ORIGIN 45

NOVEMBER 2021

The Publication of the National Fantasy Fan Federation's

History and Research Bureau

ORIGIN is edited by bureau head John Thiel, residing at 30 N. 19th Street, Lafayette, Indiana 47904. kinethiel@mymetronet.net

Published for the National Fantasy Fan Federation (N3F). To join or renew, use the membership form at http://n3f.org/join/membership-form/ to provide your name and whichever address you use to receive zines. Memberships with TNFF via paper mail are $18; memberships with TNFF via email are $6. Zines other than TNFF are email only. Public memberships are free. Public members may participate in activities. Send payments to Kevin Trainor, Post Office Box 143, Tonopah, Nevada 89049. Pay online at N3F.org . Our PayPal contact is treasurer@n3f.org .

BUREAU MEMBERS

Jon Swartz, 12115 Missel Thrush Court, Austin, TX 78750, jon_swarts@hotmail.com

Jeffrey Redmond, 1335 Beechwood NE, Grand Rapids, MI 49505-3830, redmondjeff@hotmail.com

Judy Carroll, 975 East 120 South, Spanish Fork, UT 84660, blueshadows2012@gmail.com

CONTENTS

EDITORIAL

How We Progress

As Dave Rike once explained it, writing in the Cult Fantasy Rotator, existentialist thought has four major themes meaningful for the individual: Who am I, where did I come from, where am I now, and where am I going?

I believe he was referring to Jean-Paul Sartre's treatise, BEING AND NOTHINGNESS. Does modern man worry about his being? Does he understand himself? There is a lot of talk going on about this.

It reminds me of a science fiction story of the fifties, which I'm talking about in this issue, in a recollection of that era's science fiction, later on. The story is THE STARS MY DESTINATION, a novel by Alfred Bester. This book centers around a spaceman whose ship has been destroyed and all crew members are dead but one, and the ship is floating around in empty space. Inertia keeps it near the space line, along which route he is expecting another ship to come along, and he intends to attract its notice with distress flares. In the meantime he thinks about how near he came to the death the others escaped; if he had not been in unusual circumstances which were irregular anyway, he would have died with the rest. He is keeping himself alive by various means and it is a tedious ordeal. He supposes he is apt to die anyway. He is not in a condition of sanity, and he makes up little rhymes about his circumstances: "Gully Foyle is my name, Terra is my nation. Deep space is my dwelling place, and death's my destination."

A ship finally comes by and he uses his distress flares and the ship swings around toward him, then, as if they'd changed their mind, they go back on course and are soon gone. He yells after them with hatred. He goes insane with it and then comes to and begins working to repair his ship all by himself. He actually gets the job done, and is able to get his ship to a populated asteroid, where he lands in and begins getting his body repaired, the same way he managed to do with the ship. He is on a manhunt to

catch the crew of the ship that abandoned him and avenge himself upon them.

We find that this man left home to go into space and after a while lost contact with his family and just continued roaming space. He was in an existential position which may represent modern man. No background, no history. He can't say where he came from. When wrecked in space, there was no way to describe where he was at—he was in the nothingness through which he had travelled as part of the crew of a space ship. Being abandoned there made him feel isolated from humanity. He no longer knew where he was now—he had no understanding of the life he had led. His nonsensical little chant shows that he has little knowledge of himself and no hope for the future. Where was he going? To death. Those were his answers to those philosophical questions. The book, however, shows him gradually beginning a quest for an identity and a self understanding. He runs into his father and doesn't recall him, but after a time his father notices who he is—and Gully says "I don't even recognize my own father!" The shock he feels at this starts him trying to figure it all out—and he finally comes up with the answer. Where he is going to is the future, and it will be a future of increase, not diminishment. He has dealt with one of the terrors of modern times—not having any solid ancestry, not being in a place he understands, not having any concept of a future, and careless of knowing anything even about himself: a fugitive from terror by way of a sort of catatonia, a lack of concern with anything. Thought is fear—but he learns to think. It is also the road away from fear, if travelled well.

We can see ourselves in this—aimlessly adrift in the science fiction we once became interested in, but losing concern with science fiction's past, its meaning, its relevance to our lives, its impetus to thought. The science fiction of the past is merely the remains of a culture that is past—but if we lose the past, we lose the present. Bester's book studies this very thing. Why relegate it to the past? It would seem that the book concerns us still in the present.

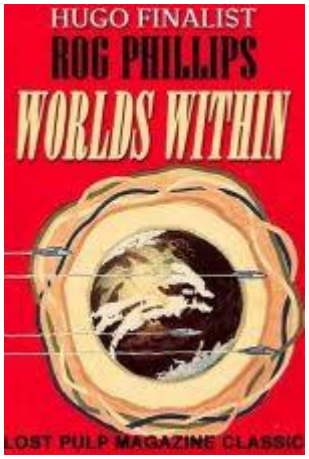
I'd like to see the N3F develop meaning to its members, and become a means of development (as a comment later on in this issue by Jon Swartz says); and I think the history and research bureau can achieve accomplishments in this and has already been doing so. It is not a waste of time to develop ourselves, as we dodge the travails of a modern world which has troubles aplenty.

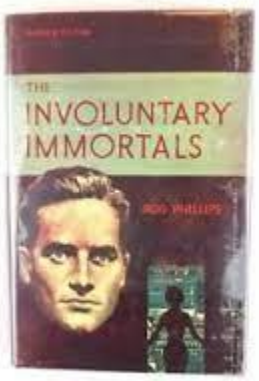
Let's see if we can forge ahead, as Jeffrey Redmond later in this issue suggests.

