

THE DRINK TANK 395

RICHARD E. GEIS

THE MAGNUM OPUS BY DAVID B. WILLIAMS

COVER PHOTO BY RICK HAWES (1983)

PSYCHOTIC



**SMUT & FANAC: THE RICHARD E. GEIS STORY
BY DAVID B. WILLIAMS**

I AM MASTER HERE!

ROTSLER

SMUT & FANAC: THE RICHARD E. GEIS STORY

BY DAVID B. WILLIAMS

The death of Dick Geis in February 2013 stirred memories. I ransacked my storage area and pulled out a box of *Science Fiction Review*, Geis's much-honored fanzine (originally titled *Psychotic*), which I read faithfully from 1968 until its last issue in 1986.

During that interval, Geis was nominated for Hugo Awards 30 times and won 13 – seven for Best Fan Writer and six for Best Fanzine. Arnie Katz once wrote: “*Psychotic/SFR* has had a history unparalleled by any other fanzine, in that it has been the focal point of two different fandoms.”

Geis's personal columns in the various permutations of his fanzines (and especially his personalzine, *Richard E. Geis*) served as a kind of public diary. He wrote thousands of words about himself, and as I browsed through these issues it occurred to me that a substantial profile, mostly “in his own words,” could be stitched together from scattered snippets.

It's been more than a quarter of a century since Geis was one of the the most prominent figures in SF fandom. Today he is unknown to a new generation of fans. I offer this biographical sketch to enlighten those newer fans, and to remind the old-timers, about one of the most successful fanzine publishers and writers in all of fan history.

I.

Richard Erwin Geis was born on July 19, 1927, and grew up in Portland, Oregon. As a child, he was bright and socially alienated, a classic recruit for SF. As he explained in his personalzine, *Richard E. Geis*: “I was an extremely tense child with a weird limp – pigeon-toed and so on. I hated being 'crippled' and inferior! I hated all who looked at me and saw me that way! I hated my parents for making me that way! And of course I could not show this hate! I bottled it.

“And now, with *REG*, I'm getting even! I'm a reviewer! Aha-ha-ha-ha-haaa! And I'm a writer of fiction – I rage and kill and am powerful! The vim, vigor, and vitality of *REG* and “One Immortal Man” [a raunchy, gory Geis novelette] are rooted in that seething, neurotic little boy.

“When I was nine or ten years old I found a copy of *Super Science Stories* while vacationing at the beach. I consumed it avidly; my naturally keen intelligence was drawn to sf and, once bitten with the wonders of space-time, I was never the same. I read *Astounding* every month, *Startling Stories*, *Thrilling Wonder Stories*, *Unknown Worlds*, *Weird Tales*, *Amazing Stories*, *Fantastic Universe*.

“A. E. van Vogt blew my mind regularly, especially *The World of Null-A*. And the classic “Nightfall” by Asimov. “Final Blackout” by Hubbard. The Lewis Padgett stories and novels. *The Ship of Ishtar*. Almost every story in *Unknown*.

“That first thrilling era of discovery cannot be re-experienced. Everything was new. Now almost everything is old. I can appreciate fine writing, an original idea, a new twist, of course, but it's not the same. You're only a virgin once.”

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“I wanted to be a writer. I started writing letters of comment to Sam Merwin when he was editing *Startling Stories*, as I recall, and I wrote a column for *The Tech Pep*, Benson Polytechnic's school paper. In 1951 or so, I wrote two stories and sent them to *Thrilling Wonder Stories* and *Startling Stories*. Awful. They came back.”

Then, SF fandom offered an alternative outlet. In 1953, Geis burst onto the fanzine scene like a skyrocket with *Psychotic*. “I was into fandom then, and a letterhack to the prozines. It was egocentrically inevitable that I, too, would publish and edit a fanzine.”

The 1954 *Oops!* Poll ranked *Psychotic* second among the top-ten fanzines, surpassed only by Walt Willis' *Hyphen*. As Terry Carr explained, “In '54, *Psychotic* was considered fandom's focal point, though the knowledgeable fans chose *Hyphen* above it all the same: quality counts too.”

The next year, the Tucker Fan Survey ranked *Psy* in first place. In Arnie Katz's estimation, “*Psychotic* took over, after *Quandry* and *Vega* folded, as the focal point of Sixth Fandom. Geis maintained this position for a year of steady monthly publication, during which he featured much fine material.”

Then in mid-1955, “I changed *Psychotic* to *Science Fiction Review*, probably for 'respectability' and because I was tiring of the 'fannish' ambience of *Psychotic*.” The first issue of *SFR* was numbered 21 following *Psy*'s numbering sequence. But *SFR* didn't garner the response he hoped for, so he discontinued it and abandoned all fanac.

“I went gafia with a vengeance and killed *Science Fiction Review* in its first incarnation, gave the few dollars in sub money to the Red Cross or some charity like that, gave my other unpublished material to other fan publishers, gave away my own file of *Psychotic*, my extra copies, and went off on a toot of non-fan activity and writing, with only marginal contact with sf and fandom as a sometime member of the Cult.”

Then he found a new focus as a writer. “In 1958, when I moved to Venice, California, I wrote a short story and sold it, right off, to *Adam* magazine. I spent two years selling a hundred short stories to *Adam*, *Sir Knight*, and other LA-based men's magazines.”

Geis could support himself on these sales because of his modest standard of living. “I lived for a while in the laundry room (about five feet by ten feet with two big cement laundry tubs taking up about half the space) on the roof of 19 Wave Crest Avenue, even then a run-down apartment house (which I later managed for a year and a half). I lived on fifty or sixty dollars a month (the rent was twenty dollars) and ate a lot of peanut butter.

“In 1960 I wrote a sex novel, *Like Crazy, Man!* and sold it to a Chicago publisher.

Since sex novels were far better paying than short stories, I switched to novels and haven't written a short story since. I sold about a hundred novels to sex publishers in the next 23 years.”



3/18/2004

“My problem---
trying to be fair here!--
is finding a way for
women to get even in
the bathroom. I
imagine a toilet bowl
shaped like a man's
mouth, perhaps
decorated with a
mustache and beard.
Oooo, it tickles!”

Richard E. Geis in
Taboo Opinions #2

That was in 1984; he would achieve a lifetime total of 110. And what did his family think about his career as a porno writer? “I'm not sure about my family. I think my dad was tolerant and perhaps a mite proud; he'd wanted to be a writer, briefly, in his 30's. My mother never said; I think she lied about me to most of her friends; she couldn't show a copy of *Oral Daughter* and be proud.

“She wanted me to be a respectable man, a baker like my uncle, or an accountant. But she was tolerant and supportive. But I never really knew her or my dad. Their real feelings were hidden; we never let each other behind the masks.”

Later, Geis's literary specialization led to anguished introspection: “So when I moved out on my own, went to Venice in 1958, and started to write, *why didn't I write science fiction or fantasy?* I was well grounded, I had the skills, yet I started writing sex stories for the men's mags.

“I cannot make myself write 'straight' science fiction. I cannot write gothics. I cannot force a murder mystery out of my fingers. All I want to do is write 'my' type of fiction – highly sexual, sometimes with a high degree of violence, with often anti-social, non-conformist themes, characters.

“Why, for that matter, am I spending year after year, Ghod knows how many working hours every issue, putting out fanzines? The rational writer – the rational man – would not do this.

“Am I insisting on writing this way to avoid possible success? Am I into this fanzine scene so deeply to tie myself up, to avoid – what? Is it sheer stubbornness and ego? Or do I simply fear failure if I do write conformist sf?

“I can't give you or me an answer. There's something perverse operating in me. Something in me decided: sex is your fiction beat, so beat it.

“I'm not cursing my fate. I'm largely content. I am a damned good fanzine editor and a very reliable fanzine publisher. And a readable fanzine writer. I win Hugos. I'm proud of that.”

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Geis's porno career also landed him in court as a co-defendant in an obscenity case. He had returned to Portland, moved into a nice apartment, and was just stepping out of the shower when he answered a knock at his door. Two police detectives arrested him on a warrant from Los Angeles.

