



# First-Person Singularities

*Robert Silverberg , John Scalzi (Introduction)*

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*First-Person Singularities* is the latest collection by science fiction Grand Master Robert Silverberg, featuring nineteen stories written over the course of his forty-year career, all told in the first person singular. Inspired by W. Somerset Maugham's *Six Stories Written in the First Person Singular*, a fiercely realist collection from the 1930s, Silverberg takes on the challenge, offering up his own unique sci-fi twist and - running the gambit of singularity.-

Every story in *First-Person Singularities* offers a truly one-of-a-kind narrator. One story is told by a dolphin feeling the pangs of love for a human being, one told by a computer eager to convince us of its sanity, one by a Greek god who has survived into our own times, one by an alien visitor living in disguise in a New York hotel. One is even a retelling of H.G. Wells's *The War of the Worlds*, as witnessed by pudgy, timid Henry James! Each story features a special introduction by Silverberg himself, providing the inside scoop on his experience writing for and publishing with the greatest science fiction magazines of the past and present.

Author Robert Silverberg is one of science fiction's most beloved writers, winner of five Nebula Awards, five Hugo Awards, and the distinctive Grand Master Award presented by the Science Fiction and Fantasy Writers of America. His work includes *Dying Inside*, *Downward to the Earth*, and *Lord Valentine's Castle*. He is also highly regarded as an editor, most recently editing the Three Rooms Press volume *This Way to the End Times: Classic Tales of the Apocalypse*.

## First-Person Singularities Details

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Author : Robert Silverberg , John Scalzi (Introduction)

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# From Reader Review First-Person Singularities for online ebook

## Robert French says

I have read very few Robert Silverberg novels. Most of these were many years ago. I do remember I liked a few. I decided to try his short stories in anticipation of reading more of his work. Not a chance. Although there were a few stories I liked, I found most bizarre and a struggle to complete. It is unusual for me to abandon a book when I have read almost 80 per cent of the book, but I could simply not continue. Farewell Robert Silverberg.

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## Pop Bop says

### A Fascinating Sampler That Spans Forty Years

The stories in this collection date from 1956 to 1997 and offer a glimpse into Silverberg's development as a master of the sci-fi genre. The book opens with a restrained and thoughtful Introduction by John Scalzi that sets the tone for this career retrospective and offers insight into Silverberg the writer, mentor and major figure. The stories are opened by intros written by Silverberg. Unlike many authors Silverberg gets to the point, (for some authors I've read intros longer than the tales they're introducing), and his opening comments, while occasionally a bit on the self-impressed side, offer real insight into Silverberg's thinking and work style. You actually get a decent sense of Silverberg as a person who writes.

The unifying concept, that all of the stories are in the first person, was interesting enough, but did not strike me as being an especially important aspect of the collection. As always, in an anthology, the more important question seems to be whether the stories are entertaining, interesting, or otherwise deserving of inclusion. The career-spanning angle does add something, but to me that alone wouldn't save an otherwise weak lineup.

The good news, for me, is that the collection included some well loved, heavily anthologized favorites, ("Passengers", "Now Plus N, Now Minus N"), some unfamiliar pieces with unexpected or charming angles, ("The Dybbuk of Mazel Tov IV", "Call Me Titan"), and some totally new, to me, stories that expanded my appreciation of Silverberg. As you might expect there were a few that didn't appeal, but no one pleases everyone all the time with everything. (Disclaimer - I think "Born With the Dead", Silverberg's 1974 novella about the rekindled dead, is one of the coolest speculative fiction stories ever, so you can see where my fandom resides.)

The upshot? It's always fun when an anthology can please completists, entertain fans, and intrigue newbies, and that struck me as what we have here. It was nice to just relax with a dedicated volume of Silverberg pieces.

(Please note that I received a free advance ecopy of this book without a review requirement, or any influence regarding review content should I choose to post a review. Apart from that I have no connection at all to either the author or the publisher of this book.)

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## **Randy M. says**

If you enjoy science fiction, it is next to impossible not to enjoy this collection of short stories from one of the Grand Masters of the genre – Robert Silverburg. The unifying theme of this collection is explicitly stated by the title – all the stories are written in the first person. Beyond that, the narrators and the stories they tell are as varied as they come. Spaceships! Time-travel! Alien invasions! Telekinesis! Dinosaurs! Whew!

Amongst stories of human beings in the midst of extraordinary circumstances, Robert Silverburg writes from the perspective of a dolphin, a computer, a crab-like alien, and a Greek Titan. Settings take place in the past, present, and future, on this world, other worlds, and in between worlds.

The creativity and depth of imagination is tremendous. As in the best fiction, many stories reflect on serious themes of the human condition - morality, love, loneliness, power. Many of the stories would be a natural for SF-themed television shows like The Twilight Zone. The stories “Caliban” and “To See the Invisible Man” are just a couple that come to mind.

