



Why Science Fiction?

Janet Kafka

The English Journal, Vol. 64, No. 5. (May, 1975), pp. 46-53.

Stable URL:

<http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0013-8274%28197505%2964%3A5%3C46%3AWSF%3E2.0.CO%3B2-G>

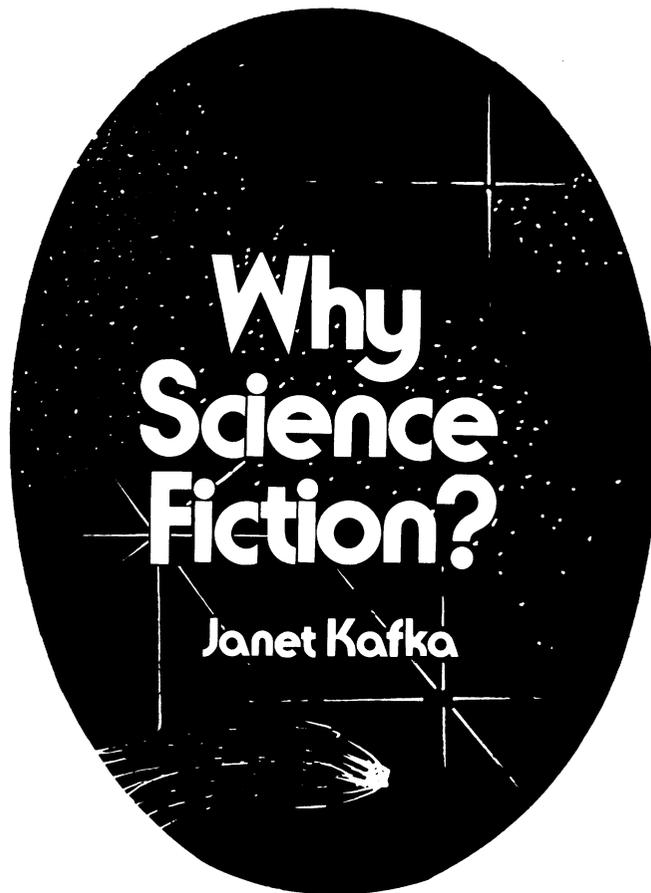
The English Journal is currently published by National Council of Teachers of English.

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of JSTOR's Terms and Conditions of Use, available at <http://www.jstor.org/about/terms.html>. JSTOR's Terms and Conditions of Use provides, in part, that unless you have obtained prior permission, you may not download an entire issue of a journal or multiple copies of articles, and you may use content in the JSTOR archive only for your personal, non-commercial use.

Please contact the publisher regarding any further use of this work. Publisher contact information may be obtained at <http://www.jstor.org/journals/ncte.html>.

Each copy of any part of a JSTOR transmission must contain the same copyright notice that appears on the screen or printed page of such transmission.

The JSTOR Archive is a trusted digital repository providing for long-term preservation and access to leading academic journals and scholarly literature from around the world. The Archive is supported by libraries, scholarly societies, publishers, and foundations. It is an initiative of JSTOR, a not-for-profit organization with a mission to help the scholarly community take advantage of advances in technology. For more information regarding JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.



In his novel, *GOD BLESS YOU, MR. ROSEWATER*, Kurt Vonnegut, Jr. has his main character, Eliot Rosewater, address a convention of science fiction writers:

"I love you sons-of-bitches," he says. "You're all I read anymore. You're the only ones who'll talk about the *really* terrific changes going on. You're the only ones with guts enough to *really* care about the future, who *really* notice what machines do to us, what wars do to us, what cities do to us . . . You're the only ones zany enough to agonize over time and distance without limit, over mysteries that will never die . . ."

This statement, from a writer who has frequently been accused of trying to divorce himself from the science fiction brotherhood, is for me the best possible answer to the question, "Why science fiction?" But it is not only the matter of relevance that makes good SF more and more suited to classroom use. I believe—and I know I'm not alone in this—that the best writing in current science fiction is as good as, if not better than, the best writing in any other genre. Much of it bears analysis according to the same criteria you apply to other works of fiction. And unlike many other things your students will have to read, SF provides a critical vantage point for

commentary on people and societies as we find them today, as well as extrapolating from this to give us a view of some possible alternate futures. Historically a pariah, free from the conventions and demands of the mainstream, SF can deal with any socio-political, ethical, or technological problem that the human race might meet, from nearly any point of view. In the words of veteran writer and teacher Jack Williamson, it might also be seen as "an unending debate about the value of science and the nature of man." ("Teaching Science Fiction," pamphlet. Available for \$1.00 from Jack Williamson, P.O. Box 761, Portales, N.M. 88130.)

And something more: It's fun.

What Is Science Fiction?

There are nearly as many definitions of SF as there are writers of it. Personally, I have no patience with what I call the "rationalizers"—those

This paper was prepared for delivery at the New Orleans NCTE Convention. At that time, Janet Kafka was the Science Fiction Editor for Vintage Books.

who would argue for the literary legitimacy of SF by trying to demonstrate that the genre includes Plato's "Republic," Chaucer's "Canterbury Tales," and Swift's "Gulliver's Travels."