“I was actually a small fish in indictments which included nine authors, editors, bookkeepers, salesmen, and the publisher and his wife. They were after Mr. Luros [the publisher] and used all us others to cripple his operations.

“They brought a case against us in California in 1964, on a county level, lost it, and by devious means brought the same case (same magazines, same books, same charges) to a grand jury in Iowa, got an indictment, put us on trial in Sioux City for three or four months, and eventually lost that, too. The government never tried to 'pick its spot' again.”

While initially shaken by his arrest, “it involved me in legal proceedings and nitty-gritty life experiences I'm very glad I didn't miss. For instance, two days and nights in the felony tank in the old Portland Police Station is something everyone should experience. And six hours in the new LA County Jail processing tank (complete with processing) is another.

“Why the felony tank? Because in California conspiracy to publish obscenity was then a felony. So I was thrown in with car thieves, muggers, etc. I didn't ask anyone their crime(s).”

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Then, twelve years after his sudden gafiation, Geis startled all fandom when he returned to fanzine pubbing in November 1967 with *Psychotic 21*. Readers were enthusiastic. “Psy quickly established itself as the focal point of a new, Eighth Fandom,” according to Arnie Katz, with “the liveliest letter column seen in fandom since *Habakkuk*.”

John D. Berry derived the formula for this success: “Psy has managed to reflect nicely the essential bent of fandom today: that is, a combination of fannishness and new developments in science fiction.”

However, a familiar trend was soon evident as Geis gradually de-emphasized the fannish angle and increased the focus on science fiction. *Psy* was a standard-sized mimeographed fanzine. The readers expecting *Psy 28* were startled to receive a half-sized, photo-offset publication now titled *Science Fiction Review 28*. The change to photo-offset, Geis explained, was “to avoid all that mimeo cranking and assembling and stapling.”

As for the title change, “*Psychotic* seems to me such a misnomer for the magazine now. I had originally intended a small-circulation personal zine. But the magazine grew and grew, with a dynamism of its own, in size and circulation, and the *function* changed until it has become, nearly, a 'little' magazine, a place for serious comment and discussion.”

4-19-04

“Dear me! What to do about President Bush’s war in Iraq? He lied to the world (and especially us!) in order to justify his ‘preemptive,’ unconstitutional attack on Iraq. So far he’s killed about 7-10,000 Iraq people with his world-record bombings (remember when they bragged about the massive tonnage of bombs and missiles?) and over 700 United States soldiers (and never mind the numbers of wounded).

Richard E. Geis in Taboo Opinions #5

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Geis did carry over one feature from *Psychotic*, the dialogs with Alter Ego, his internal Evil Twin. Alter would often intrude upon Geis's editorial musings with caustic comments of his own. Alter Ego was a handy literary device because it allowed Geis to argue with himself and shift responsibility for rude remarks.

“Geis, you're a weak-kneed jellyfish,” Alter once expostulated. “Don't apologize for me!”
“I have to, Alter. They blame me! They think I'm actually you and vice-versa.”

Geis later observed: “Talking to yourself in print requires an odd personality, and a willingness to open up and let go.” Alter was so popular that each time Geis tried to drop him, readers pleaded for his return. Eventually, Alter Ego was allowed to write his own book reviews in *SFR* and even partner with Geis in a review column, “The Alien Viewpoint,” in *Galaxy* (1974-79).

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Unlike the first attempted conversion of *Psychotic* into *SFR* in 1955, this time popular acceptance was overwhelming. According to Arnie Katz, the new *SFR* “achieved such stature that any writer who wanted to address fandom and prodom at large on the subject of science fiction immediately thought in terms of sending it to *SFR*.”

Darrell Schweitzer was succinct in his assessment of this second run of *SFR*: “the most successful fanzine of all time.”

SFR II appeared, at first bi-monthly and then eight times per year, from 1968 to 1971. Each issue ran 48-64 pages. Content included columns by Poul Anderson, Piers Anthony, Ted White, Norman Spinrad, John Brunner. Feature articles were penned by such luminaries as Harlan Ellison, Jack Gaughan, Samuel R. Delaney, Dean Koontz, Robert Silverberg.

Geis boosted *SFR*'s prestige content by including 75-100 pros on the comp list; many sent letters of comment. Few other fanzines could boast letters from the likes of Don Wollheim, L. Sprague DeCamp, Isaac Asimov, Barry Malzberg, Joanna Russ, Michael Moorcock, Alfred Bester, Andre Norton, James Blish, Philip Jose Farmer, A. Bertram Chandler, Ursula Le Guin, and even John W. Campbell Jr.

Issues 28-30 were photo-offset and “half sized,” i.e., the standard 8.5x11-inch sheet folded in half, creating a special kind of hell for collectors and archivists who had to shelve these 5.5x8.5-inch issues with the previous full-sized mimeographed issues. Then, assessing the costs of those printed issues, Geis returned to mimeo with issue 31.

Calculations of labor versus cost were a constant Geisian preoccupation. “I have just figured out that I spend at least 60 hours typing up this magazine every two months.” This was time he could use for professional writing. But, “if I had the copy typed professionally it would cost \$7 per hour;” canceling out the gain in income.

So he decided to do the work himself. The print run for issue 31 (June 1969) was 700 copies – 350 subs, 250 trades and comps, and a surplus for future back-issue sales.

Geis always did good business selling back issues. That's the kind of fanzine he produced – new subscribers wanted to see what they had missed, and many readers wanted to complete their sets. He saved the stencils and later reprinted some mimeo issues to replenish his inventory. He set the print orders for the photo-offset issues high to provide a large surplus.

He built circulation with ads in the prozines, attracting readers outside traditional fandom. Several fans later testified that it was *SFR*, discovered through a prozine ad, that introduced them to fandom. In my own case, it was a sample copy of *SFR* that drew me back into fandom after a couple of post-college years, wandering in the wilderness.

But at that point, *SFR* II was far from profitable. During 1969, Geis took in \$1600 in subscription income. Total expenses were \$3800, including a capital investment of \$1300 for an electric-powered Gestetner 466 mimeograph (at least saving the labor of turning the mimeo crank 42,000 times for *SFR* 31).

In *SFR* 39, August 1970, Geis wrote: “Editing a fanzine of this size and frequency is fun, work, and a trip. This is the 19th issue since I revived the magazine in the fall of 1967. If you had told me three years ago when I published that 18-page, 100-copy issue of *Psychotic* that now I would be running off 1200 copies of *Science Fiction Review* . . . well, you know what I would have said. I have no regrets. I look forward with disgusting zest to the next 19 issues.”

But Geis's zest wasn't as durable as he thought. Issue 43, March 1971, was the last of *SFR* II. He hadn't decided to cease publication when he prepped that final issue, but some comments in its pages foreshadowed his decision.

“Note that the military, as a result of this double-crossing and extreme use of the National Guard and Reserves, is having little success in persuading present-force soldiers to re-enlist when their tours are finally ended. I think it’s great that all these patriotic citizens are being raped by their lying, cheating government and are now learning their civics lessons, but alas the hard way.”

Richard E. Geis in
Taboo Opinions #32

Existential angst played a part. As Alter Ego argued, “A hundred years from now, no one will care a fig that we lived, *SFR* will possibly be a teeny, tiny footnote in a reel of microfilm or a fading charge in a memory circuit in a tired computer. Do you realize that? Probably every copy of *SFR* will be dust.

“Why go to all this trouble? Why put in long hours on this magazine while writing books, too? Why, in short, knock us out like this? We are mortal! We are forty-three years old and the cold clutch of the waiting grave is turning our hairs gray one by one.”