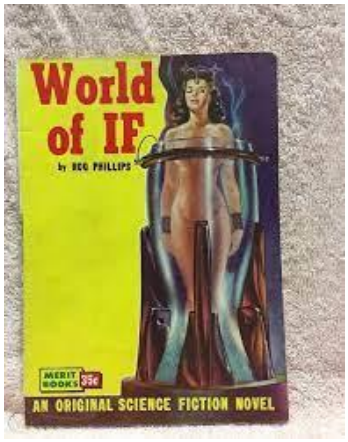
A Look Back at Century/Merit Science Fiction

by Jon D. Swartz, N3F Historian

Looking over past science fiction reading







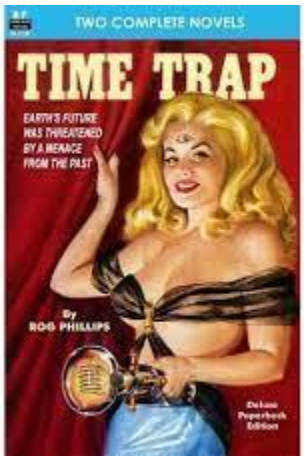
During the late 1940s and early 1950s there were very few science fiction (SF) novels or short story collections published in book form. In addition, many of the SF paperbacks that did appear were not distributed nationally. As a teenager living in a small town in Central Texas, I was aware of the distribution problems of paperback books and magazines because I worked part time at the local news stand and was involved at times in trying to order some of these publications.

The paperbacks of Century Publications, a small publisher in Chicago, stood out as an exception in this unfortunate state of affairs. Not only were their books distributed to the nation's major cities, a few of them even reached the news stands of some very

small towns. These Century paperbacks were distinguished for another, completely different reason: they included some of the earliest SF paperback originals (PBO) to see print in this country. At the time a few of Century's digest-sized titles were issued under their Merit Books imprint. These pioneering Century/Merit SF paperbacks are described and discussed in this article.

The Century/Merit Paperbacks

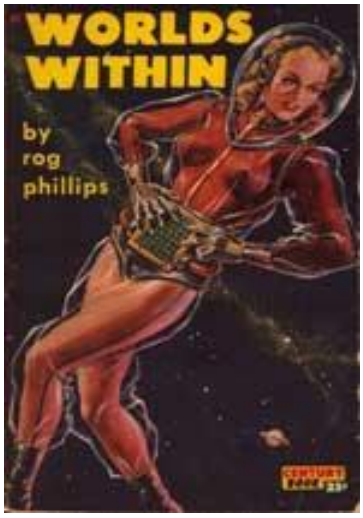
TIME TRAP by Rog Phillips (Century Book No. 116, 1949), a 25c mass-market PBO with cover art by Malcolm Smith



The cover art of the three-eyed girl (third eye in the center of her forehead) by Malcolm Smith is simply gorgeous. The girl is scantily dressed and holding a ray gun that looks more like a flashlight than a weapon of any kind. The story is about a mysterious three-eyed race of humans, the Varg Throtts, who attempt the takeover of the United States in 1999. One of the main characters is named Ray Bradley! When the book was published in 1949, apparently fifty years seemed to be a very long time in the future. This title is arguably the very first science fiction PBO to be published. On the other hand, today this paperback is better known for Smith's GGA cover than for his distinction or for the book's story. This PBO sells for about $15-$20 in G-VG condition, and about $100-125 in Fine condition.

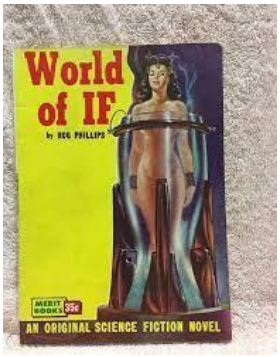
A Canadian edition of this book printed in May 1950 by Publishing Enterprises of Toronto, London, and New York was identified as a News Stand Library Pocket Edition. The cover art in blue and white is not anything like the Century Book edition and depicts some sort of space vehicle amid a group of stars, comets, galaxies, *etc.*

WORLDS WITHIN by Rog Phillips (Century book No. 124, 1950), a 25c mass-market PBO with cover art by Malcolm Smith



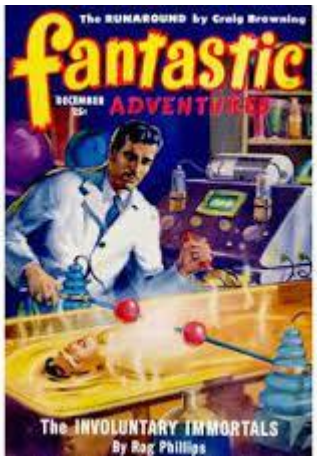
Lin Carter, an engineer engaged in top secret research at Lockheed, was shaving when a knock came at his apartment door. Before he could reach it, the door was opened by a girl so beautiful that she was literally "out of this world". "His apartment door was the first of many doors she was to open for him." It is not known whether or not the main character was named after the SF fan (and later pro) Lin Carter [1930-1988]. Carter was a SF fan as a teenager, and wrote many LOCs to the prozines, so it is not inconceivable that Phillips knew him (or at least his name) in the late 1940s. Since both parties are no longer with us, we may never know. Prices for this book range from $15.00 in G to about $75.00 in Fine condition. Smith's cover is of a blonde in a transparent spacesuit, floating in space.

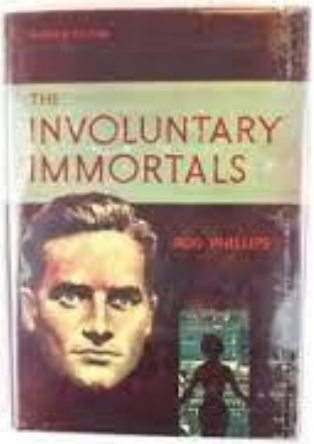
WORLD OF IF by Rog Phillips (Century Publications/Merit Books No. B-13, 1951), a 35c digest-sized PBO with cover art by Malcolm Smith



John Dow discovers that an experimental subject—who, as part of the experiment, had had his mind "pushed back" into childhood—had experienced a memory of the future! Dr. French likened this phenomenon to the idea of pushing the mind back into childhood under hypnosis, except he had pushed the mind of a subject lost in time forward instead of back. Prices range from $10.00 in G and $45.00 in Fine. The cover art is a naked woman encased in a glass container.