I believe it is fair to say that science fiction, as we know it, has its literary origins in the 19th century English romantic novel. Brian Aldiss, in his excellent history *BILLION YEAR SPREE: The True History of Science Fiction* (Doubleday, 1973) claims Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley's *FRANKENSTEIN* as the first science fiction novel. Feminists—a new and vocal element in the field—enthusiastically support Aldiss' claim. But whether you adhere to the Shelley faction, or agree with Robert Silverberg that H. G. Wells "is the true father of today's science fiction, for it was he who set the canon of subject and technique that most contemporary writers follow" (*THE MIRROR OF INFINITY: A Critics' Anthology of Science Fiction*, Harper & Row, Torchbooks, 1974), you'll have to concede that what we today label SF covers a wider range of subject matter, style, and literary quality than was ever imagined by the readers of Wells and his French contemporary, Jules Verne.

This diversity, for better or for worse, is largely due to the influence of the pulp magazines. In 1926 Hugo Gernsback introduced *Amazing Stories*. Gernsback, who also has been called the "father" of science fiction and is credited with inventing the name "scientifiction," later shortened to science fiction, was, in Aldiss' words, "utterly without any literary understanding." He put great emphasis on scientific accuracy, but even while this was in fact practically ignored, Gernsback's influence resulted in a kind of "deadening literalism" quite lacking in the finer things like characterization or atmosphere.

In the mid-thirties John Campbell introduced *Astounding* (which later became *Analog*) and took SF one step further. Campbell's writers were still encouraged to emphasize man-and-machine plots, but they tended to be superior craftsmen. *Astounding*, complete with garish illustrations, ushered in the "Golden Age" of the pulps, during which SF reached its adolescence. Right up through the fifties these magazines were in control; there was a large readership of fans (mostly young men); and the magazines gave them the kind of writing they demanded and had come to expect: action-oriented, sexless and simplistic. Most of the writers we recognize today as the "heavies"—Isaac Asimov, James Blish, Arthur C. Clarke, Robert Heinlein, Fritz Leiber, L. Sprague de Camp, Clifford Simak, Theodore Sturgeon, A. E. van Vogt—got their start writing for the pulps at one-cent or a

half-cent (and even sometimes quarter-cent!) per word.

Drastic changes began taking place after World War II. Some say it was the dropping of the atom bomb and the resulting changes in scientific consciousness that forced SF to "grow up." But whatever effect all that may have had, it was the launching of the first Sputnik in 1957 that wrote an end to the accepted conventions of the Golden Age. Suddenly space travel was a *reality*. Faced with the fact that they were no longer the exclusive purveyors of rockets, space suits and low-gravity gadgets, and having to share their materials with NASA and Walter Cronkite, SF writers began reaching out into the *rest* of the stuff of our daily lives for subject matter and ideas.

The magazines' heyday is long past. From about three dozen in 1953, their number has dwindled to only a few: *Galaxy*, *Analog*, *Vertex* and *Fantasy and Science Fiction* have the field pretty much to themselves. The decline of the magazines has accompanied changes in subject matter and style, and perhaps has accelerated some of them. But at the same time, the rise of the book anthology, especially the original paperback, and the increasing strength of the SF novel, have given writers more freedom to experiment with both ideas and forms. Theodore Sturgeon, who now reviews SF for the *NY Times Book Review*, has suggested calling this "if-fiction" rather than science fiction, and it is clear that as SF becomes more and more concerned with ideas and with such un-alien entities as social forces, it is turning away from little green men with unpronounceable names to considerations of the question, "What if . . . ?"

So what is SF? I leave it to you to work out your own definitions—they will be as satisfactory as any others around. SF can be as brilliant and imaginative as Frank Herbert's *DUNE* (Ace), in which he creates a totally believable alien world, complete with culture, philosophy, ecology, language; it can be as perceptive and (prematurely) feminist as Ursula K. LeGuin's *THE LEFT HAND OF DARKNESS* (Ace) which explores socio-sexual interaction on an alien planet where all the people are hermaphrodites; it can be a traditional space-adventure like Arthur C. Clarke's *RENDEZVOUS WITH RAMA* (Ballantine); it can be Kurt Vonnegut's sadly-comic explorations of human foibles or Michael Crichton's medical best-sellers; it can be as demanding as Stanislaw Lem's *SOLARIS* (Berkeley), or as straightforward and entertaining as Robert A. Heinlein's *STARMAN JONES* (Bal-

lantine); it can be as despairing, as J. G. Ballard's story "Terminal Beach" (SURVIVAL PRINTOUT, Vintage), or as optimistic as Clarke's CHILDHOOD'S END (Ballantine).

Science Fiction in the Classroom.