The stories in First-Person Singularities cover the gamut of years in Robert Silverburg’s career, and yet they are just a fraction of the total number of stories his imagination has produced. There are many more in other collections and this book was the perfect spark to ignite my interest. If you like science fiction, you absolutely must read Robert Silverburg.

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## **Eddy Bryant says**

I received my copy from good reads first reads. Good collection of short stories. Recommend

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## **Phenex Alarius says**

I really enjoyed this collection of short stories. ESPECIALLY, The Secret Sharer. All of these stories are well written in a classic style seldom seen anymore. I had forgotten how much I actually preferred short stories better than full length novels. Much more fun and easily retained.

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## **Marcheto says**

“First-Person Singularities “ is a solid collection compiling Silverburg’s first person short fiction. Not being strictly a thematic anthology, the stories are extremely varied, as those first person narrators range from a computer to a dolphin, an alien, Henry James, a Greek Titan, time-travelers, spaceship captains, a science fiction fan, among many others.

This collection is not a “The Best of...”, so not every story is a masterpiece, but all of them are interesting, enjoyable, witty (lots of irony throughout the book) and definitely worth reading. As this collection includes some of Silverburg’s best known pieces (as his Nebula winner short story “Passengers” and his Locus winner novella “The Secret Sharer”) along with some lesser known ones, it can be read by Silverburg’s completists

(which I'm sure will particularly enjoy Silverberg's introduction to every story) but it can also be a good entry point to this SF master's short fiction. And although I think I liked every story, my favorite by far was "To See the Invisible Man".

Highly recommended for any SF fan.

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### **Casey Wheeler says**

I received a free copy of First-Person Singularities by Robert Silverberg courtesy of Goodreads and Three Rooms Press, the publisher. It was with the understanding that I would post a review to Goodreads, Amazon, Barnes and Noble and my history book review blog. I also posted it to my Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter and Google Plus pages.

I requested this book as I am a huge fan of Robert Silverberg and I was fascinated by the premise of the book.

I found this to be a fascinating book. It was engaging and a fairly quick read. It is a series of short stories that have been culled from Silverberg's long career with the writing spanning from the 1950's to the 1990's.

Each short story is written in the first person singular and covers a wide range of subjects - time travel, greek mythology, space travel, first contact and many more. Each story comes with an introduction on how the story came about and where it was first published. What I found most amazing was his ability to crank many of them out in a very short period of time.

I strongly recommend this book to anyone who is a fan of Robert Silverburg, fantasy or science fiction. You will not be disappointed.

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### **Lori L (She Treads Softly) says**

First-Person Singularities by Robert Silverberg is a very highly recommended collection of eighteen stories by Silverberg all told in the first person singular. This is a wonderfully written collection of many favorite stories that showcases Silverberg's enormous talent over five decades, from 1956 to 1997, or from when Silverberg was 21 to when he was 62. The volume features an introduction by John Scalzi. Each story is then introduced by Silverberg and he also shares additional inside information about it.

Contents include:

Ishmael in Love: A well-educated dolphin is in love with a human woman. Quote: "Misguided human beings sometimes question the morality of using dolphins to help maintain fish farms. They believe it is degrading to compel us to produce fellow aquatic creatures to be eaten by man. May I simply point out, first, that none of us work here under compulsion, and second, that my species sees nothing immoral about feeding on aquatic creatures. We eat fish ourselves."

Going Down Smooth: A computer is a little bit off balance, perhaps crazy, in this story. Quote: "They call me mad, but I am not mad. I am quite sane, to manypower exponential. I can punctuate properly. I use upper-

and lower-case letters, do you see? I function. I take the data in. I receive well. I receive, I digest, I remember."

The Reality Trip: An alien being wearing a human disguise is trying to fend off the unwanted attention of a fellow resident in the Chelsea Hotel.

The Songs of Summer: A story featuring multiple first person narrators. A man travels to the future and tries to take control.

The Martian Invasion Journals of Henry James: A retelling of Wells's tale of Martian invaders as if the invasion had been experienced firsthand by Henry James.

Push No More: A sexually inexperienced Jewish boy happens to be a poltergeist.

House of Bones: The story of a man who finds himself stranded many thousands of years in the past.

Call Me Titan: Typhoeus, one of the Titans awakes, and looks for members of the old pantheon.

Our Lady of the Sauropods: A scientist visits the L5 space satellite/habitat where the reconstructed dinosaurs are kept. Quote: "What a brilliant idea it was to put all the Olsen-process dinosaur-reconstructs aboard a little and turn them loose to recreate the Mesozoic! After that unfortunate San Diego event with the tyrannosaur, it became politically unfeasible to keep them anywhere on earth..."