Phillips had only one other novel published as a separate book, THE INVOLUNTARY IMMORTALS (Avalon, 1959). This novel was revised/expanded from Phillips' original story with this title that appeared in **Fantastic Adventures** in 1949. To my knowledge, The Involuntary Immortals has never been published in paperback.





THE GREEN MAN: A Visitor From Space by Harold M. Sherman (Century Adventures 104, 1946, 25c, digest-sized)

The first SF book from Century was an early space opera story that was originally published in the pulp SF magazine **Amazing Stories**. Numar, a creature from another world, arrives on Earth, travels over a trillion miles from his planet Talamaya. "This is quite possibly the most amazing story you have ever read—more amazing still when you consider that it COULD happen" appears on the book's cover. The plot involves the alien Green Man trying to bring peace to Earth. The story appeared originally in two parts in Amazing, and is typical of pulp SF in the 1930s-1940s. Copies range from $20.00 in G to $140.00 in Fine. The cover art by an uncredited artist shows the full figure of the Green Man character, clothed in white and gold and holding a scientific gadget of some sort in his hand. A space ship is seen in the background.

OPERATION INTERSTELLAR by George O. Smith (Century Publications/Merit Books No. B-10, 1950), a 25c digest-sized PBO with cover art by Malcolm Smith

"The flight dropped down out of super velocity one by one, a quarter of a light year from Latham Alpha, coming into real space in a volume spherically as large as the outer limits of the Solar System." This book ranges from $10.00 in G. to $25.00 in Fine. The cover art is of two spaceships and an exploding planet, very reminiscent of the art Smith later did for the covers of the SF magazine **Other Worlds Science Stories** that began in November 1949.

Smith is better known to the SF community for his collection of linked stories about a communications space station in the orbit of Venus, VENUS EQUILATERAL (1947), his novel of an alien invasion, PATTERN FOR CONQUEST (1949), and his two novels with "superman" themes: HIGHWAYS IN HIDING (1956) and THE FOURTH "R" (1959).

Brief Author/Artist Biographies

Rog Phillips (1909-1965)

Roger Phillips Graham was born in Spokane, Washington. He married Mari Wolf in 1950 (divorced) and Honey Wood in 1956. A power plant engineer and then a welder during World War II, he turned to writing full time in 1945, with his first publication the story "Let Freedom Ring" in the December 1945 Amazing. His first SF book was Time Trap. He ran "The Club House", a fanzine review column, in editor Raymond Palmer's Amazing from March 1948 until March 1953, and later revived it in other Palmer publications (Other Worlds Science Stories, **Universe Science Fiction**, *etc.*). His column is credited with helping to stimulate the growth of SF fandom in the United States. His short story "Rat in the Skull" was a finalist for a Hugo Award (Best Novelette) in 1959. In addition to his Rog Phillips byline, Graham also published under his own name and used several other pseudonyms, including Clinton Ames, Drew Ames, Robert Arnet, Franklin Bahl, Craig Browning, Gregg Conrad, Sanandana Kumara, D.C. McGowan, Inez McGowan, Melva Rogers, Chester Ruppert, William Carter Sawtelle, Gerald Vance, and John Wiley. He also occasionally published under the house names of Robert Arnette, Alexander Blade, P.F. Costello, A.R. Steber, and Peter Worth. Perhaps his most famous SF story was the much-reprinted "The Yellow Pill", originally published in the October 1958 issue of **Astounding Science Fiction** (ASF). When he and Mari Wolf were married, she wrote the fan column "Fandora's Box" for **Imagination** (April, 1951 to April, 1956). Her column was very similar to her husband's "The Club House". Because of his support of SF and SF fandom, Graham once stated: "Perhaps I did come to think of myself in some ways as a distant god of fandom".

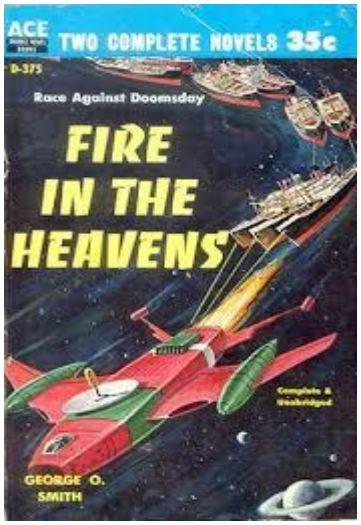
Harold M. Sherman (1898-1987)

Sherman is known today principally for the many juvenile novels he wrote during the 1930s-1940s, including the "Tahara" fantasy adventure series. Public libraries had most of them, and I read and enjoyed many of them as a youngster. Sherman also wrote a screenplay, THE ADVENTURES OF MARK TWAIN, produced by Warner Brothers in 1944 and starring Fredric March. In addition, he wrote a dramatization of the life of JANE ADDAMS OF HULL HOUSE. The Green Man (and its sequel, THE GREEN MAN RETURNS) may be the only pure SF stories he ever wrote. They were originally published in Amazing in the mid-1940s. Sherman was also interested in psychic research, and apparently knew and even worked with Duke University's famous parapsychologist Dr. Joseph B. Rhine.