Like everything else, SF has its good and its bad; its real writers and its hacks. I'm not here to ask you to drop all your standards in the name of "relevance" and start teaching garbage because you can get the kids' attention with it. Nor am I going to tell you that Robert Heinlein is "as good as" Herman Melville. What I hope to do is encourage you to let down some of the prejudices you may have formed about SF and begin to consider it as a literary sub-genre rather than a sub-literary genre.

I'm going to tell you about some SF books I think are great, and some I think are not so great but interesting, and suggest some ways you might consider integrating them into your teaching. I am here on behalf of Vintage and Ballantine books, but I'm not going to confine myself to our titles; Vintage's list is small and new, Ballantine has always had terrific titles, but they haven't got everything. In fact, I'm not certain that every book I mention is even in print right now. But if you're interested, you'll find some of them. (A bibliography follows.)

If you haven't read much SF, I suggest giving yourself a brief survey course. Start with Aldiss' history—it has a real point of view and will give you plot summaries as well as critical discussion of the major works and a bibliography. Another good primer is Sam J. Lundwall's SCIENCE FICTION: *What It's All About* (Ace). A short and valuable overview comes attached to an anthology called A SPECTRUM OF WORLDS, edited by Thomas D. Clareson and published in hardcover by Doubleday. It surveys the history of SF from Ambrose Bierce (1893) through Robert Silverberg (1969). Another good survey anthology, which is in paperback, is Norman Spinrad's MODERN SCIENCE FICTION (Anchor); it covers the period from the Golden Age of the pulps to the present. Spinrad's introduction is short, but there are extensive headnotes to each story.

A more scholarly view can be got from David Ketterer's THE APOCALYPTIC IMAGINATION: *Science Fiction and American Literature* (Anchor), and from H. Bruce Franklin's seminal anthology, FUTURE PERFECT: *American Science Fiction of the 19th Century* (Oxford). Franklin made history of a sort by teaching one of the earliest SF courses at the college level—at Stanford in the mid-sixties.

The Modern Language Association has a science fiction caucus, The Science Fiction Research Association, and publishes *Extrapolation: A Journal of Science Fiction and Fantasy*, edited by Thomas D. Clareson. The other scholarly journal is *Science-Fiction Studies*, which originates in the English department of Indiana State University and is edited by R. D. Mullen and Darko Suvin. An indispensable tool is Cliff's Notes' SCIENCE FICTION: *An Introduction*, by L. David Allen. It contains analyses of thirteen representative novels, as well as a reading list, critical bibliography, and suggestions for teaching SF as literature. Most of the works I will mention here—and many others, too—are listed and described briefly in "A Basic Science Fiction Collection," compiled several years ago by the Science Fiction Writers of America and published in the June 15, 1970 issue of *Library Journal*. If you are lucky enough to be able to find a copy of this list, you will discover that prices and publishers of the books mentioned have changed noticeably. Cross-reference with an up-to-date edition of *Paperback Books in Print*.¹

One way to begin infiltrating SF into your classes is to substitute a couple of SF stories for the old chestnuts in your English texts. THE SCIENCE FICTION HALL OF FAME (in three volumes, from Avon) is a collection of the best SF stories and short novels of all time, chosen by the Science Fiction Writers of America. It contains some truly great stories, like Stanley G. Weinbaum's "A Martian Odyssey," which features a loveable ostrich-like creature named Tweel. Weinbaum is justifiably revered for his aliens; they are by far his best characters. His stories, more of which can be found in Ballantine's THE BEST OF STANLEY G. WEINBAUM, belong to an earlier period; they are simple and well-constructed, and they might serve as models for an exercise in writing an SF short story.

Another good anthology is Terry Carr's annual BEST SF OF THE YEAR (#3 is available

¹The problem of books going in and out of print, often with different publishers, is one you are going to have to face. Plan your courses at least a year ahead of time to give you a chance to track down all the materials you will need. There is no guarantee you will get the books you order from the mass-market paperback houses. If demand for a title slips below a certain number, publishers will let it go out-of-print—either temporarily until enough back orders are built up to justify another printing, or permanently, in which case another publisher might pick it up. The so-called quality houses like Vintage print fewer copies of each title and can sometimes keep their book in print longer. But their prices will be slightly higher.

from Ballantine). Carr—who also assembled the classic *SCIENCE FICTION FOR PEOPLE WHO HATE SCIENCE FICTION* (Funk & Wagnalls)—tends to pick idea-oriented stories with a strong humanist flavor, like Ursula K. LeGuin's "Those Who Walk Away from Omelas" and Vonda N. McIntyre's Nebula Award-winner, "Of Mist and Grass and Sand." There is some feeling among fans that this is not "true" science fiction, and in her *STELLAR* series, Judy-Lynn del Rey is collecting what she calls "good old-fashioned stories that are fun to read." *STELLAR 1* (Ballantine) contains a number of original, entertaining stories with no pretensions to art or literature. They might be especially suited to lower-level classes, reluctant readers, or people who have never read SF before (though some of these might be turned off by the very "good old-fashioned" simplicity).