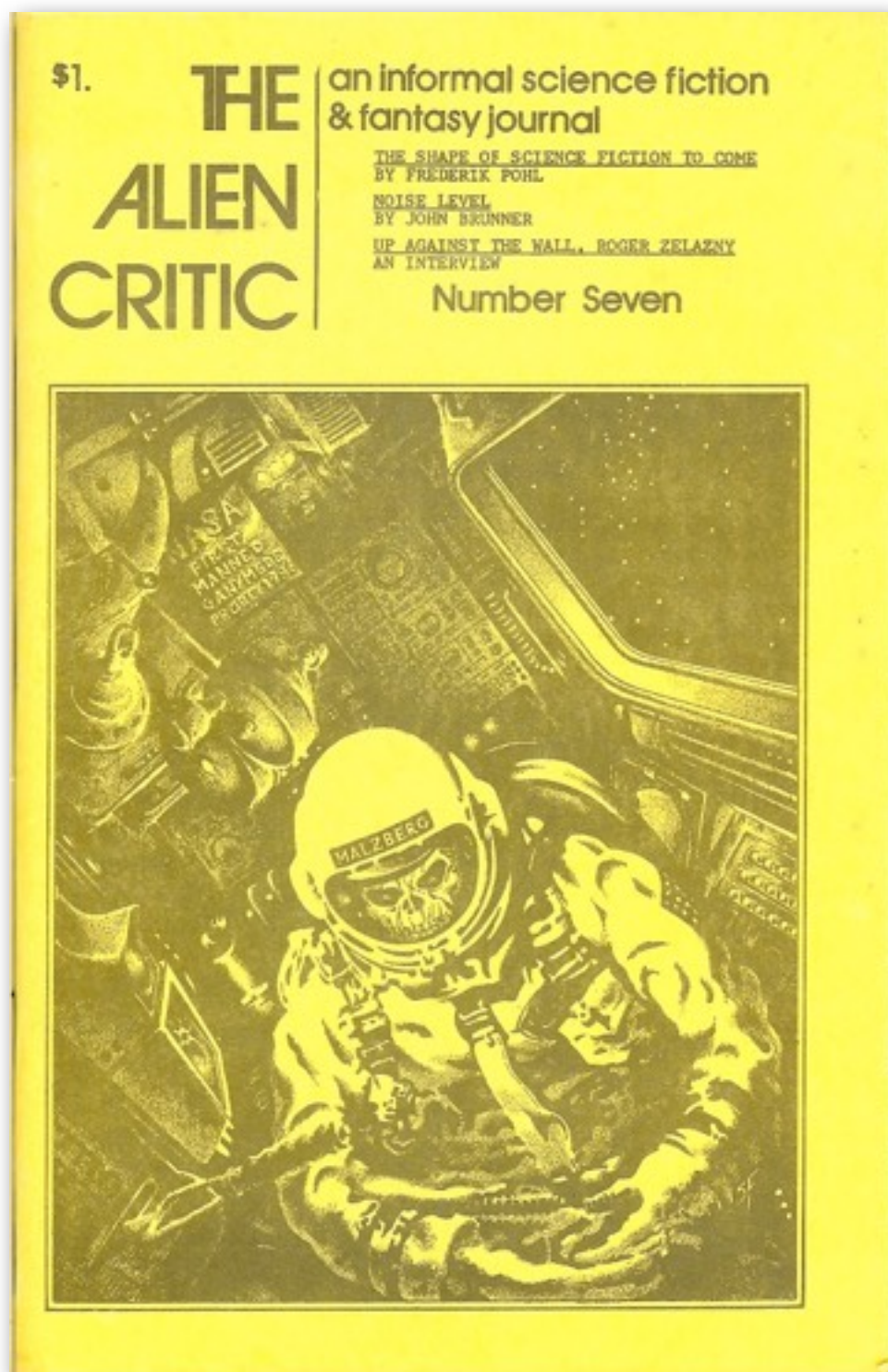
Geis responded: “Why not work? If it’s all the same in the end, why not work and produce and accomplish?”

But beyond such lofty philosophical questions, Geis was returning to some old concerns. He wanted to produce and accomplish, yes; but he wanted to achieve more than writing sex novels and publishing a fanzine, however successful he was at those endeavors.

Almost a year later, he wrote: “I think my stopping publication of *Science Fiction Review* was the first major sign of the changes that have been occurring in me during the last year. A deep-seated dissatisfaction. Maybe a subconscious panic. Middle-aged man’s terror: Whither, Geis? You’ve got maybe forty years left, and then comes the final blackout, I suppose I thought.”

Whither, indeed. Geis had succumbed to a classic midlife crisis. He was now more than 40 years old. He was living in a small apartment. He didn’t own a car. He didn’t have a wife or children. He believed he had talent, but he had used that talent only to “waste 13 years writing sex novels” and publishing fanzines.

Time was passing. Was this all there was?



RICHARD E. GEIS



One of Our Parties

2

THE SECOND PHASE

Number 1

II.

In 1971, Dick Geis abruptly ceased publication of “the most successful fanzine of all time” and resolved to use the time gained to achieve an old ambition: “I don't know if I can sell what science fiction I'll write in the next few years. I'm going to write as well as I can, slowly. I have enough money to last four years even if I sell nothing. I'm going to give it my best shot.”

Meanwhile, in an attempt to resolve another aspect of his midlife crisis, Geis spent several months on a quest to find “the woman I will spend the rest of my life with. Did I meet women! Around twenty, at least. It was an education. I learned, or relearned, a great deal about myself I had wished to ignore.

“I cannot live with anyone. I am too selfish of my time. Weekends. Once in a while during the week, depending. That's all the social contact and emotional closeness I can take – a compromise between my hermit self and my infant self.”

To fill the void in his suddenly fanzine-free life (and, perhaps subconsciously, to divert himself from the science fiction he intended to write), Geis launched a personal fanzine titled *Richard E. Geis*.

“Why? Because I have been lying every night on the couch, watching the pretty colors on the TV. And I cannot watch TV without keeping my mouth busy. Ice cream, candy, fruit, beer, screwdrivers, pretzels. Lying there like a zombie. Getting dull and fat.

“And now I am number one on the Fantasy Amateur Press Association waiting list. And I've had the idea for a personal magazine of this make-up for years. And now it is time to do it. To save my mind from TV, to get my thoughts on a myriad subjects down on paper, and to provide myself with a vehicle for interaction with science fiction fandom, again.”

Geis's new fanzine was ground-breaking. First, *REG* ran 44-56 pages per quarterly issue, an unheard-of length for a personalzine; until then most had seldom amounted to more than a dozen pages.

REG possessed the graphic pizzazz of a phone book – two columns of micro-elite text, no artwork, no large-type headings, no nothing to attract or guide the reader's eye. “I'm happier in this format. Informal, no layouts, no pretense. No artwork, no outside contributors. This zine is a perfect ego trip. I think I'd rather do this than fiction.”

Geis really put the personal into personalzine. He typed entries almost every day, straight to stencil, discussing whatever happened to him: the mail, the news, books, movies, his inner musings, his sexploits with partners of both genders, his masturbation practices, everything in pursuit of total honesty.

And he conceded: “Peel away another level of motivation for my putting out this magazine, and you come upon a small, tender, pulsing blob of need for love. Each letter of comment is a morsel of love. Each subscription is a bit of precious affection.”

Geis set no limits on his confessions: “What am I most ashamed of? Not that I had lecherous thoughts about my mother when I was 15. Not that I prefer oral lovemaking to intercourse. Not that I have frequently wished my mother and father dead so that I could inherit a few thousands of dollars.

“No, I'm ashamed of wanting, hoping, I'll be able to sell this magazine to enough people to permit me to live off the profit. God's truth! This irrational dream has been with me from the first days of *SFR*, way back in 1955. The wish keeps surfacing. It wriggled its way into the tail-end of my recent splurge of publishing *SFR*, and it is burbling in my mind now.

“I will need about 800-900 subscribers. A dollar a copy, folks, and about 65-70 cents profit per copy. I can live on \$250 per month. I dearly love the challenge.

“There is something buried in me which insists I be this way – living on the minimum, yet not in want. I have a color TV, a newly decorated apartment, a new bike. If my dream of living off my fanzine is the fuel that drives my fan publishing, then I accept it. It serves a good purpose, I hope.” It would require several more years, but Geis eventually succeeded in turning this dream into reality.

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Geis produced *REG* I in Santa Monica. But as he finished that first issue he decided to move back to Portland, leaving behind his life in Los Angeles with all its associations and emotional entanglements.

“It appears a new chapter in my life is about to start. I wrote mom: Yes, I would move up to Portland and live with her. Now I'm planning in my mind how I'll arrange my desks, bookcases, etc. in the party rooms in the basement.