There Was an Old Woman: A man, one of thirty-one identical siblings, writes about his mother, a scientist with a theory. Quote: "Each of us was slated for a different profession. It was the ultimate proof of her theory. Genetically identical, physically identical except for the minor changes time had worked on our individual bodies, we would nevertheless seek out different fields of employment. She worked out the assignments at random..."

The Dybbuk of Mazel Tov IV: Mazel Tov IV is a planet that has been colonized by Jews fleeing from persecution by their fellow Earthlings. Quote: "But there was no arguing the phenomenon away. There was the voice of Joseph Avneri emerging from the throat of Seul the Kunivar, and the voice was saying things that only Joseph would have said, and Joseph had been dead more than a year. Call it a dybbuk, call it hallucination, call it anything: Joseph's presence could not be ignored."

Caliban: "The tale of the one ugly man in a world of people who have made themselves look like movie stars."

Passengers: Aliens can take over human minds, as "passengers" and control them. Quote: "It is always like that when a Passenger leaves us. We can never be sure of all the things our borrowed bodies did. We have only the lingering traces, the imprints."

Now Plus N, Now Minus N: A story written in the first-person plural about somebody who is getting stock market information from his future self and relaying it to his past self.

The Iron Star: The after effects of a supernova are noted on a distant world when an alien race is encountered.

The Science Fiction Hall of Fame: "My mind is cluttered with other men's fantasies: robots, androids,

starships, giant computers, predatory energy globes, false messiahs, real messiahs, visitors from distant worlds, time machines, gravity repellers. Punch my buttons and I offer you parables from the works of Hartzell or Marcus, appropriate philosophical gems borrowed from the collected editorial utterances of David Coughlin, or concepts dredged from my meditations on De Soto. I am a walking mass of secondhand imagination. I am the flesh-and-blood personification of the Science Fiction Hall of Fame."

To See the Invisible Man: A man is sentenced to one year of invisibility.

The Secret Sharer: This story is a rewriting of Conrad's plot where a ship's captain finds a stowaway on board.

Disclosure: My review copy was courtesy of Three Rooms Press.

<http://www.shetreadssoftly.com/2017/1...>

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## **Tawney says**

I received this book compliments of Three Room Press through the Goodreads First Reads program.

It had been many years (probably since the days of Omni magazine) since I had read any Silverberg. This collection of his stories did not disappoint. His introductions, although brief, offer insight to the whys and wherefores behind the writing. The challenges he sets for himself and the limiting factors in writing at another's request are enjoyable little sneak peeks into his process as a writer. The stories themselves are wonderfully crafted and satisfying. They have aged well, no doubt due to the topics explored. Silverberg is especially good exploring 'otherness' and most, if not all, these stories touch on it in unexpected and imaginative ways.

And this may sound weird, but it was a treat to read a book printed on such nice paper. Thanks for that, Three Room Press.

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## **Helois says**

This book of 18 short stories by Robert Silverberg, are a must read for any science fiction lover or even if like me your not a big sci fi fan, just a little one. All the stories are told in the first person (hence the name of the anthology), and features stories from 5 decades, 1956-1997. Stories that appear in other anthologies or were for magazines. Each story is preceded by a little note from the author of why he wrote it and for what publication, which in my opinion was a nice touch.

Some of the stories, the two that are set in the 1980's while interesting, were kind of boring to me, perhaps because it just seemed improbable, then again science fiction is suppose to be improbable, so what do I know. The stories I liked the best were ones that featured people who had traveled to a different time, usually in the past or the ones where they've recreated parts of the past for current people to visit. I enjoyed most of the other stories and think the author has enormous talent, each story is so different from each other. My favorites were "Ishmael In Love", "Our Lady of the Sauropods" and "The House of Bones".

\* I received a review copy from the publisher, all thoughts and opinions are my own.

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## **Steve says**

Amazing anthology

Robert Silverberg is a master of science fiction and this anthology is an example of this greatness. All stories are told in the first person and all were hard to put down. Even Silverstein's notes at the start of each story are great. John Scalzi's introduction to the book is also fun to read. This anthology is a genre must-read.

Disclosure: I received a complimentary copy of this book via Above The Treeline for review purposes.

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## **Karen A. Wyle says**

This collection of Robert Silverberg stories was published last year, but the stories are not new: the earliest was first published in 1956, the most recent in 1997. (The introduction by John Scalzi is contemporary, and quite enjoyable.) The uniting theme, stories written in the first person, is almost all the stories have in common, other than fitting within the vast realm of science fiction. If the collection has a theme, it is just that variety, the fact that a first person POV can be used in innumerable ways and go in very many directions.

I have been reading both SF and Silverberg for many years, but still found some stories I had never encountered, as well as a few old favorites. I liked some stories a little more than others, but overall, this is a great read.

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## **Fred says**

Speculative fiction writers will benefit from seeing how many voices a single writer can slip into, some far away from the author's identity. One of the characters is a dolphin, proving that you should write what you know, not who you are.

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