Harlan Ellison, however, takes a lot of chances, with both subject matter and form; his *DANGEROUS VISIONS* anthologies (vol. 1 from Berkeley, vol. 2 from New American Library) reflect his very erratic and iconoclastic interests. Ellison's own work can be difficult, violent, shocking; he observes few of the standard taboos. Yet it is also sometimes brilliant. His "Deathbird" won this year's Hugo Award in the short story category. It can be found in Carr's *BEST #3*. "A Boy and His Dog" (in *THE BEAST THAT SHOULD LOVE AT THE HEART OF THE WORLD*, Signet) has just been made into a movie. "I Have No Mouth and I Must Scream" (*SURVIVAL PRINTOUT*, Vintage) is probably *the* most anthologized short story in the history of SF.

I could go on for hours listing anthologies. There are literally hundreds of them and once you start looking you'll find some that suit your purposes. At Vintage I emphasize "theme" anthologies—stories are selected for the way they shed light on a particular problem. A whole teaching unit can be planned around just one of these books. The only trouble with them is that if you know what the theme is you can tell how the stories are going to come out, so there is less reader involvement and less plain suspense.

Vintage's *SURVIVAL PRINTOUT* is a theme anthology with a number of practical classroom applications. The editors selected factual articles by prominent scientists like Arthur C. Clarke and Loren Eiseley to be posed against SF stories that deal with the same subject matter, under the headings "evolution and identity," "earth probabilities," "ecosystems (cellular and solar)" and "time space travel." Conceived as one way to approach a unit in "future studies," perhaps

along with Alvin Toffler's *FUTURE SHOCK* (Bantam), it shows clearly how SF can be used to illuminate possible ways of dealing with currently recognizable problems like overpopulation, housing, travel.

Themes are an easy handle to hang a study unit on. Try examining current views of the man-woman relationship and then reading some SF stories or a short novel on that popular subject. Given what we know now, how might men and women relate to each other in a future society? What variations on the male-female relationship might be found among sympathetic aliens? What might catastrophe—like an atomic war—do to the conventional roles of men and women? Ursula K. LeGuin's masterful *THE LEFT HAND OF DARKNESS* places a human male in an alien world where the sexes are not differentiated—everyone can be both male and female at different times in their lives. Philip Jose Farmer's stories, collected in the Avon paperback *STRANGE RELATIONS*, deal with this theme from a variety of different and amusing angles. The title story is about a man marooned on an alien world who finds himself falling in love with a giant, intelligent plant. Carol Emshwiller's "Sex and/or Mr. Morrison" is a hilarious treatment of the theme in Vintage's *WOMEN OF WONDER*. See also Chelsea Quinn Yarbro's apocalyptic "False Dawn" (*WOMEN OF WONDER*), and James Tiptree's "The Women Men Don't See" (Carr's *BEST #3*).

One of my favorite subjects is "The Role of Women in SF". *WOMEN OF WONDER*, edited by Pamela Sargent, was born out of a debate about whether SF written by women was essentially different from that of their male counterparts. (See also *TWO VIEWS OF WONDER*, by Chelsea Quinn Yarbro and Thomas N. Scortia, Ballantine.) Like life, SF has always been dominated by men, both as writers and as fans, and it dutifully reflects the values of the dominant society. Most stories, as Pam Sargent points out in her excellent introductory essay, feature women in certain stereotypical roles: the housewife who solves the problem through sheer inadvertence; the maiden who must be rescued from the alien menace (see Edgar Rice Burroughs' sexless wonders); the hero's girlfriend or the scientist's daughter who serves the author by having to have an essential piece of information carefully explained to her and, by extension, to the reader; and, perhaps most dangerous, the woman who is a competent scientist but at some point in the story must show herself to be subordinate to her male colleagues—like

the doctor in Clarke's RENDEZVOUS WITH RAMA. There is also the woman-as-witch variation, in which it is assumed that women are dominating men by means of supernatural (or alien) powers. Fritz Leiber's CONJURE WIFE (Award Books) is a good example of this kind of story.

Get your classes to discuss the position of women in a number of different SF stories. This is an excellent opportunity to introduce the techniques of character analysis in literature, as well as the difficult question of the intrusion of the author's own ideas into his characters and situations.

One course I know of considers ways in which lifestyles and values we see operating in our society today (the Protestant work ethic, hippies and communal groups, the church, zero-population-growth, paramilitary organizations like the Klan or Weatherpeople) might look in the future. Begin by reading some stories or novels that extrapolate from current social issues: Robert Silverberg's "A Happy Day in 2381" (SURVIVAL PRINTOUT) shows how a vertical community might operate; Fritz Leiber's "The Secret Songs" (SURVIVAL PRINTOUT) is about the use of drugs; Silverberg's "Thomas the Proclaimer" (BORN WITH THE DEAD, Vintage) examines a mass religious hysteria; his "Going" (BORN WITH THE DEAD) shows what death might be like in a society that allows people to choose when they will "go"; Kurt Vonnegut's PLAYER PIANO (Dell) shows a fascist political order; John Brunner's STAND ON ZANZIBAR (Ballantine) shows the possible effects of overpopulation and misuse of resources; Alan Dean Foster's story "A Miracle of Small Fishes" (STELLAR 1) tells how a priest is able to intervene on behalf of one of his parishioners with the bureaucrats in charge of managing the food supply; in "Schwartz Between the Galaxies" (STELLAR 1), Robert Silverberg shows what space-age commuting might be like; in "The Food Farm" (WOMEN OF WONDER), Kit Reed shows a future woman on a diet.