“It may be the lack of other people in my life. Except for a Von's grocery clerk in the morning, and people on the street as I ride to the Post Office, I just don't see people in my life. Which explains why I am going back to Mother. I need someone close, but not too close.

“Of course, moving to Portland, to Mother, sort of wipes out women from my life . . . a not altogether dismal prospect. My going to Portland will be as much running from as running to. The convoluted depths of my 'real' motivations here are staggering.

“I know I've never, at base, wanted to be an adult. I've rejected 'manhood' consistently. Maybe I should simply come to terms with it and be a child on one level and stay with mom until she (or I) dies?

“The question I ask (and the one anyone will inevitably ask) is: if you need company, why don't you go out and find it? No! I want my mommy! (And she wants me!)

“Somehow, I surmise I'll go through life in a turmoil to one degree or another. I will continue to stumble through life with an open fly, and an open mind.”

Geis made the move at the end of May 1972 after mailing *REG* I. After a three-week gap in journal entries, he reported: “I've been five days unpacking, sorting, arranging, re-arranging. I'm as snug as a bug in a rug. Me and my bookcases and my color TV and my Gestetner 466 are content.

“The Bad News? That’s the stock market losses and the news that the American economy created only 78,000 new jobs in May. Actually, 175,000 new jobs were expected. But that low number is a fluke!

There were other shortfalls in the economy, too, and the price of crude oil went up to \$55 a barrel, but not to worry! Just keep on borrowing and spending, folk! Everything will work out fine!

After all, we’re A*M*E*R*I*C*A*N*S and blessed by God! We are the most powerful nation ever seen on Earth, and by manifest destiny assured of a bright, prosperous future...just like ancient Rome!”

Richard E. Geis
Taboo Opinions #52

“The main room in this side of the basement is 12' by 18'. Two windows, one doorway to the stairs and one arched doorway to this 9' by 9' room I am using as an office. Here I have my two large filing cabinets, my eager Gestetner, my storage cabinets, my wall shelves, my bulletin board, my two desks with a swivel chair between.

“Everything fits beautifully. Sometimes I hug myself and shiver. It's too good to be true. I know a truck will hit me as I ride to the Post Office come Monday and the Gods will laugh.”

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REG appeared for three quarterly issues, but old ambitions began to stir. Perhaps impelled by his desire to earn a living from his fanzine, Geis was thinking about a title change “for commercial reasons. If I changed to a more descriptive title [*The Alien Critic*] it would probably advertise and sell better on prospective bookstore shelves and would 'fit' better in the publishing world by category.”

But he was considering more than a new title. “The nature of REG is changing. It seems to be becoming more a sf review and fanzine review zine. The emphasis is changing, if only because I'm reading more sf now and receiving many, many fanzines.”

As always, he really wanted to publish a genzine focused on the SF field. “This would involve a big SFR-like structure again, and a commitment to it with my eyes wide open and no excuses. The prospect lures me.”

A few weeks later, he wrote: “The wall next to my desk is bloody from hitting my head against it. Just a minute – the urge is coming on again! – BONK-BONK – No, it does no good. I still am thrashing about day and night in my skull, fighting *The Alien Critic*.”

By the time he finished cutting stencils for what would have been *Richard E. Geis 4*, he had made up his mind and put the new title on the cover. The first issue of *The Alien Critic*, subtitled “An Unconventional Science Fiction Journal,” was numbered 4 in the REG numbering sequence; TAC would maintain the same quarterly schedule.

Many of the former SFR II columnists returned: Poul Anderson, Ted White, John Brunner, now joined by Harlan Ellison and Larry Shaw. Major articles were contributed by Barry Malzberg, Greg Benford, Samuel Delaney, James Blish, Marion Zimmer Bradley, Frederik Pohl.

There were also a few unexpected contributors, such as prominent post-War SF editor Sam Merwin Jr. (*Startling Stories* and *Thrilling Wonder Stories*), who had never written for a fanzine before, and Richard S. Shaver of the notorious Shaver Mystery in the 1940s *Amazing*.

Interviews appeared in almost every issue and featured the likes of Avram Davidson, R.A. Lafferty, Stanislaw Lem, Roger Zelazny, Philip Jose Farmer, L. Sprague de Camp, Jerry Pournelle, George R. R. Martin, Philip K. Dick. The letter column was again crowded with equally big names.

Geis could also report that TAC 4 “is assured of that fanzine nirvana – a profit. In fact, with REG back-issue sales continuing, those issues are now in the black.”

But he was again juggling labor and cost considerations: “The drudgery of running the 466 for hours and hours, the time-wasting drudgery of collating, stapling. If the income permits, I'll go photo-offset, even at the sacrifice of a mimeo edition profit vs. a photo-offset break-even.” So, issues 5-7 of TAC were again half-sized photo-offset.

Then, with TAC 8, Geis went back to mimeo. First, his printer had taken a month to deliver the previous issue, forcing him to miss his mailing deadline. Then there were the inevitable cost calculations. “I save \$350 by printing this issue myself. That is the difference between a further loss and a small profit.

“I really do want to save that \$350. It would reduce the 'nut' from \$1350 to \$1000 per 3000-copy issue. Oh, yes, Big Time Semi-Pro Fanzine publishing is expensive. I've sunk \$2000 into TAC so far, and the wish to see an end to red ink is, honestly, the major reason for the change.”

By TAC 10 (August 1974), Geis could report: “I have now approximately 1000 subscribers and I sell approximately 700 copies to bookstores. I estimate I 'clear' about \$300 per month. And I work full-time doing it.”

He calculated basic living expenses at \$196 per month, so he could live modestly on this income. The new phenomenon of profit-making fanzines would plunge all fandom into war and prompt a change in the fan Hugo Awards.

But what about his intention to write SF? “When I folded *Science Fiction Review*, I made some big talk about having books in me fighting to get out, how I wanted to switch from porno to sf, and how a large-circulation fan magazine was too much work. Now, here I am, back in the big-fanzine business. Howcum?”

“I could say that I know how to make a big-time zine work this time around (true, true). I could say that after approximately 85 published books and 100 odd stories (and believe me, some of them were pretty odd!), I am simply sick of writing fiction. I could say . . . But I'd probably be jiving.

“I seem to have something in me that *insists* on editing and publishing. It has existed in me ever since my kiddie days. So I obey. Go fight inner city hall.”

After eight issues of *The Alien Critic*, Geis received a legal challenge from a magazine with a trademarked title, *The Critic*, and rather than fight, he returned to his default fanzine title, *Science Fiction Review*. The first issue of this third series of *SFR* appeared in February 1975, numbered 12. Dick Geis had come home.

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In 1975, Geis also revived *REG* as a smaller, more frequent personalzine, publishing an issue whenever ten stencils were filled. He may have been prompted by the death of his mother. He detailed her sudden stroke, the funeral, and the consequent changes in his life in the first issue of the new series (confusingly numbered 1).

He was now alone again, but he was no longer living in his basement “womb.” “Mother's death has changed everything, for good or ill. In a way her death is a benefit for me – it frees me from my vow to stay with her until she died. I completed that vow. Now, I am able to get out of this basement literally and figuratively.”

He had inherited \$4,300 in cash and a one-third interest in the house. His step-brother and step-sister agreed on a value of \$18,000 for the house, so Geis could buy their shares for \$12,000. This he did with the \$4,300 inheritance, a \$3,000 gift from his father, and the remainder from his savings.

With a presentable place to entertain guests, he began seeking sexual partners and potential companions again. Then, in the third issue of the new *REG*, he called a halt: “Richard E. Geis is dead! My personal journal, that is. Not me.

“I am entering into a relationship with a woman which is serious and which I refuse to endanger by reporting in *REG*, and I cannot feel good about not reporting it. There's an element of dishonesty and compromise that I can't live with. So that factor says stop the journal if you have to censor your reporting in it.

“This lady is coming along as everything I've said I'm looking for in a woman – and I'd rather have her than *REG*.” Some months later he could report: “A very good woman is sharing my home now. We get along remarkably well.”

He mentioned the name of his Lady Companion in *SFR* 25, May 1978, a monstrous 94-page issue. He had so much good material waiting for publication, in fact, that he announced a more frequent, bimonthly schedule, which was maintained for the next six issues.

