying himself \$100,000 a year (in the 1920s that was a fortune) while not bothering to pay his writers. I have no great love for the 1% myself, but where does this path fandom is on end? I'm starting to get sick of it all...

I get that I'm an old guy late to the fandom party. I also get that fandom is for the young. The young padawans have tons of energy and have to expend it somehow, so they will tear down our clubhouse and build a new one to suit themselves. We, their elders, will stand by with heads hung low, and let it happen. It's happened before, it will again. Even if we did stop them, they would just be at it again next year and the next after that, until they get what they want.

But as the grand old clubhouse is being turned to ashes I will say this. What passes for science fiction these days is pure shit. For my cash, the only person alive today writing science fiction worthy of the name is Cixin Liu. The rest of them can't write for cold spit and give science fiction a bad name (I am referring to the Dirty Old Pros, not the fannish crowd trying to break into the majors or just having some fun)

I am not the first to feel this way, sure as hell I won't be the last. I have to admit that it warms my cold heart to know that around the time the current crop of young padawans become old pharts, another group of young padawans will rise up and another clubhouse will be razed. I wish I could be around to hear the howls.

Also, for Bill Plott, CouchCon was held in Atlanta. And no, the bookstore I'm not telling about yet isn't 2nd and Charles (it is in B'ham tho). Summer before last my buddy and I hit six or so 2nd and Charles stores in 3 states. Their flagship store is in B'ham, across from the hotel that holds the Magic City con every year. It's not bad, but I found better stuff at the store in Augusta, Ga (I think it was Augusta...it's been over a year now, and the old bean grows dim). My big score there was a bunch of leatherette editions of Ron Hubbard's short SF and Fantasy, \$5 a pop and still sealed in shrink-wrap.

I hope the issue this letter sees print in will carry an article about the store in SC I've been keeping under my hat (that is, of course, if Bob thinks either is fit to print). You have to have a sheepskin to work there, but they are NOT snooty. Come to think of it, the only used bookstores I've been in that were snooty were also real

dives, overpriced books falling apart on the shelves with blue-haired little old ladies dragging in romance novels by the bagful while even more blue-haired little old ladies standing around gossiping.

One last bit. Yahoo! Groups changed the way it can be used as a store of information. Apparently, enough of the SF fen make use of Yahoo! for *Locus* magazine to take notice. It affected a group I am a member of, a bunch of scanners working to preserve old pulp magazines of all types. We also scan old fanzines. I've been after them for years to get a back-up site going, but no one wanted to. So when the news of the changes at Yahoo! hit we were running around like our hair was on fire and our magazines were catching. I'm happy to report that we managed to make the move without losing anything important. Good thing too, one of the first new things to make an appearance at our new digs was a scan of *All-Story* v22 n02, it contains the first part of "Under the Moons of Mars" by one Norman Bean. That's EBR's first story, making it one of the most sought-after pulps of all time. I have NO idea how the scanner managed to get a copy! Good things DO happen in this old world from time to time...

///I have not heard any discussion about renaming the Hugo Awards and disassociating them from the Hugo Gernsback personality. It wouldn't surprise me tho. So far as I can see are in the middle of an era of political correctness running amok. LGBTQ themes are being hyped as the newest and bestest thing in SF/fantasy, with gay or gender bending character being inserted into stories for no other reason than to say they are there. I don't think this is going to attract many new readers, but it often clunks up otherwise stable story plots.

I disagree completely with your assessment of the current crop of science fiction. There is some bad crap out there, but there have always been bad stories out there, getting published for reasons that almost defy rational explanation (altho blackmail and mind altering drugs come to mind immediately), however there are plenty of excellent science fiction novels and short stories being published today. *Fadeaway* is only one of the fanzines currently offering critical reviews to help separate the wheat from the chaff. Rather than just try something blindly, I have always found that checking the reviews is generally a good way to stay way from the bad stuff and find material that will provide positive entertainment value.

I agree that the world of fandom is changing, rapidly. I think the internet and the incredible proliferation of conventions is the primary factor here. Virtually instantaneous contact among fans and a con every weekend within easy driving distance has made for a much more easy going, sociable environment that seems like fan Nirvana to oldsters like myself who relied on snail mail, fanzines, and the occasional regional con to maintain the fan spirit. However, there's still room for everybody.