Ask students to discuss, or write their own stories about, a future world *they* would like to live in.

Some of the topics dealt with most frequently by SF writers are also well-suited to study units: What might the world be like after an atomic war? What might it be like to encounter aliens? What can we look forward to when we begin to explore space and colonize distant planets?

There is a whole sub-genre of after-the-holocaust SF, most of which, understandably enough, was written in the fifties. One of the most im-

portant novels in this group, and in fact a powerful work of fiction on its own terms, is Walter Miller, Jr.'s A CANTICLE FOR LEIBOWITZ (Bantam). It is at the same time a terrifying vision of a devastated Earth, and a powerful reaffirmation of the knowledge that because man is what he is, he will never quite succeed in destroying himself. Miller brings to SF a deeply religious perspective that is unusual in the field.² This book is more demanding than most SF novels, but it is worth devoting considerable time to. If you don't have time for a novel, there is a short story version, with the same title, in THE VINTAGE ANTHOLOGY OF SCIENCE FANTASY.

"First Contact" by Murray Leinster (SF HALL OF FAME) is one of the earliest stories to explore the question of meeting aliens, and it remains one of the best in the "realistic" school: Here we are up in space and there they are, looking in on us. What do we do? Or, there is the friendly-but-confused alien visiting Earth: Robert A. Heinlein's STRANGER IN A STRANGE LAND (Berkeley) introduces Valentine Michael Smith, who arrives on Earth with super-human abilities and a total ignorance of human sexual practices. Smith is not exactly an alien; he is an Earthman born on Mars. But his strangeness raises enough of the right problems and gives Heinlein an opportunity to make some pointed comments on contemporary Western society.

Zenna Henderson's stories about The People (PEOPLE: NO DIFFERENT FLESH, Avon)—a group of gentle, human-like aliens who settle in an isolated area of Earth—deal sympathetically with the problems they have when they encounter humans. A TV series based on her work was produced a couple of years ago. And humans accommodating themselves to aliens is another variation. See Marion Zimmer Bradley's "The Wind People" and Vonda N. McIntyre's "Of Mist and Grass and Sand" in WOMEN OF WONDER.

Another change that can be hung on this question is the terrible alien, the unseen horror or malevolent force out to conquer mankind.

²There has always been an "underground" religious current running through American SF, but it seldom surfaces to the point where major characters are priests or major themes ask religious questions. See also C. S. Lewis' OUT OF THE SILENT PLANET, THIS HIDEOUS STRENGTH and PERELANDRA (Macmillan), and James Blish's excellent A CASE OF CONSCIENCE. Robert Silverberg's main character in "Schwartz Between the Galaxies" is the first Jewish main character I have come across, but there is an entire anthology of Jewish fantasy and SF called WANDERING STARS, edited by Jack Dann and published by Harper & Row.

John Wyndham is a master of this form in *THE DAY OF THE TRIFFIDS* (Fawcett) and *THE MIDWICH CUCKOOS* (Ballantine). But for sheer giggles and goose flesh, you can't beat H. P. Lovecraft's SF horror stories (several collections from Ballantine). Colin Wilson, in the only SF novel he has written to date, takes Lovecraft one step further: *THE MIND PARASITES* (Oneiric Press, Berkeley, Ca.) combines Lovecraft's technique and his own philosophy of evolutionary existentialism in a story about some archaeologists whose discoveries in an ancient tomb include the invisible and horrible "mind parasites."

Arthur C. Clarke is the acknowledged master of the exploration-colonization theme. Everyone is familiar with his epic *2001: A SPACE ODYSSEY*. The story on which the movie was based, "The Sentinel," can be found in Ballantine's *EXPEDITION TO EARTH. CHILDHOOD'S END* (Ballantine) gives another view of Clarke's inspired and optimistic concept of the future of mankind. It could be read along with Olaf Stapledon's *THE STAR MAKER* (Dover) as a unit, with discussion centering on the expansion of man's potential through contact with galaxies beyond the Earth. Another approach might be to compare either one or both of these books with some very pessimistic views of man's future, such as John Brunner's *STAND ON ZANZIBAR*.