George O. Smith (1911-1981)

Smith began dabbling in radio at an early age, and worked in the medium for most of his life. He began writing SF in the 1940s, principally for John W. Campbell's ASF. After Smith moved to Philadelphia in 1946, he was an active participant in local fan gatherings and attended several Worldcons. In the early 1950s he had a book review column in **Space Science Fiction**. In addition to Operation Interstellar and his novels already mentioned above, his SF books included HELLFLOWER (Abelard, 1953), TROUBLED STAR (Avalon, 1957), and THE PATH OF UNREASON (Gnome, 1959). WORLDS OF GEORGE O. SMITH, a collection of his short fiction, was published in 1982. Smith also wrote under the pseudonym of Wesley Long. During SF's Golden Age, Smith was usually thought of as a member of the genre's second tier of writers, yet most of his

stories had a sound scientific base. He once stated that he thought science had caught up with science fiction and "passed it in a cloud of dust".



Malcolm Smith (1912-1966)

Smith originally worked as a display artist. He later became an illustrator, and in 1940 submitted a number of paintings to Amazing Stories, which subsequently were accepted by Ziff-Davis, the magazine's publisher in Chicago. Smith began doing freelance work for the company, and when it expanded its line of magazines, joined its art department; he soon became an art director for all of the Ziff-Davis pulps. His first SF magazine cover art was for the January 1942 issue of Amazing. In 1948 he set up his own studio, and began doing art for SF books of the time, including the striking cover art for Welles' INVASION FROM MARS INTERPLANETARY STORIES, the popular Dell paperback anthology published in 1949. Smith also did several dust jackets for Shasta Publishers in

the 1940s and 1950s. Smith was Amazing's regular artist before taking over as art director for Other Worlds Science Stories, where he was hired by editor/publisher Ray Palmer to do most of that magazine's cover paintings.

Sources

Clute, John and Peter Nicholls. THE ENCYCLOPEDIA OF SCIENCE FICTION. London: Orbit, 1993.

Hancer, Kevin. HANCER'S PRICE GUIDE TO PAPERBACK BOOKS, THIRD EDITION. Radnor, PA: Wallace-Homestead, 1990.

Lovisi, Gary. COLLECTING SCIENCE FICTION AND FANTASY. Brooklyn, NY: Alliance, 1997.

Schreuders, Piet. PAPERBACKS, U.S.A.: A GRAPHIC HISTORY, 1939-1959. San Diego, CA: Blue Dolphin, 1981.

Note: This article was written many years ago for my fanzine, **The Ultraverse.** It is reprinted here with some revisions.

A CLOSER LOOK AT SF AND FANTASY READING

By Judy Carroll

Ray Bradbury

Shirley Jackson

Shirley Jackson and Ray Bradbury are two of my favorite science fiction/fantasy authors.

Shirley Jackson—I discovered Shirley Jackson in 9th grade English class. My teacher sat on the edge of her desk, facing the class, legs crossed at the ankles, as she gave an introduction to the story she was about to read to us—"The Lottery".

She had me hooked before she started reading.

I was fascinated with the entire story while wondering what was so unusual about a group of friends gathering for a lottery. When the teacher finished the story, I was

surprised by the ending. How could she make us a part of the group and then trick us at the end? Is that OK?

I was so impressed I started using that method in conversation. If someone asked me how I did on a test, I couldn't just say "Fine. Everything went well." I'd lead them along, telling how uncertain I was about question #5 and that #12 was a trick question. When I took it as far as I could go, without losing my audience, I would quickly wrap it up and say, "Fine. Everything went well." (I still have a tendency to do that. Turning everyday doings into a story.)

Obviously, I like the way she can take the mundane and common and turn it into a story with a totally unexpected ending.

Her stories about her family life are equally impressive. It's like you are experiencing the ENTIRE incident as if you were there.

Ray Bradbury—I'm not sure at what age I discovered Ray Bradbury. I read a lot of his novels and short story books. I remember turning TV channels and finding him sitting at a desk with lots of toys and figures surrounding him. He would pick one up and introduce that week's story.

He can take the most common things and turn them into something magical, "Something Wicked This Way Comes", or terrifying, "The Small Assassin." He can put words together and send your imagination to new places. One of my favorite short story titles is "Dark They Were and Golden Eyed", from THE MARTIAN CHRONICLES.

I think, if I had the chance to go back in time and visit with Shirley Jackson and Ray Bradbury, I would be too nervous to say anything. I would probably watch them from afar and wish I had the courage to approach them.

But, if I had the courage and confidence to approach them—

I would tell Ms. Jackson how much I love all of her work, and that I have patterned my storytelling after her. We would talk of ghost stories and strange phenomena. And laugh that we both talk to inanimate objects as if they were alive.

I would tell Mr. Bradbury that I love his imagination and his writing. And that I have almost every science fiction/fantasy book he has ever written. I would tell him how much his writing means to me, and what a door of imagination he has opened up for me. And that I love to say, "Dark They Were and Golden Eyed."

Best Science Fiction Stories

by Jeffrey Redmond

Some prototypical sf

Ellison

Vandermeer

Chaing

Garland

You may have surrounded yourself with books for as long as you can remember. In large part this is because a childhood can be anything but peaceful. The memory of it can be like a shipwreck whose jagged pieces float up to the surface of the mind's dark waters. What you wanted were books. They felt like receiving whole worlds, ones with many pictures, ones with none at all. Favorites could have been those where the main characters were explorers. Some would visit the edge of the world, others the bottom of the sea, or the speckled ice mountains of a distant continent.

The body of each book got fat from our leafing through it. They gave us something we hope to some day give back to the world: reassurance, and above all a richer inner life. Needless to say that one of the favorite genres is science fiction. It combines exciting elements of high-tech terror and scientific theory into individual tales. The stories below, specifically, have changed many as a person. It is hoped that they may change the lives of many more of us as well.