“This increase in pages published is being made possible by Elsie, who has been typing most of the non-diary, non-Geis material for the past few issues, as well as the bookwork and day-to-day filling of orders. All Hail to a lady without whom my life would be a shambles. She lights up my life.”

But even with the extra help, Geis couldn't maintain the more-frequent schedule. In *SFR* 31, May 1979, he announced: “We've been putting out *SFR* on a bi-monthly schedule for about a year now. It's too much. We're going back to the quarterly schedule. I have other fish to fry and need time to apply the heat – a lot of gardening, house fixing-up, and a lot of other writing.”

I don't know what happened with Elsie, but her place as Lady Companion was soon assumed by another. In *SFR* 32, November 1979, “Paulette, Special Assistant” appeared on the masthead. In *SFR* 35, May 1980, Paulette Minare, with an *accent acute* over the final “e”, was promoted to Associate Editor. By *SFR* 47, May 1983, she was contributing book reviews.

Geis would revive *REG* as a personal journal for a third time in 1978 and, in typical Geisian manner, change its title and purpose to *The Conspiracy Newsletter* in 1981. *TCN* only lasted a few issues. He revived *REG* yet again in 1985; after just one issue – a new record – he retitled it *The Naked Id*.

* * * * *

Geis's father died in 1976, a year after his mother. Geis's relationship with his mother had been close but complicated. Relations with his father had been remote but still problematical.

“This is hitting me harder than I thought it would. Dad and I had barely seen each other for a dozen or so years, and rarely before that, after he and mom divorced when I was six years old. Only in the past year, since mom died, have I seen and talked with him regularly. He was a virtual stranger in so many ways.”

Geis's loss proved beneficial for his readers: “The future of *SFR* is bright. How can I be so sure of this? Well, dad left me \$16,000. The interest earned by this money will further insure my living expenses, cut the amount I have to earn from *SFR*, and will make it easier to continue this absurd life of pontificating, publishing, and intellectual poltroonery. I have every hope and expectation to continue *SFR* for at least another ten years.”

an informal science fiction
& fantasy journal

THE ALIEN CRITIC

Number Eight

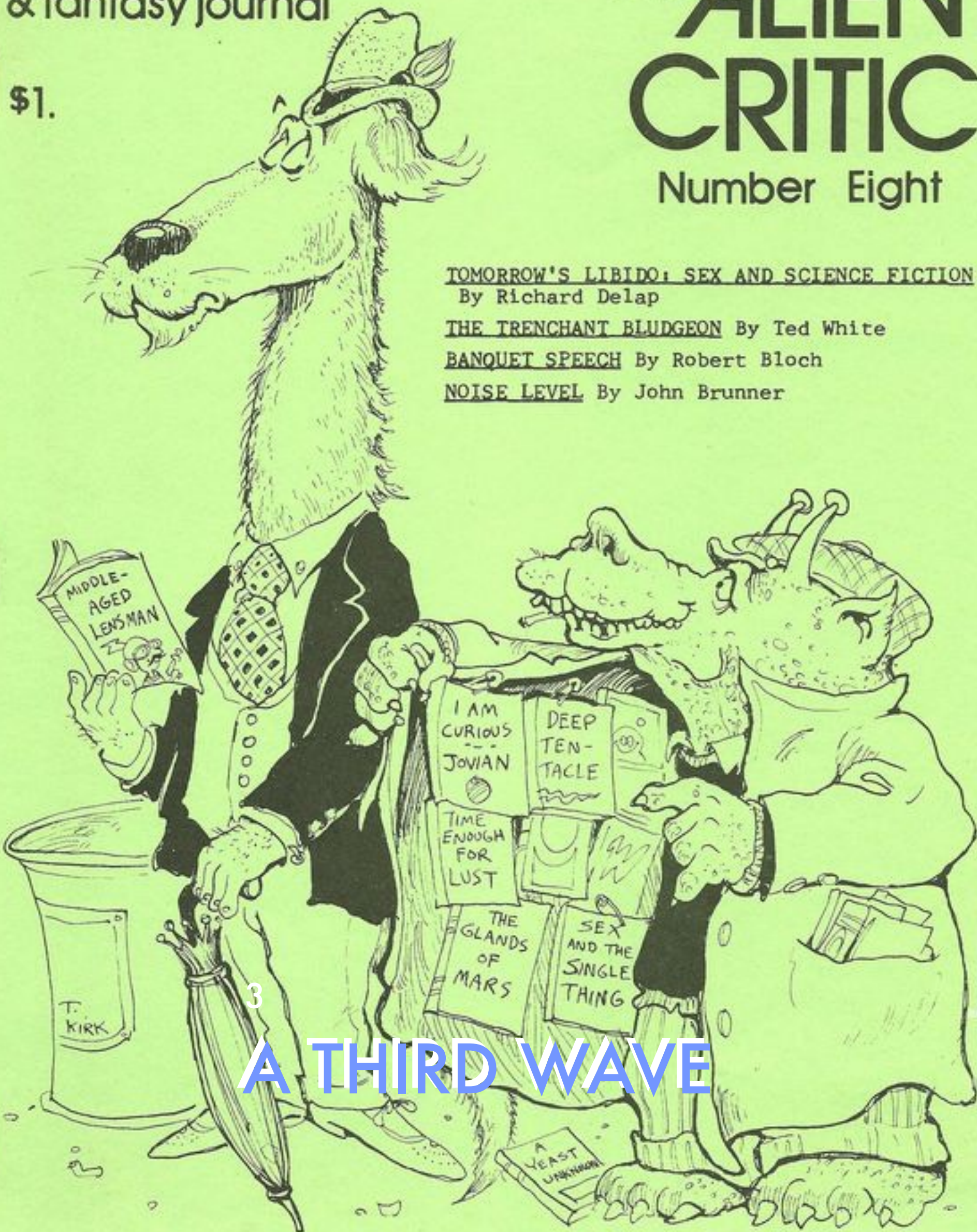
TOMORROW'S LIBIDO: SEX AND SCIENCE FICTION

By Richard Delap

THE TRENCHANT BLUDGEON By Ted White

BANQUET SPEECH By Robert Bloch

NOISE LEVEL By John Brunner



A THIRD WAVE

III.

In 1953, Dick Geis conquered all fandom with his focal-point fanzine *Psychotic*, which he eventually retitled *Science Fiction Review* and then quickly folded. In 1967, he revived *Psychotic*, then changed the title to *Science Fiction Review*, then abruptly killed it at the peak of its focal-pointedness. In 1972 he launched a personalzine, *Richard E. Geis*, which he soon retitled *The Alien Critic*, followed by a change to (you guessed it) *Science Fiction Review*.

And he kept changing the format of these fanzines from standard-sized mimeo to half-sized photo-offset and back again. Issue 12 of *SFR* III (the first of the new series) was full-sized mimeo, but issue 13 was again half-sized photo-offset. Then with *SFR* 14, Geis changed printers and finally adopted a format he could stick with: full-sized photo-offset.

The next 48 issues would be 8.5x11-inch, at first on newsprint and later on better grades of acid-free paper. When he could afford it, some issues sported wrap-around covers of heavier stock. But at last, every issue was the same size and commercially printed, so the editor was no longer obliged to run his Gestetner 466 for four solid days to print an issue, followed by a hundred hours of collating and stapling.

In August 1976, Geis could report that *SFR* had 1581 subscribers and sold another 1207 copies through more than 80 bookstores; with complimentary subs and trades, *SFR* had a total readership of 2997.

That same year there was a movement to abolish the fan Hugo Awards, because the big-circulation fanzines – *SFR*, *Algol*, *Locus* – and their editors were dominating the Fanzine and Fan Writer categories, shutting out everyone else.

Geis became increasingly annoyed with all the accusations that, somehow, he wasn't a fanzine publisher. "Over the years I have kept my peace, suffered the slings and arrows of outrageous morons. I am accused often of running a prozine here. *SFR*, it is said, actually (*horrors!*) pays some of its contributors. And Geis actually admits he makes a (*shudder!*) profit every issue.