Another exploration-colonization novel is Alexei Panshin's *RITE OF PASSAGE* (Ace). It has proven to be very popular with teenagers and might be used successfully as an introduction to SF on the high school level. In it we see human survivors of a devastating Earth war living precariously in colony worlds. In order to assure that the fittest survive, all teenagers are cast out into the hostile environment to test their survival skills. Mia Haverro is a teenager about to undergo her Trial.

As a composition exercise, you might ask students to create an alien world; people it; give it a culture, an ecology, a political system. Two of the best examples of this kind of SF are Frank Herbert's *DUNE* and Larry Niven's *RINGWORLD* (Ballantine). *DUNE* is a giant book in the epic tradition. The story concerns the political and personal development of Paul Atreides, ordered as a result of a political struggle to leave his home planet and take over the government of a hostile alien colony. In the novel, Herbert treats three extremely popular contemporary themes: the use and abuse of political power, the importance of maintaining a whole planet's ecological balance, and the spiritual development

(based on consciousness of the functioning of mind and body) of the young hero. Few works of SF have ever achieved the depth and breadth of *DUNE*.

Larry Niven's *RINGWORLD* is another brilliantly imaginative portrayal of an alien world, but it has never achieved the "cult" following of *DUNE*.³ Set some 1,000 years in the future, *RINGWORLD* brings together recognizable human characters and several varieties of intelligent alien life on an interstellar expedition. The rather spare plot is fleshed out with multifarious details of the explorers' societies and those they come into contact with. The book is classic SF at its best.

Interdisciplinary Possibilities.

There is no need to confine SF to the English curriculum. Biology classes might find the whole subject more appealing if whatever they were studying could be illuminated by a science fiction story with a biological theme. Cloning is the subject of Ursula K. LeGuin's "Nine Lives" (*MODERN SCIENCE FICTION*, Anchor). Ten cloned members of an exploring team are sent to an alien planet where nine are killed in an accident. The tenth has to learn to adjust to being alone. Every high school geometry class ought to begin by reading Edwin Abbott's *FLATLAND* (Dover). A painless introduction to the principles behind computers and information technology can be got from Stanislaw Lem's *THE CYBERIAD: Fables for the Cybernetic Age* (Seabury). This is brilliant intellectual slapstick, a series of stories relating the adventures of two robot "cosmic constructors" who constantly try to out-invent each other. Arthur C. Clarke's stories frequently extrapolate from pure science, as do Dr. Isaac Asimov's. Clarke's "Jupiter Five" (*REACH FOR TOMORROW*, Ballantine) is an exercise in applied mathematics. "Technical Error" (in the same collection) deals with a weapon that is just *too* good; the story is required reading at M.I.T.

Or what about history? L. Sprague de Camp's *LEST DARKNESS FALL* (Ballantine) is a classic time travel story about a modern archaeologist transported back to 6th-century Rome where he tries to stem the tide of barbarism by intro-

³Both books have the unusual distinction, along with LeGuin's *LEFT HAND OF DARKNESS*, of having won both Nebula and Hugo awards in the year they were published. Like all awards, the Nebula and the Hugo (named for Hugo Gernsback) are not necessarily indicative of the *best* writing around. But if you're new to SF, and don't know what to look for, the notice that a short story or a novel or a novella has won one of these is an indication that it is *at least* worth reading.

ducing modern technology. Fawcett has begun a series called TRANSFORMATIONS, anthologies of SF stories illuminating American (vol. II) and world history (vol. I). Current events? Lester del Rey's NERVES (Ballantine) is about an explosion in a nuclear power plant.

You can do this as well as I can, if not better. The point is to get used to thinking about interdisciplinary possibilities. After your class has read some SF, get them to write a story based on something they are studying in another area: biology, or history, or math.

Some schools have started interdisciplinary programs under the label "future studies" or "futuristics." This is a rapidly-expanding area and one that makes considerable use of SF and related materials. A forthcoming Vintage book, CULTURES BEYOND THE EARTH, brings together a number of prominent anthropologists to speculate on what extraterrestrial civilizations might be like and where and how they might be found. Is this science, or science fiction? Where do you draw the line? When we talk about cloning, or send men to walk on the moon, or give them artificial hearts, we have already integrated the stuff of science fiction into our lives. There is no longer any point in debating about its place there.

Good science fiction has as much of a place in your English classes as these fantastic events have in our daily papers. It is especially appealing to teenagers, both male and female, and you might find that with careful selection you can turn on even the most reluctant readers. Some high schools are offering special electives in SF and fantasy literature⁴ and whole courses can be developed with a very specialized curriculum. There is an awful lot out there—both good and bad—and I urge you to sample it. And to enjoy.