And speaking of strange new worlds, I just read on the internet news sites that a banana duct taped to a wall sold for \$120,000 at a Miami Beach art show. I wonder what they would get for a string of dried red peppers wrapped in Christmas Bows?///



George Phillies; 48 Hancock Hill Dr.; Worcester, MA 01609

As always, you create a fascinating fanzine with a wide range of coverages. The description of Charles Fort and the linkage forward to science fiction was fascinating. Charles Fort was consumed by his curiosity in odd directions, and must for much time have lived a miserable life. As a minor note, which perhaps is hidden someplace in the report, his four books were reprinted in a single volume, perhaps 60 years ago. The Shaver Mystery was indeed very odd, including one zine issue that was entirely filled with Shaver mystery material. It is sad that Shaver was mentally ill. Did Palmer know this?

I recall seeing Quatermass and the Pit on television. The effects were perfectly respectable, given the time and budget. There were several of these, including the tale (perhaps not with Quatermass) with the man-plant fusion being fried electrically. There was also the visitor from a moon of some outer planet who wanted our women, except he lured women who were decidedly not well off, who, when given the choice, chose voluntarily to go with him.

Tom Feller's account of "The Power" is staggering in its detail. Of course no one would suspect the one woman on the committee -- radical for its time -- of being the mutant. Having a woman on the committee was also somewhat radical. However, period SF shows were sometimes a bit radical in this direction. Tom Corbett had a female scientist Major (I forget), who gave orders. When Commando Cody flew into battle against The

Ruler's starships -- yes, there was interstellar flight in at least one episode -- it was his female sidekick at the controls.

I had never heard of Martin Ehrengraf, nor of Lawrence Block. He certainly gives a remarkably alternative approach to being a successful defense attorney. One might propose that the Massachusetts Board of Bar Overseers might take exception to some of his methods. Plot twists are indeed a tradition in these stories, and Block sounds to have created a lot of them. My imagination does not run in that direction.

You created a FANTASTIC Christmas card!

///It seems reasonable to me that Ray Palmer must have known or at least strongly suspected that Richard Shaver was mentally ill. As I may have mentioned before, I corresponded with Shaver briefly in the early 1960s and his writing was so whacked out that it was clear to me the guy was nuts. All of the stories Shaver sent in to Palmer were heavily edited by Palmer and apparently had quite a lot of S&M content that had to be cut out. Palmer always claimed he didn't necessarily believe in the hidden world and the deros Shaver wrote about, but at the same time he did not disbelieve. The stuff ramped up sales of his magazines which was what he was primarily interested in.

I'm not so sure any state Bar Oversight committee would find Martin Ehrengraf deficient, since they would not know of his unique and highly illegal methods of operating. All they would see is that all of his clients always proved to be innocent of all the charges originally filed against them. In all the cases another person was proven to be guilty, and, as they say, "justice was done".

In one of the stories Ehrengraf takes a charity case assigned to him by the court system, which paid him almost nothing, and successfully proved that his client, tho drunk at the time of the murder and with the sole opportunity to kill the woman involved, was completely innocent. He framed the wrong guy, but then discovered the correct guilty party and uncovered the fact that the individual he was framing was guilty of another criminal enterprise related to the people involved in the original case. Plus he made a bet with another lawyer that he could prove his charity client innocent, so Ehrengraf made money from the side wager anyway. The local attorney's council would probably assign him a certificate of merit for his tireless devotion to duty even in the face of daunting circumstances.///

Bill Plott; 190 Crestview Circle; Montevallo, AL 35115



It being about time for my truck's annual visit to the car wash, I set out on a recent pre-breakfast morning to clear out a year's detreus -- such things as my grandson's fast food and Gummie Bear bags, assorted magazines always on hand for waiting rooms and lines, a smattering of SFWA fanzines for the same purpose (and because I'm behind in reading the latest mailing), newspapers (mostly comic sections), long-empty Dasani water bottles, tattered bank deposit receipts, etc. Amidst all of this, "what to my wondering eyes should appear," to coin a phrase, but a bedraggled copy of *Fadeaway* 63. Thus, this letter of comment, which will quite possibly cross in the mail with #64. Not the first time that has happened.