"Let me make this perfectly clear: I estimate I make about \$300 per month from *SFR*. I also make a small stipend from *REG* and about \$1200 per self-published sf/sex novel I put out. This, plus the help Paulette provides for the utilities, some food, etc., and the interest from savings keep the wolf from the door (though he remains, snarling, down at the corner).

"Without naming names, I note sourly that most of those who bitch about *SFR*'s 'prozine' qualities are very eager to trade with me; they send awful little crudzines and expect to get *SFR* every issue, on the assumption that in this respect (to their advantage) I am a fanzine publisher and honor the ancient obligation of trading at least one-for-one or all-for-all.

"But they don't send their small mimeo'd effort to *Analog* or *Omni* or even *Amazing* and expect to trade. They know the difference, all right. They just want to have it both ways, if possible, with me.

"These occasional bites on the leg irk me, piss me, croggle my greeps. I comfort myself with the knowledge that soon these bugs will be gone. I survive. I continue. I outlast the bastards – and bitches."

* * * * *

Geis filled his columns with endless, and dire, economic and political predictions, few of which came true (he was misled by his horror of exploding government debt – he always shunned personal debt – and his belief in secret powers operating behind the scenes). But he made one prescient prediction in *SFR* 18, August 1976:

"I'm waiting for the time (probably beyond my time) when a vast computer network will permit a citizen to read the latest issue of *SFR* on his home screen at a reasonable cost. His credit account will be debited and my account credited instantly for the transaction. No more distribution woes, no more printing woes. Just create the master copy, feed it into the central computer memory."

He did live to see all this, the "vast computer network" being the Internet and eFanzines.com the central distribution hub. What he didn't foresee was that electronic fanzines would be free, because once a fanzine is digitized, its distribution cannot be controlled. The first paying subscriber can forward free copies to any number of friends or post the whole thing onto the Web for all the world to read.

The dawn of fandom's Cyber Age would mean the death of fanzines that earned a profit. Only *Locus* would survive, as a fully commercial and strictly paper publication.

* * * * *

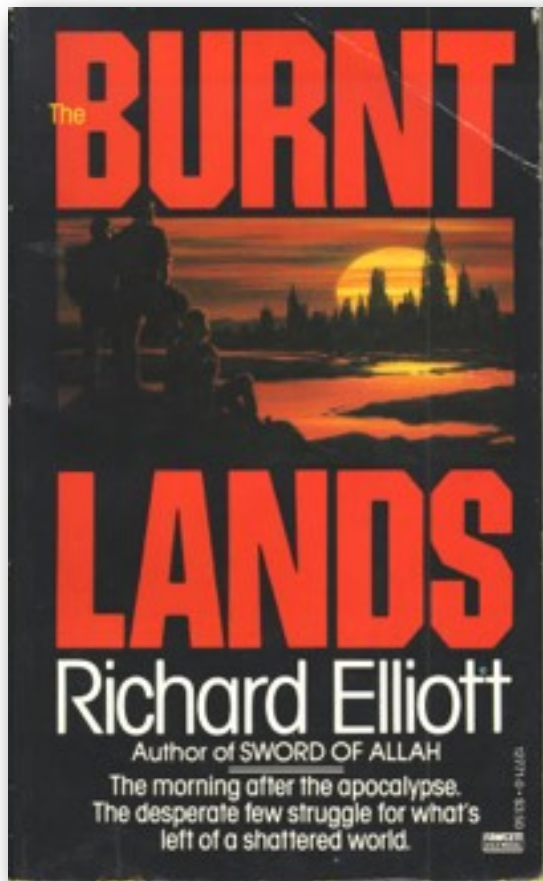
Although Geis had returned to major fanzine publishing, he didn't totally abandon his plan to write SF. But most of his working time was now consumed by writing, editing, and publishing his fanzine. He found a solution to suit his circumstances.

In *REG* 2 he reported: "I am toying with letting Alter Ego use a section of each page in *REG* to write a shocking, depraved, violent sf adventure. Not porno, but bawdy and gory." By this means he incorporated a daily quota of fiction into his production routine. The result was a novelette, facetiously titled "Tomb It May Concern" by A. L. Terego, which appeared on the last quarter of each page in *REG* 3.

Gene Wolfe commented on the story: "It concerns me; by which I mean it is much too good to be called crap, yet sufficiently bad that I think it could be improved a great deal."

Robert Lowndes opined: "I think you have a salable tale here, and one which many readers will enjoy."

With this encouragement, Geis sent the story, retitled "One Immortal Man" with his own name as author, to his agent, Virginia Kidd. She considered it "absolutely smashing" but wasn't able to sell it in New York; the story was too brutal and raunchy, and prior publication in his copyrighted fanzine excluded it from sale to most potential markets.



“You know
you've arrived
when your
fanzine wins a
Hugo and
Kurt Vonnegut
phones to tell
you you're a
cocksucker.
”

But when Peter Weston in England became editor of the *Andromeda* original SF anthology series for Futura, he remembered the story in *SFR* and bought it. After revisions, “One Immortal Man” appeared in *Andromeda 2* in hardcover (Dennis Dobson) and paperback (Orbit Books) in 1977. Geis received a check for 170 pounds (\$296).

He was euphoric. “‘One Immortal Man’ will hold the reader and rock him a bit at the end. I’m proud of that story. It’s the only ‘pure’ sf I’ve ever written. And about the only sf I’ll ever write until I tire of *SFR* in a few more years.”

He later expanded “One Immortal Man” to short-novel length. Virginia Kidd had dropped him as a client, in part because he spent too much time producing his fanzine instead of writing fiction. His new agent, Larry Shaw, shopped the novel version around to major book publishers, and it got some nibbles. But the text was simply too violent and sexual. A bit miffed by this rejection, Geis decided “just for the hell of it” to serialize the story in *SFR* 25-28.

This impulsive act was costly. Serialization in *SFR* removed *One Immortal Man* from further consideration by commercial publishers and prevented Geis from selling the novel to *SFR* readers as a separate, self-published volume.

Geis had toyed with the idea of self-publication for several years: “I could do it easily enough: publish a sf novel of my own by mimeograph. The idea of Doing It My Way, of doing it all – writing, printing, selling my own work on a private, handcrafted, underground, non-Establishment basis appeals to me immensely.”

He gratified this desire by self-publishing three short novels of “erotic science fiction,” *Canned Meat* (1978), *Star Whores* (1980), and its sequel *The Corporation Strikes Back* (1981). These 500-copy editions sold out to *SFR* readers and earned their author about \$1200 each in additional income.

Selling the novelette version of “One Immortal Man” to a commercial market fulfilled a longstanding ambition. But Geis didn’t stop there. He finally broke into mainstream SF novel writing when he collaborated with another Oregon fan (and *SFR* columnist), Elton Elliott, on a near-future thriller.

Apparently, collaboration gave Geis the motivation and discipline he needed to write “straight” fiction, traits he lacked when working alone. Elliott provided the novel’s concept and structure, they shared the plotting, and Geis did the writing. Geis’s third agent, Joe Elder, sold the partial and outline to Fawcett Gold Medal.

The resulting 280-page novel, *The Sword of Allah*, was published as a paperback original in 1984 under the blended name “Richard Elliott”. This work was successful enough to be followed by three more: *The Burnt Lands* (1985), *The Master File* (1986), and *The Einstein Legacy* (1987).

* * * * *

Geis was widely regarded as a recluse, a West Coast version of Harry Warner, “the hermit of Hagerstown.” He always operated from a post office box and in the early years didn’t publish his residential address or phone number.

But unlike Hagerstown, Los Angeles hosted a large fan and pro community. In Venice, Geis lived just two blocks from Fritz Leiber. “I met a few people in California – Harlan Ellison, Hank Stine, Charles Platt, Fritz Leiber, Poul Anderson, Phil Farmer.”

He also occasionally appeared at fan events. He was an honoree at the 1960 LASFS Fanzine, which saluted members who had made their first professional sale. He was also present at a later LASFS meeting where he took delivery of his second Best Fanzine Hugo and received a standing ovation.