A (RANDOM?) SCIENCE FICTION BIBLIOGRAPHY

NOVELS

GOD BLESS YOU, MR. ROSEWATER, Kurt Vonnegut, Jr. (Dell/Delta)

⁴Some of you have probably noticed by now that I haven't said anything about fantasy. This is simply a function of my personal tastes: I don't read it, so I don't know anything about it, and I am not going to burden you with my ignorance. If your students have read J.R.R. Tolkien's LORD OF THE RINGS, or this year's best-selling WATERSHIP DOWN, they might want to go on to some of Ballantine's extensive "adult fantasy" list: E. R. Eddison's THE WORM OUROBOROS, THE MEZENTIAN GATE, MISTRESS OF MISTRESSES. A FISH DINNER IN MEMISON: Mervyn Peake's GORMENGHAST TRILOGY, or Anne McCaffrey's on-going SF-fantasy series, THE DRAGONRIDERS OF PERN. All are wildly imaginative, convoluted epics—the kind of book you can get lost in for days at a time.

DUNE, Frank Herbert (Ace)
 PLAYER PIANO, Kurt Vonnegut, Jr. (Dell/Delta)
 THE LEFT HAND OF DARKNESS, Ursula K. LeGuin (Ace)
 SOLARIS, Stanislaw Lem (Berkeley)
 RENDEZVOUS WITH RAMA, Arthur C. Clarke (Ballantine)
 STARMAN JONES, Robert A. Heinlein (Ballantine)
 STAND ON ZANZIBAR, John Brunner (Ballantine)
 CONJURE WIFE, Fritz Leiber (Award Books)
 A CANTICLE FOR LEIBOWITZ, Walter Miller, Jr. (Bantam)
 OUT OF THE SILENT PLANET, C. S. Lewis (Macmillan)
 THIS HIDEOUS STRENGTH, C. S. Lewis (Macmillan)
 PERELANDRA, C. S. Lewis (Macmillan)
 A CASE OF CONSCIENCE, James Blish (out-of-print)
 STRANGER IN A STRANGE LAND, Robert A. Heinlein (Berkeley)
 PEOPLE: NO DIFFERENT FLESH, Zenna Henderson (Avon)
 THE DAY OF THE TRIFFIDS, John Wyndham (Fawcett)
 THE MIDWICH CUCKOOS, John Wyndham (Ballantine)
 THE MIND PARASITES, Colin Wilson (Oneiroic Press, Berkeley, Ca.)
 2001: A SPACE ODYSSEY, Arthur C. Clarke (Ballantine)
 CHILDHOOD'S END, Arthur C. Clarke (Ballantine)
 THE STAR MAKER, Olaf Stapledon (Dover)
 RITE OF PASSAGE, Alexei Panshin (Ace)
 RINGWORLD, Larry Niven (Ballantine)
 FLATLAND, Edwin Abbott (Dover)
 LEST DARKNESS FALL, L. Sprague deCamp (Ballantine)
 NERVES, Lester del Rey (Ballantine)
 DRAGONFLIGHT, Anne McCaffrey (Ballantine)
 DRAGONQUEST, Anne McCaffrey (Ballantine)

ANTHOLOGIES

THE MIRROR OF INFINITY: A CRITIC'S ANTHOLOGY OF SCIENCE FICTION, ed. Robert Silverberg (Harper Torchbooks)
 A SPECTRUM OF WORLDS, ed. Thomas D. Clareson (Doubleday)
 MODERN SCIENCE FICTION, ed. Norman Spinrad (Anchor)
 FUTURE PERFECT: AMERICAN SCIENCE FICTION OF THE 19TH CENTURY, ed. H. Bruce Franklin (Oxford)
 THE SCIENCE FICTION HALL OF FAME, vols. I, II A&B (Avon)
 BEST SCIENCE FICTION OF THE YEAR, ed. Terry Carr (#3 Ballantine)
 SCIENCE FICTION FOR PEOPLE WHO HATE SCIENCE FICTION, ed. Terry Carr (Funk & Wagnalls)
 STELLAR, ed. Judy-Lynn del Rey (#1 Ballantine)
 DANGEROUS VISIONS, ed. Harlan Ellison (vol. 1 Berkeley, vol. 2 NAL)
 SURVIVAL PRINTOUT, ed. Total Effect (Vintage)
 WOMEN OF WONDER, ed. Pamela Sargent (Vintage)

THE VINTAGE ANTHOLOGY OF SCIENCE FANTASY, ed. Chris Cerf
 THE VINTAGE BRADBURY, Ray Bradbury
 CYBORG: THE MAN-MACHINE SYMBIOSIS IN SCIENCE FICTION, ed. Thomas N. Scortia and George Zebrowski (Vintage)
 TWO VIEWS OF WONDER, ed. Thomas N. Scortia and Chelsea Quinn Yarbro (Ballantine)
 BORN WITH THE DEAD: THREE NOVELLAS ABOUT THE SPIRIT OF MAN, by Robert Silverberg (Vintage)
 THE BEAST THAT SHOULD LOVE AT THE HEART OF THE WORLD, stories by Harlan Ellison (Signet)
 EXPEDITION TO EARTH, stories by Arthur C. Clarke (Ballantine)
 REACH FOR TOMORROW, stories by Arthur C. Clarke (Ballantine)
 THE BEST OF STANLEY G. WEINBAUM, stories by Weinbaum (Ballantine)
 STRANGE RELATIONS, stories by Philip Jose Farmer (Avon Equinox)
 H. P. Lovecraft—several anthologies available from Ballantine
 THE CYBERIAD: FABLES FOR A CYBERNETIC AGE, by Stanislaw Lem (Seabury)
 TRANSFORMATIONS, edited by Daniel Roselle (Fawcett Premier)
 Vol. 1: UNDERSTANDING WORLD HISTORY THROUGH SCIENCE FICTION
 Vol. 2: UNDERSTANDING AMERICAN HISTORY THROUGH SCIENCE FICTION