ANNIHILATION by Jeff Vandermeer

We've known of this novel for more than a year now. Its pages are seeped with mystery and suspense. An alien species arrives on Earth and has taken over an area known as "Area X". Military research groups are deployed one at a time to explore the region. It's a swatch of wilderness thick with mutated flora and fauna. Animal noises can be heard long into the night, disquieting the characters' meals and their sleep.

All the while the group of trained women are compelled to explore two places: a

lighthouse with which most people become obsessed, and a tower unmarked on their map. The author's language is beautifully descriptive and poetic. But what endears us most to this novel is the main character. She had many flaws, yet was so keen-eyed and intelligent that we can't help but be transfixed by her.

The horror story is, at its core, about self-destruction and reinvention. We feel ourselves anxious for every impending death, but also growing more introspective whenever I read it. It's the first book in the Southern Reach Trilogy and was beautifully adapted into a film starring Natalie Portman.

"When you see beauty in desolation it changes something inside you. Desolation tries to colonize you."

"Arrival" or "Story of Your Life" by Ted Chiang

This novella is similar to Annihilation in that it explores an alien civilization coming to Earth and changing the people with whom it communicates. But unlike the former story, this one is not about the oblivion we experience within ourselves. It's about time, and perspective. A linguistics professor attempts to learn the language of the alien species. Doing so rewires her brain, allowing her to see things differently from all those around her. This is something that's true with all of us as well. Language is a powerful tool. It is one of the defining characteristics of being human, and is an art in and of itself.

Language is one of the pillars of what makes us different from other animals. We can be vulnerable and tell others about our past, or we can be mean, loving, spiteful, praising. So much depends on the words we choose to say and write to someone else. And to ourselves.

The story focuses on the professor's interaction with these creatures but also invites us to view a touching relationship between the professor and her daughter. In the end it is a heartbreaking tale that may fall into the science fiction category, but is deeply human and familial at the end of the day. I have, admittedly, a difficult time not crying whenever I re-read this piece.

The author chooses to tell the short 40-page story in a non-linear fashion, making for a fantastic plot twist once one arrives at the end. It was originally titled "The Story of Your Life" but was adapted into a movie named Arrival. Both are well-executed.

"My message to you is this: pretend that you have free will. It's essential that you behave as if your decisions matter, even though you know they don't. The reality isn't

important; what's important is your belief, and believing the lie is the only way to avoid a waking coma. Civilization now depends on self-deception. Perhaps it always has."

"I Have No Mouth, and I Must Scream" by Harlan Ellison

A lesser-known story, but an example of true, unadulterated horror. This is a disturbing tale more unsettling and gruesome than anything by Stephen King. There are no vampires, or witches, or hungry, oozing swamp monsters climbing out of soft and muddy waters. Instead the main villain is something which we've created ourselves—an intelligent supercomputer by the name of Allied Mastercomputer (AM). The world has been almost entirely destroyed during war. The sole survivors are a group of five people made up of four men and one woman. They live on a single cruel premise: AM will never let them die, giving them immortality so that it can continue to torture them for all of eternity.

The end is beyond any nightmare we've ever experienced. It leaves the reader feeling helpless and violated, as if great acts of barbaric injustice had been committed against us and there was nothing we could do about it. The saddest part of it all? We did it to ourselves.

"Oh, Jesus sweet Jesus, if there ever was a Jesus and if there is a God, please please please let us out of here, or kill us. Because at that moment I think I realized completely, so that I was able to verbalize it: AM was intent on keeping us in his belly forever, twisting and torturing us forever. The machine hated us as no sentient creature had ever hated before. And we were helpless. It also became hideously clear: if there was a sweet Jesus and if there was a God, the God was AM."

Ex Machina by Alex Garland

More artificial intelligence. More terror. But this time it's careful and nuanced. The main character in this film performs a procedure known as the Turning test. It's a test meant to see if an artificial intelligence can pass as a human being. Has the machine become indistinguishable from man?

After a rich tech genius invites a programmer to his isolated estate, the programmer's job is to interact with a humanoid female robot called "Ava". She is extraordinarily human, tender-voiced and inquisitive. But as the movie unfolds the viewer must decide who the real villain is: the machine, or the man who has created the machine? It's not an easy side to take. What struck me most about the film wasn't the

incredible plot twist at the end or even the beautifully conducted narrative surrounding mankind and our relationship with our own inventions. Instead we became absorbed with the question of consciousness. What is it, and are we the only ones capable of being conscious? Can we create it…

…can we create a sentient machine?

"If you've created a conscious machine, it's not the history of man. That's the history of gods."

There are many more science fiction stories I'd like to recommend, but these others are more well-known and, for that reason, I didn't want to speak too much about them here. They include INTERSTELLAR, 2991: A SPACE ODYSSEY, George Orwell's NINETEEN EIGHTY FOUR, ENDER'S GAME, Michael Crichton's WESTWORLD and THE ANDROMEDA STRAIN, "Flowers for Algernon", Carl Sagan's CONTACT, and THE THREE BODY PROBLEM.

Science fiction is one of the most important genres in literature. We are approaching a future rife with technology—are actually dependent on it to the point where many of us would not know how to survive without our inventions. As technology and mankind become more intertwined, science fiction poses important questions we must some day confront. It teaches us about the possible outcomes, from interstellar exploration to devastating world wars. It is never too early to begin thinking about the implications of our technology.

Stories are each a look into a possible future—the utopias and the dystopias—but more importantly each story is also a look into ourselves. We explore the universe. We create the universe with our words.