It’s true, he generally avoid parties and conventions. Nonetheless, he sometimes played poker on Thursday nights at Bruce Pelz’s house, and he attended a local Bouchercon where he met Bob Bloch.

“I’m not *that* reclusive,” he protested. “But I am jealous of my time and privacy. Mostly I know people by mail, and phone.”

Geis explained the source of his reclusive tendencies: “I have a certain degree of lack of coordination and skeletal malformation. I can’t endure it! My ego cringes at my imperfection. Clothes never hang quite right on me, I walk oddly, and I hate to have people look at me.

“So I get ‘tense’ when I’m exposed to people, especially in public. In everyday interpersonal contacts I’m quiet, self-effacing, non-obtrusive. I yield to others. I am a listener.” (Here, then, we find the inspiration for Alter Ego, who was not quiet, not self-effacing, and certainly not unobtrusive.)

In 1979, an invitation from the Portland SF club gave Geis an opportunity to define the limits of his fannish gregariousness. The club was planning to sponsor a convention and asked him to serve as Fan Guest of Honor.

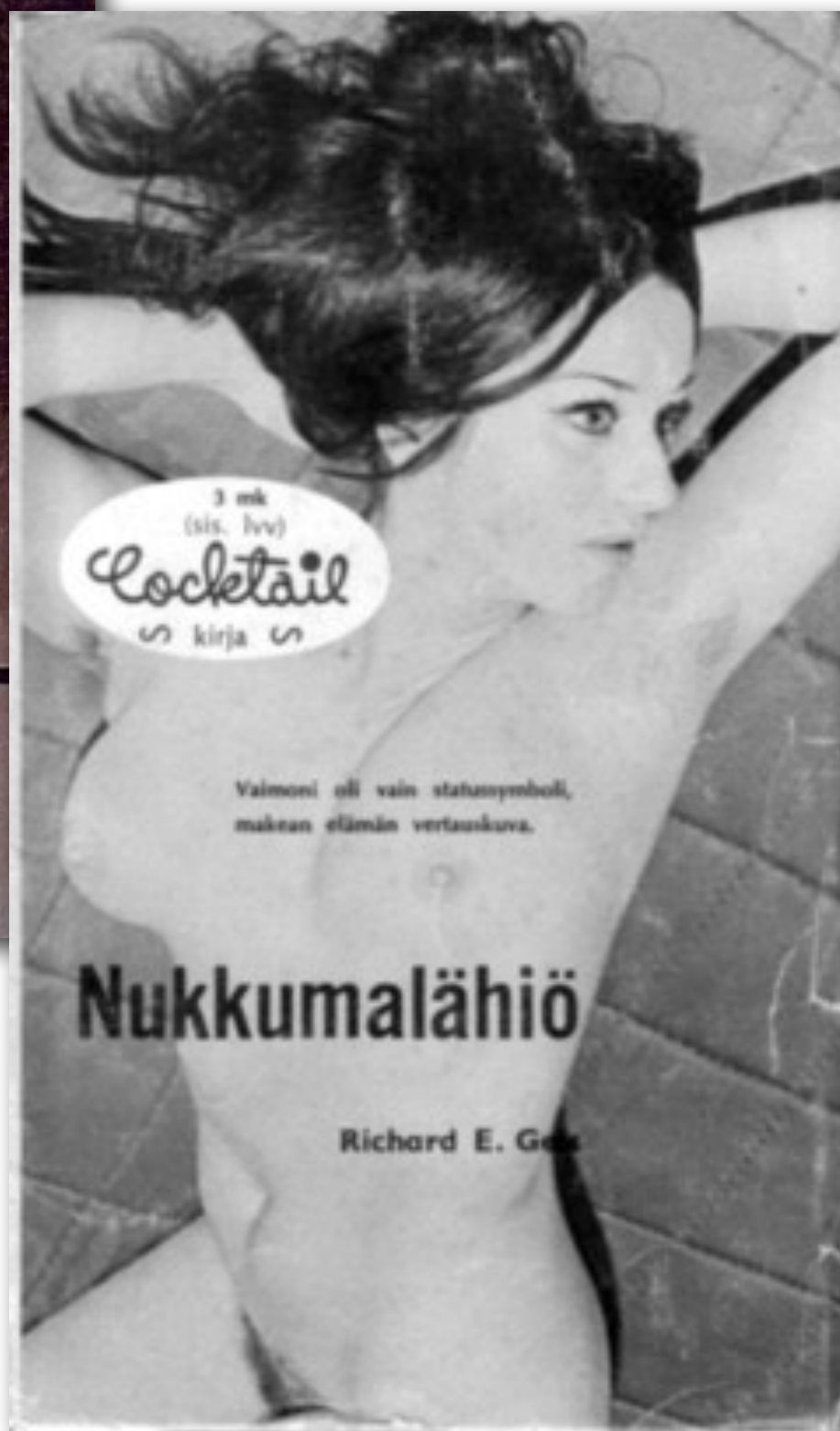
"I said yes, provided it was understood I would *not* make a speech or appear on any panels. I'm perfectly willing to wander around with a large name tag and a foolish grin and meet people, but that's about it. So it was agreed that I would be a 'non-participating' GoH."

Geis found the convention to be "a nice though mildly stressful experience. I met some fans and pros and was suitably crogged when various people came up to me and introduced themselves and wanted me to autograph some copies of my 1960s sex novels."

So, thanks to its local venue and flexible requirements, OryCon I scored a coup. Geis was rumored to have turned down several invitations to serve as a conventional Fan Guest of Honor at larger and more distant cons.

When he bought his mother's house, he had the phone company change the listing from her name to his. Thus exposed through Directory Assistance, within a few days he received an angry call from Kurt Vonnegut, who chewed him out for things Geis had written about Vonnegut's work in the most recent issue of *SFR*.

You know you've arrived when your fanzine wins a Hugo and Kurt Vonnegut phones to tell you you're a cocksucker.





4
THE FOURTH WORLD

IV.

From 1967 to 1986, Dick Geis was one of the dominant voices in fandom. Almost no one had met him, but everyone knew what he liked and disliked, what he thought, and what he did when no one was looking.

His fanzine, usually titled *Science Fiction Review*, grew steadily in circulation from 100 to 3000, and in 1984 a new category of “semi-pro” Hugo Awards was created to prevent *SFR* and two or three other big fanzines from monopolizing the Best Fanzine award.

Over the years, Geis chronicled his slowly developing health issues, which would eventually end his fannish eminence. In 1976 he wrote: “I have incipient high blood pressure. Which does not surprise me since mine has been a stroke family. (Mother at age 67, father at 73.)

“I also have arthritis in my back, hands, arms, knees. (You name it, I've got twinges, aches and pains.) And a squashed disc in my upper spine which makes turning my head a *youp!* experience.” During a routine exam, his doctor noted that he also had palsy, which explained his mild coordination problems.

None of this was too alarming. “My ailments are relatively minor and chronic, and with the help of my trunks and pain-killers I will be able to go on for years and years, bedeviling you with *SFR* in all its myriad shifts, changes, formats, alterations.”

Geis did manage to go on for another decade, but in *SFR* 60, August 1986, he had An Announcement. “Right now my neck is killing me and my left hip and lower back are serious rivals in the pain-giving contest. What I've got is increasingly severe arthritis.

“Since this escalation of intensified discomforts and pain has occurred in the past six months, I've put off and put off some tough decisions. But the arrival of serious hip/back pain has forced the issue.

“I can't sit at a typewriter very long, and I can't read very much, any more. I am only able to work (write) a couple hours a day, if I'm lucky. I have to use my writing time to write novels as best I can, for as long as I can. I have to tell you that *SFR* is dead. *SFR* 61 [November 1986] will be the last and final issue.”

In addition to his growing physical limitations, the decision to fold *SFR* was reinforced by other considerations. One was declining profitability. Total paid circulation peaked in 1979 at just over 3100. The next year, this figure shrank by 25 percent when Geis began requiring bookstores to pay in advance for the copies they ordered, because too many stores weren't paying for the copies they received on credit.

He also had to stop advertising. *Galaxy*, for which he wrote a review column in exchange for free ads, folded in 1979, and he couldn't afford to pay for ads in the remaining prozines. Surging inflation continued to drive up printing and postage costs. Then the recession of the early 1980s, which tamed inflation, also reduced subscription renewals.