But, into the trenches.

I am always amazed at the depth of your research on such things as Penny Dreadfuls, dime novels, Beadle & Adams, etc. And I am equally amazed at your ability to wade through a lot of that stiff, cumbersome Victorian writing. I do love the illustrations, though, and the pathway they paved for the wonderful pulp covers of the 1920s and 1930s and 1940s.

The Batman omnibus sounds like it would be good read, but \$125! Even at the great discount you got I don't think I will be likely to buy it. Of course, given the prices of new books generally these days, I shouldn't be surprised.

I enjoyed Gary Casey's piece on Charles Fort. It reminded me very much of my first years in fandom. I bought *Fate* magazine, viewing it not much differently than I did the SF magazines. I was interested in all of it and wanting so much to believe all of the bizarreness of the world. I got really caught up in flying saucers for a while, accepting most everything except the abduction tales. It was kind of like the conspiracy fans today, I guess. It made you feel like you were on the inside of something special if you believed UFOs were real.

But back to Casey, I was really surprised to learn of the Theodore Dreiser connection. I remember reading *Sister Carrie* in college and was aware of the titles of some of his other novels and his place in American

letters. I wonder if he is still considered necessary reading in college lit classes any more. Probably not, probably long since replaced by Updike, Roth and other more modern writers. A fine piece of research and writing, Mr. Casey.

Tom Feller again has a nice comparison of movie and book in Frank Robinson's *The Power*. I enjoyed the book, and I think I saw the movie, also, but I don't particularly recall it. What I remember most is that mantra of "You remind me of a man. What man? The man with the power? What power..." Was that in the book or was it part of a SF Book Club promotion?

Your comments on the impending demise of fanzines are spot on. If you didn't live as a fan in the '50s and '60s you can't imagine how important the printed zine and the postal service were -- especially if you lived in the South or in any relative rural area without access to clubs and cons. I have said before, unequivocally, that fandom gave me a sense of place, a host of new friends and a honing tool for developing my own writing skills. By the time I got to college and started working for the student newspaper, I was already capable of understanding style and putting a news story together. Although the fan world has changed dramatically, I can say that since my return to fandom a few years ago, my participation in SFPA and the arrival of an occasional, still-printed fanzine like *Fadeaway* rekindles some of that old teenage Sense of Wonder. I'm so glad that these vestiges of the old world are still around.

Finally, you have me adding *Quatermass and the Pit* to a list of films I may try one of these days. It sounds much more interesting than I thought it would be when it came out.

///Always good to know that fanzines are the go-to filler for time spent waiting at the car wash. Doubtless this is a step above filling the time with fanac while waiting for the spin cycle to finish up at the local laundry mat.

As I mentioned in the review, the *Batman* omnibus volume is a genuine bargain, even at full price, compared to what you would have to pay for the original comics. \$125.00 wouldn't even get you a tenth of the issues that were reprinted in that book. Plus, the art, color, and dialog was crisp and sharp, printed on gloss paper for maximum effectiveness, whereas the originals were printed in cheap pulp paper that is slowly aging out no matter how carefully the mags are stored.

Charles Fort's books made an enormous impression on a lot of people, including a lot of prominent people in the world of literature and politics. When the Fortian Society was originally started the initial membership was a virtual who's-who of important personalities. Fort managed to expose and explore a whole different and often bizarre realm that science and establishment stalwarts could not explain, and, as Gary noted in his article, those same learned authorities very often tried to sweep the facts under the proverbial rug and ignore it, hoping the information would just go away. As Fort pointed out, not only didn't those facts go away, many of the phenomena he reported repeated itself on a regular basis. It was both disquieting and fascinating at the same time.

By all means snag a copy of "*Quatermass and the Pit*". It is well worth seeing. Many libraries have the movie on DVD since it has been recently rereleased so you might be able to borrow a copy thru inter-library loan.///

**OUR ESTEEMED ART STAFF
& WHERE THEIR WORK
MAY BE FOUND HEREIN:**

Steve Stiles--- front cover, page 3

Dan Carroll---back cover

all other artwork---clip art from the internet