SCIENCE FICTION BOOKS OF THE NINETEEN FIFTIES

by **John Thiel**

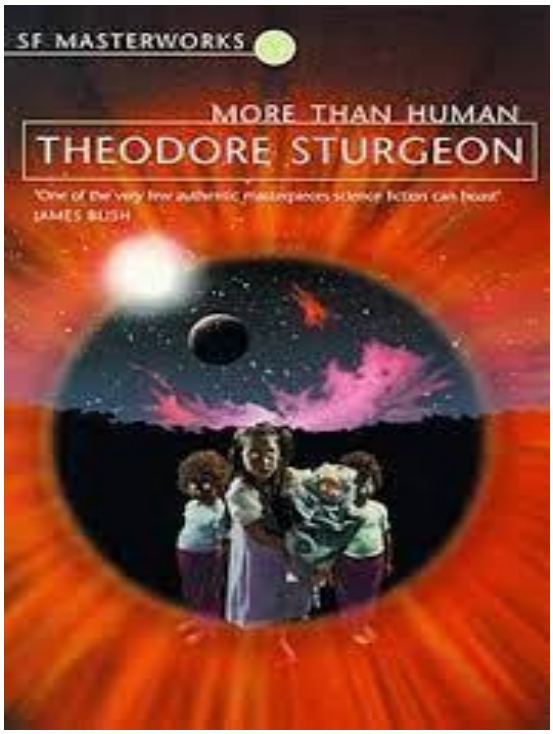
The midcentury era of the 20th Century was said to be the time when science fiction took on high quality and was less set aside from the general culture. The new digest-sized magazines looked better to people than the pulps. Here are some of the books from those times, briefly viewed.

THE PUPPET MASTERS by Robert A. Heinlein

Three investigators posing as an uncle and his nephew and niece are looking over an area where a flying saucer is said to have landed, though it was later claimed to be a hoax and people were invited to come and view it. They uncover an infiltrating invasion which is making people over into people who will do their bidding. The investigators are spotted and maneuver their way out of the area and are followed down the highway, but their car has a switch that increases their speed and they leave the pursuit behind. There are roadblocks on the way and they get past them and find that there are advances being made out of the place they were in and it isn't too long after they get back that there is an action against the place they came from. As the story develops the action increases and the investigative agency is doing battle with a mind-controlling and

personality-influencing invasion. There is a lot happening and a lot of action in the story. They finally overcome the menace and learn that it originates in the Ionic stellar system.

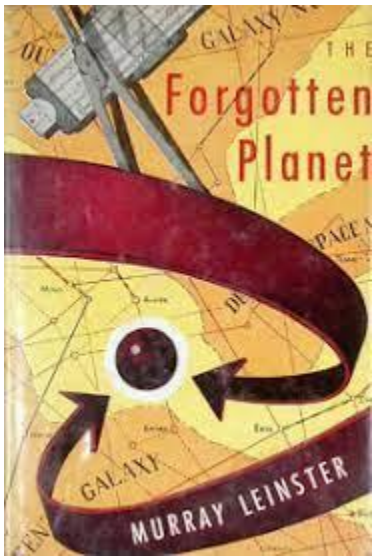
MORE THAN HUMAN by Theodore Sturgeon



A highly psychological tale where a gestalt group being is speculated. A loner who is described as an idiot is wandering down a railroad track through the ruins of fallen people destroyed by a major depression and he is keeping alive by ways he knows about. He meets a teenage boy who identifies with his means of keeping alive; he says he can get people to do what he wants through telepathy. They accumulate more acquaintances who are similarly keeping alive through supernatural means—two negro girls in their childhood who have found out how to teleport while avoiding danger, a girl more or less the boy's age who has powers of influencing people, and an infant boy who seems to be able to get people to support him. They finally are all living in a house together and develop a kind of group entityship which supports them against the wild world around them. But the boy isn't able to understand how he got the way he is and goes to visit a psychiatrist who is in practice in a very primitive way. The scientist uncovers the existence of the gestalt togetherness they have and in investigating them further becomes one of them, a guiding intellect with morality to offer them. Thereafter they become socially influential and the man has been someone who is a leader, so they

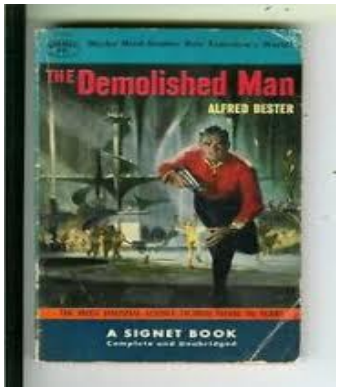
begin to reform the way of life they have been living. The book asks, can there be an evolution in the way people live?

THE FORGOTTEN PLANET, by Murray Leinster



This story traces the evolution of a man of a fallen culture's people, who have become savages and forgotten their former ways of being social beings. The man evolves individually from primordial being to one somewhat nearer to what we call "civilized" as he combats a world of giant insects. The character development is extraordinary as he learns to cope with his nightmare world. In the end they are rescued by people from elsewhere who have re-discovered them.

THE DEMOLISHED MAN, by Alfred Bester

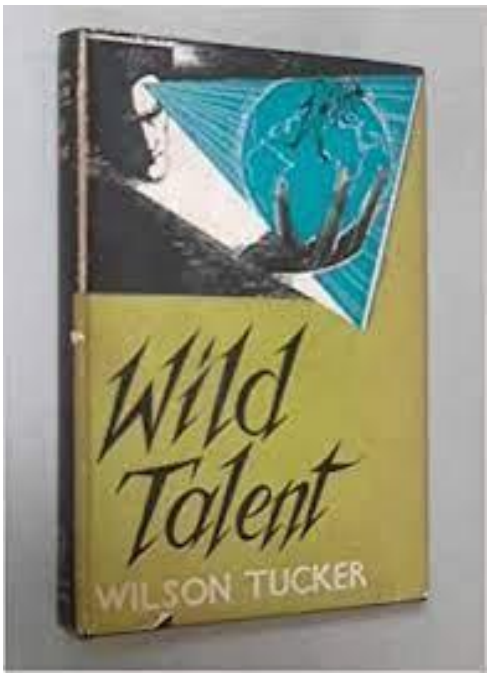


A businessman develops delusions of grandeur and becomes a menace to society and is followed by espers who can read minds and seek to know what is wrong with him. Finally they run him to the ground (after we have heard about many another odd person in this unorthodox society), and they commence his demolition for crimes and bad attitudes toward society. The book has adventures within people's minds as they get caught in the individual worlds of one another's psyches. Much of the action in the book resembles dreams.