SHORT STORIES

“Terminal Beach,” J. G. Ballard (SURVIVAL PRINTOUT)
 “Those Who Walk Away From Omelas,” Ursula K. LeGuin (BEST #3)
 “Of Mist and Grass and Sand,” Vonda N. McIntyre (WOMEN OF WONDER)
 “Deathbird,” Harlan Ellison (BEST #3)
 “A Boy and His Dog,” Harlan Ellison (THE BEAST THAT SHOULD LOVE . . .)
 “I Have No Mouth and I Must Scream,” Harlan Ellison (SURVIVAL PRINTOUT)
 “Sex and/or Mr. Morrison,” Carol Emshwiller (WOMEN OF WONDER)
 “The Women Men Don’t See,” James Tiptree, Jr. (BEST #3)
 “A Happy Day in 2381,” Robert Silverberg (SURVIVAL PRINTOUT)
 “The Secret Songs,” Fritz Leiber (SURVIVAL PRINTOUT)
 “Thomas the Proclaimer,” Robert Silverberg (BORN WITH THE DEAD)
 “Going,” Robert Silverberg (BORN WITH THE DEAD)
 “A Miracle of Small Fishes,” Alan Dean Foster (STELLAR 1)
 “Schwartz Between the Galaxies,” Robert Silverberg (STELLAR 1)
 “The Food Farm,” Kit Reed (WOMEN OF WONDER)
 “A Martian Odyssey,” Stanley G. Weinbaum (THE BEST OF SGW)
 “False Dawn,” Chelsea Quinn Yarbro (WOMEN OF WONDER)

“A Canticle for Leibowitz,” Walter Miller, Jr. (VINTAGE ANTHOLOGY OF SCIENCE FANTASY)
 “First Contact,” Murray Leinster (SF HALL OF FAME)
 “The Wind People,” Marion Zimmer Bradley (WOMEN OF WONDER)
 “The Sentinal,” Arthur C. Clarke (EXPEDITION TO EARTH)
 “Jupiter Five,” Arthur C. Clarke (REACH FOR TOMORROW)
 “Nine Lives,” Ursula K. LeGuin (MODERN SCIENCE FICTION)
 “Technical Error,” Arthur C. Clarke (REACH FOR TOMORROW)

FANTASY

THE LORD OF THE RINGS, J. R. R. Tolkein (3 vols.) (Ballantine)
 THE WORM OUROBOROS, E. R. Eddison (Ballantine)
 THE MEZENTIAN GATE, E. R. Eddison (Ballantine)
 MISTRESS OF MISTRESSES, E. R. Eddison (Ballantine)
 A FISH DINNER IN MEMISON, E. R. Eddison (Ballantine)
 GORMENGHAST TRILOGY, Mervyn Peake (Ballantine)
 WATERSHIP DOWN, Richard Adams (Avon)

CRITICAL STUDIES

BILLION YEAR SPREE: THE HISTORY OF SCIENCE FICTION, Brian Aldiss (Doubleday)
 THE APOCALYPTIC IMAGINATION: SCIENCE FICTION AND AMERICAN LITERATURE, David Ketterer (Anchor)
 SCIENCE FICTION: WHAT IT’S ALL ABOUT, Sam J. Lundwall (Ace)
 SCIENCE FICTION: AN INTRODUCTION, L. David Allen (Cliff’s Notes)

JOURNALS

EXTRAPOLATION: A JOURNAL OF SCIENCE FICTION AND FANTASY, ed. Thomas D. Clareson, The College of Wooster, Wooster, Ohio
 SCIENCE-FICTION STUDIES, ed. Darko Suvin and R. D. Mullen, Indiana State University, Terre Haute, Indiana,

THE MAGAZINES

Analog, ed. Ben Bova
Galaxy and If, ed. James Bean
Fantasy & Science Fiction, ed. Ed Fermen
Vertex, ed. Don Pfeil

OTHER

“Teaching Science Fiction,” pamphlet. (Available from Jack Williamson, P.O. Box 761, Portales, N.M. 88130. \$1.00)
 “A Basic Science Fiction Collection,” *Library Journal*, June 15, 1970.
 FUTURE SHOCK, Alvin Toffler (Bantam)
 CULTURES BEYOND THE EARTH, ed. Magoroh Maruyama and Arthur Harkins with a Foreword by Alvin Toffler and an Afterword by Sol Tax (Vintage—forthcoming)