By 1983 paid circulation was down to 2100, and Geis reported that profit had fallen to only about \$500 per issue or less than \$170 per month. The wrap-around covers of heavy, colored stock had to go (a \$450 savings).

With issue 56, August 1985, the page count per issue was cut from 64 to 48 (a \$500 savings) and the font size reduced to maintain wordage. In that same issue, Geis could declare: “*SFR* is no longer a semi-prozine. *SFR* no longer pays for its material, does not make a profit, and is definitely not a major contributor to my income.”

When he announced *SFR*'s demise, he cited one additional consideration: “Science fiction fandom doesn't want me anymore. I haven't won a Hugo for years! And today I received *File 770* from Mike Glycer, and he printed the horrible truth – the voting rundown for the latest Hugo Awards. In Best Semi-Prozine, *SFR* came in fourth behind *Locus*, *SF Chronicle*, and No Award! In the Best Fanwriter category, I came in third, behind Mike Glycer and No Award!”

Geis's “pulsing blob of need for love” was crushed.

* * * * *

After folding *SFR*, Geis completed *The Einstein Legacy* for Fawcett Gold Medal. He had sent partials and outlines for other novels to his agent, but apparently these didn't score with publishers; at least, he never published another “straight” novel. In the meantime, the sex-novel industry was withering away with the advent of triple-X videos.

But at that point, Geis was only two years from qualifying for Social Security benefits. Since becoming a freelance writer in 1959, he had paid “both ends” of the SS tax, the employer's and the employee's shares, so he had earned his benefits.

Geis had hinted that Social Security was a destination. In 1980 he wrote: “I'm going to quit this rat race when I'm 62. Only nine more years of this wonderful travail. (I assume Social Security will still be in place by then, paying benefits).” It may be that this reliable monthly income relieved him of the need to pursue increasingly painful writing.

But he still had the desire. In 1995-96, he produced two issues of *Taboo Science Fiction* containing several of “his kind” of stories (now posted on eFanzines.com with additional stories and the short novels *One Immortal Man*, *Star Whores*, and *The Corporation Strikes Back*). Also in 1995, he wrote a short story, “Monster Hunt,” for the original anthology *Nanodreams*, edited by Elliott for Baen Books.

From 2002-2008, Geis posted *Taboo Opinions* 1-114. *TO* was not a fanzine but a series of commentaries on recent political, social, and economic news. Then, after a two-year silence, he posted *Taboo Opinions* 115, in which he updated fans with “The View from Eighty-Two.”

“It's been a long time since I wrote one of these, so let me give you a horrifying picture of what and who I am now. Physically I'm a mess. What you might expect of a man my age. I've had four operations on my spine to keep my spinal cord from being cut into and/or strangled by encroaching calcium deposits and broke-down vertebrae. I can no longer walk, nor stand up for more than a second or two because of the accompanying severe pain.

“So I live in bed, in my wheelchair, and in the living room sofa. I hope soon to get a motorized wheelchair because my legs and arms are gradually losing strength. I'm not sure if this debility is from some arcane disease, a side-effect from my intensifying cerebral palsy, or from a natural, progressive age-related feebleness.”

“The coin isn’t really a coin. Coins are legally and technically made of precious metals, gold and silver, usually. This “coin” is a token made of base metals, copper, nickel and a bit of zinc. Might as well be made of plastic. It would be made of plastic if the government could find a durable plastic which conducted electricity properly for coin-operated machines.

Richard E. Geis
Taboo Opinions 113



RICHARD GEIS, 2006
PHOTO BY BRUCE BRENNER

This was Dick Geis's last message to fandom and the world.

* * * * *

Geis once asked himself and his readers: “Am I living a lie of avoidance and excuses – or living a life of individualism, unique creativity, and virtue? Damned if I know.” The answer, of course, was “both.”

I don't think there can be any doubt that Geis's painful childhood created his adult character and his compulsions as a writer. His father was a violent drunk who left when Geis was five. His disabilities and the shame he felt must have made his school years a misery. The 1930s were a more brutal era, and children with disabilities might be called spaz or cripp to their faces.

This was his own analysis. “I was shaped to be a loner in my childhood. While I loved the powerful Mother who dominated my life (no strong father-figure from my fifth year on), I also resented and hated her . . . and lusted for her.”

When he became a homeowner, his first improvements were revealing. “The iron grids and window guards and the locks and the plan to put up six-foot fences – a reflection of my most basic character. My world – and you're *not* welcome to it.

“Life outside is a hassle; the people there are a pain and the social requirements and roles are a drag. Most of the time I'd rather not pay the price people and society require . . . in person. Thus I 'hide' physically and sally forth mentally with *SFR* and *REG* and so on.”

He recognized his desire to live on a small income as another form of avoidance. “I'm not supposed to make too much money: it wipes out my excuses for not being normal. With money I could afford a car. With money I'd be more attractive to women. With money I would have no real excuses.”

At the same time, while living a life of avoidance and excuses, Geis had created circumstances in which he could fully express his individualism and creativity. His lack of conventional employment, substantial income, a wife and children, left him with the time and freedom of choice to publish a big fanzine.

Publishing *SFR* was a full-time job – about 50 hours per week, he reported. No one with a 9-to-5 job and a family could do it (or would be allowed to do it). How many other focal-point fanzines have disappeared after just a year or two because they demanded too much of their editors' time and labors?

And only Geis, with a lifestyle designed for a minimum income, could have supported himself for so many years on the slim profits of his fanzine. He was almost unique in being able to turn fanzine publishing into gainful employment.

But none of this explains his remarkable success, which stemmed from his skills as a writer and editor. Dick Geis was a talented fanzine writer with an unadorned, lucid, engaging style. According to Mike Glycer, “He was an extremely funny writer when that was his aim, and also a trenchant editorialist.”

Geis may have been reticent and retiring in person, but he came alive in print. “My personality is in my fingertips, on the typewritten page,” he once observed. His attitudes and candor appealed to a large audience.

He was also a go-to editor. He didn't sit around waiting for someone to send him good material, he went after it. He followed up suggestions, he corresponded, he phoned. He nurtured new talent. He fostered debates and even conflicts that might have fizzled away without his editorial connivance.

He also dismayed all fandom and reduced his profit margin by paying some of his contributors. The top rate was only one cent per word, but “I make a small profit off this labor of love and compulsion, and I'd feel like a crud if I *didn't* pay the contributors something.” Modest payment helped professional writers justify the time they spent pounding a typewriter for a fanzine.

Another, little-recognized secret of his success was his reliability as a publisher. Year after year, *SFR* appeared on schedule, building subscriber and contributor confidence. When Geis apologized for a delayed issue, it was because he had been forced to miss the mailing deadline by a few *days*, not weeks or months.

* * * * *

In one of his few accurate predictions, Geis forecast his demise “at 85,” a prophesy that would be fulfilled on February 4, 2013.

“Richard E. Geis was one of the finest fan writers and fanzine publishers SF fandom ever produced.”

Andy Porter

When he learned of Geis's death, SF writer Michael Swanwick recalled: “When I first became aware of science fiction fandom some thirty years ago, anybody who claimed to know anything about science fiction had to read Geis's fanzine, *Science Fiction Review*.”

SF writer and early *SFR* contributor John Shirley ranked Geis as “one of the most important figures in science fiction fandom.”

Fellow big-fanzine publisher Andy Porter summed up Geis's place in fan history: “Richard E. Geis was one of the finest fan writers and fanzine publishers SF fandom ever produced.”

I hold Geis in special esteem because he was the first fan editor astute enough to invite me to write for his focal-point fanzine. So I offer this profile as both a tribute and a thank-you. Rest in peace, Dick. Oh, and you too, Alter.

“Hey, watch it, Williams, don't count me out!”

Is that you, Alter?! What are you doing here?

“Don't look so surprised. Don't you know that a writer's literary creations live forever?”

Well, I guess so . . . But what have you been doing?

“Oh, just drifting around, looking for a suitable new host.”

Good luck with that! You'll have a hard time finding another Dick Geis.

“You may be right.”