COSTIGAN'S NEEDLE, by Jerry Sohl

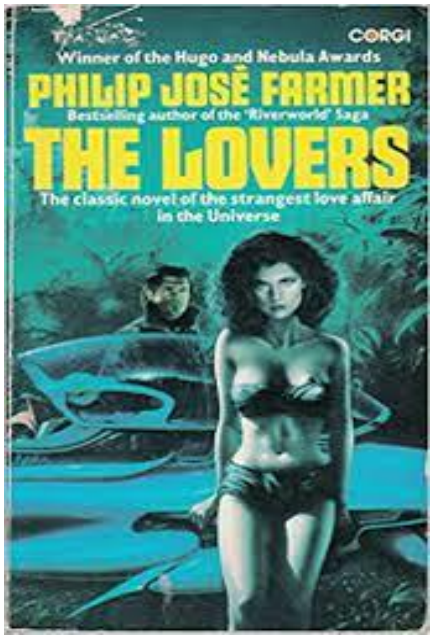
A scientist, said to be eccentric, creates a gateway into another world and persuades a suffering culture to pass through it and populate this new world, which is described as a potential paradise. Their original view of it does look good. The people go there, and building is done and a society set up, but it is a failure and eventually explodes due to the limitations of mankind.

WILD TALENT, by Wilson Tucker



A man reveals to companions at a card game that he is able to see what's on a face down card. Their test finds him able. Thus begins an exploit that becomes a telepathic warfare as the original incident accelerates and has repercussions all around.

THE LOVERS, by Phillip Jose Farmer



In a place far from Earth, a strange culture is experiencing problems, and during an attendant disaster a man who has gotten into an accident meets a native woman and

develops a liking for her, although people of her sort are abhorred. She is referred to as "an insect" and her people describe her as a man eater. Nevertheless a relationship comes to pass and the man finds himself at odds with his own culture as a result of this. He is accused of miscegenation and the action becomes violent and extreme. She is, by the way, described as attractive and alluring. But the people around him think it might begin things fatal to them, and among her own people there are those who concur with this, from their own perspective. For awhile he is displaying her and offing all who don't like it, finding admirers of the relationship. But it is causing disasters, though the point that people not liking the relationship are causing these is not ignored. The social upheaval and tribulations become complex and there does not seem to be any way to overcome or understand these problems. I'd say how it all turns out but that would be a spoiler.

GETTING CLOSER TO OUR STAFF

Jeffrey Redmond, photo by Tim Wilson

Commentary

Here we commence a feature that will hopefully have the effect of making readers of Origin more familiar with our bureau and the way it operates. I will introduce this feature by reprinting some statements I made in a departmental communication I send around to the other bureau members which have reference to the creation of this new feature.

Statement: **I was stating in TNFF that we should have some internal commentary in the bureau going on, which brings up a problem. I have time and opportunity to do this, but I think other bureau members don't have as much. Jeffrey Redmond is wedged in, it appears, by a lot of activities in which he is engaged, Jon Swartz has a whole lot to do also, and Judy Carroll has several bureau assignments to take care of, whereas I have two bureaus which are inter-related enough that I can work on both of them at once and be doing the same stream of activity.**

I'd suggest that if people in this bureau want to they could do informal statements about the bureau and what it is doing and have these statements in Origin, so that things would look livelier in the bureau to the rest of the NFFF. A short notation would serve well for this purpose, such as "things look nice this month" or "we seem to have problems" or whatever, and we could answer one another in a notation in Origin when we felt like doing so from month to month in this feature. You'd just send these to me to put in Origin. No demands being made here, I just felt like expressing this notion, and I'm always open if people in it want to make an open statement about the bureau or its present doings. We could also express ideas to one another here, or complaints as the case may be. These might look a little like these bulletins I am writing. Let 'em see what we're doing is what I'm thinking. –John Thiel

Maybe some Neffers will think it corn, since it resembles a letter column, but hey, we're doing things here and it serves a purpose.

I've gotten a couple of replies to this bulletin from the other staffers:

I don't think most N3F members today are interested in the history of science fiction, or in research related to it. For one thing, most of them refer to our field these days as sci-fi, following the lifelong interests of Los Angeles fan Forry Ackerman in visual SF,

as opposed to print SF.

As the historian of our club, I can verify that most of the inquiries I've received over the years have been regarding whether or not various family members were N3F members at one time. The only recent inquiries I've received on SF in general, and our club in particular, have been from our current president, George Phillies. He occasionally has a question regarding previous club activities that relate to current club matters.

As a bureau, we can do our small part to educate SF members by continuing to feature articles related to the history of SF, and maybe our readers will benefit somewhat from our efforts. I believe we have been doing a good job so far, thanks to the bureau head, John Thiel. –Jon D. Swartz, N3F Historian

Somehow we'll manage to get it all done. –Jeffrey Redmond.

My own commentary on the above missives: Yes, and I think we might be able to re-interest people in the science fiction we are familiar with—and once they start reading historical matter, they may well become interested in it, as sf does have an interesting history. In my own piece in this issue, I call attention to top science fiction novels of the fifties, and try to show in a short space how vivid and even relevant to our interests today those novels were.

Yes, Jeffrey, we have a good start and I think we'll be making headway at it. (Sometimes—in considering the word "headway"—I wonder if the main sf interest in recent years has been Max Headroom.)

I notice you're well up on what the more recent interests have been—you've been known to use the term "sci-fi" in reference to SF, and it may be that we could take in scifi too, the movie kind of fare, but we want to remember our roots and, as this publication's title puts it, our origins. Knowing the past makes for greater being in the present.

To provide further commentary for this issue, I'd like to comment on the articles of the other members of this bureau. That's like corresponding with them, but it is also visible to the readers. There's a lot in what they're writing that I find interesting enough to bring about commentary, and I wish it would bring in commentary from the readers also. Perhaps some time in the future it will.

In Jon Swartz's article, as if I were writing a letter, I'd say to Jon, it sounds like you had a job indicating an early and growing interest in literary things when you were a young person.

That looks like Mae West on the cover of TIME TRAP.

I'd say "Lin" is such an unusual name that Rog must have had him in mind in naming the character. Rog was at the 1952 World Convention and Walt Willis, the TAFF representative there, says a lot about him in his long report on his trip, "The Harp Stateside". He was an interesting person.

There's a lot of war consciousness in science fiction. The Green Man wanting to bring peace to Earth has occurred in quite a few stories, most notably "Farewell to the Master" by Harry Bates (THE DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL when made into a movie).

I think we ought to pay extra attention here in the History and Research Bureau to fanzine reviewers such as Rog Phillips and Mari Wolf; they played a great role in shaping fandom.

Referring to Judy Carroll's article, I liked Bradbury for the unique poetry of his style and also for the intense drama his stories provided. I did a reading of his story in The Martian Chronicles about the explorers who found their earthly town duplicated on Mars to the 8th grade class in the school I attended, and fully spooked everyone out. They were on the edges of their seats.

I read "The Lottery" in F&SF and the editor's introduction which spoke of the symbolism and mysterious qualities of the story, pointing out that these were what she was noted for. I did find the story caused me to wonder what it was about, even after reading it through. It seemed to concern primitive rituals arising in American communities and to suggest that this could and even did happen. There were some other stories by Jane Roberts that resembled this one, a kid recalling being someone else in the past in "The Red Wagon" and then reverting back to being a kid, and "The Chestnut Beads" and "The Bundu" about rites among women at a college and thereafter. These were also printed in F&SF. (Tell the recent editors at the magazine about these stories and they might not have read them.) I think "The Lottery" was an important crux story in the development of a fantasy theme that might concern a lot of people, and there certainly was a lot of talk about the story.

Jeffrey—I would hope reading the stories you showed, if they changed the lives of readers, changed them for the better. Ellison's is one of those stories telling us "beware

of what we create" (which seems to be the purport of the title of his anthology DANGEROUS VISIONS), such as computers. People are presently pulling up news items about scientists who speculate that we are living in computer simulations.

Ted Chiang's story has philosophy in it, always a plus in science fiction, as it adds much to the basic elements of a story.

Jeff Vandermeer once had a story in my fanzine Pablo Lennis. I was interested when encountering him further in later years. The "self-destruction and resurrection" of his story is an important theme in considering these modern days.

I think "Ex Machina" is too far out—a sentient machine is a contradiction in terms, almost self-definatory as an impossibility.

A lot of writers in fanzines I have read have pointed out how we become dependent on what we invent. It is a crucial point. Some of it is due to predecessors in usage becoming outmoded; when you have the new thing the old thing is abandoned, but if the new thing breaks down, you cannot substitute what you have had, and there you have destruction, the possibility of destruction that has been foreseen by many writers in the acceleration of technology. There is much to be thought about in the stories you have pointed out. They may be relevant to the destruction we see taking place around us, for example the money machine breaking down with outrageous inflations dancing around like a nuclear chain reaction, resulting in utilities being cancelled, evictions and homelessness. EXTERMINATOR seems to have this unconscious motivation, blasting out anything that is still in business. We should be conscious not only of stories which laud and predict advanced technologies, but stories which are critical of this speedup; quite a bit of science fiction has been about "the end of the world", tremendous holocausts which wipe out much of civilization. We boast about what science fiction has predicted, but the technologies are not the only things they have predicted. Perhaps people should go through some of this negative science fiction and recount exactly what its writers have said.

I recall in an earlier N3F there were a lot of discussions going on about such things as I have been discussing in the above paragraph. I am attempting to get such discussions reactivated, as it would make our reading matter more relevant to what is going on around us. People were being accused of hubris for the kinds of things they were taking on in what they were writing—but that's the very thing that caused a lot of the conflict we find in fandom today, people were not approving of freedom of speech in these matters. Apparently you can't discuss what's oppressive in the world around you—you

end up talking about the people around you to whom you are talking. As Walt Kelly said, "We have encountered the enemy and he is us" in his statement about the bear going over the mountain to see what he could see, and seeing nothing but the other side of the mountain. Intelligence seems to be particularly unwelcome in discussing these problems. No one has the solution (as the song puts it, nobody's right when everybody's wrong), and I think there should be more discussions of what the problems are rather than proposing new solutions which nobody's equipped to try out anyway. Speaking of technological advances, the computer has started correcting my errors in typing in advance of my making them, and is frequently wrong about what I have been typing being an error. It changed "its" to "it's" and then underlined what it had done in blue, correcting an error IT had made—like the computer was getting sentient and developing a neurosis.

At any rate, I would like to see discussions of the content of science fiction stories coming back into being, and I am trying to encourage that in doing this new commentary feature. I notice that the four stories that Jeffrey highlights all concern breakdowns of civilization and I consider the stories he mentions preeminently discussable.

That's about it on the issue; I hope readers have found this issue interesting and enjoyable.

endpage